

“And this Gospel shall be preached...”

Matthew 24:14

Sermon Summaries from Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

How You Can Obtain Enduring Faith

The book of Hebrews, chapter 11, is the story of faith in an entirely different light than most people conceive of it. Faith, as we normally perceive it, is the belief that what you ask God to do for you He will perform, if it's in accordance with His will.

Unfortunately that's where many people limit faith. But faith involves much more. It involves an aspect that is far greater than merely receiving, an aspect that we call enduring.

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for.” Once you have the substance and you're no longer hoping for it, faith is not relevant to that matter. “Faith is . . . the evidence of things not seen.” It is the comprehension and understanding that there are ideas, there are beings, there are realities that we do not see with the human eye. We were not here when God created the world. Faith is that aspect whereby we recognize God as a creator.

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God,” not evolved on their own. “So that things which are seen” are recognized to have been made not of things which appear; which is, of course, fundamental to the science of creation.

Divine energy, which is God's, was transformed into a form of energy, which we recognize as matter, by an act of creation and the power of God. “Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

Human experience and faith

Now we come, after the subject of creation, to a whole new issue — that of *human experience and faith*. “By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Abel offered an animal whose blood was shed, which prefigured the coming of the Messiah who would pay the penalty of sin. And in faith Abel comprehended that the Messiah should have to die in order that he himself could be forgiven. And therefore he obtained witness that he was righteous because he perceived God would forgive him.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him.” The word *translate* may mean merely to move or to transplant.

Enoch was placed into or begotten into the Family or Kingdom of God that he should not see that death which is the *second death*. If we have been begotten of God the second death has ultimately no power over us once Christ resurrects us from the dead. And furthermore, by faith he was not found by his enemies. His body was not abused because God had, in fact, removed him from those who would slay him.

Not always in this life

“But without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” But the reward doesn't always come in this life. It may in part, but that is not the primary reward.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear [and there is a time to have such fear], prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” And, of course, he was ridiculed in the process. So faith enabled Noah to do something that he probably would have otherwise been unable to do in his natural strength.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance,” which he hadn't seen yet, “obeyed.” It enabled Abraham to decide that the journey through Canaan was worth it, however unpleasant it might have been.

“And he went out not knowing whither he went.” He had never been in this area of the world before —

the land of Canaan. “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise,” and he certainly had troubles there. It was “a strange country” and he dwelt “in tabernacles” (temporary dwellings), not in solidly built one- or two-story houses.

Now at the same time “he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” And he never found that city. There were plenty of Canaanite towns around but he never found that city. He must have comprehended that the real city was yet to come — the new Jerusalem.

So Abraham looked forward to something in his day that is not really revealed and described until we come to Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. “A city whose builder is God.” So much must have been revealed to these men verbally by God, but only written down later for our understanding.

“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed,” since she was already beyond that period of time when she normally could have children. The change of life had already occurred.

“[She] was delivered of a child when she was past age because she judged him faithful who had promised.” Despite the fact that she first laughed and thought it impossible. But the more she thought about it the more real it seemed to be, because God is real.

“Therefore sprang there even of one [Abraham in this case], and him as good as dead, so many children as the stars of the sky in multitude and as the sand which is by the sea shore, innumerable.” There is no way to number the children of Abraham, all of whom came as an act of faith. Now God promised, and Abraham trusted.

We live in a world where we want so many things and we think God must give them to us now instead of letting Him work things out and trusting what God says He's going to do.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises,” which are the ultimate promises.

A better world

It is interesting to note as you read these verses that these people did not put their confidence in the civilization, the society, the city from which they came. They decided in a sense, what Abraham did: he had to leave the world behind him and journey en route to another world yet to appear.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.” Here he was asked to perform something which was incomprehensible except that perhaps Abraham saw it as the example. He perceived that God the Father must be willing to give up His Son the same as he must be willing to give up his, and that if Isaac were to be slain there would have to be a resurrection.

“Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.” In this sense Abraham perceived Christ in this figure or representation and comprehended the nature of the sacrifice that would have to be done when the true Passover, Jesus Christ, was to come.

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.” That is, though he could not see and there's nothing he could do, he trusted God that what had been said of each should occur even after his death.

“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff” (because he had to rise up and hold

himself). Jacob trusted God to fulfill the blessings that God had promised to Abraham and that God had bestowed through Abraham to Isaac. In faith the inheritance was passed on.

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel.” So he perceived and he knew by faith that God would deliver them out of the land of Egypt and would bring them back to the promised land, which had been promised to Abraham. And he also “gave commandment at this time concerning his bones,” not leaving them in Egypt.

God works around trials

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents.” They decided to trust God when they saw this remarkable child who was so handsome or beautiful at this age. Josephus implies that Moses was a remarkable-looking human being. Now they could have trusted that God would have removed the king's commandment. No, God didn't do any such thing. He let trials stand, and He worked our problems around them.

So Moses was accepted of Pharaoh's daughter and “by faith when he was come to years [he was now about 40] refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.” He decided to reject being heir to the throne. That's what it means. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

So Moses, in this account, illustrates exactly why most people, who depart from the faith, go out into the world. They would like to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

There are certain pleasures that people somehow find titillate their senses, intellectually, emotionally, physically. And it lasts for a little while; it can't last forever.

“[He esteemed] the reproach of Christ [that is the way Christ was reproached] greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” that came by being an heir of Pharaoh's daughter. “He had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” Now if you want to know how enduring the prosperity of Egypt is, go look at it today. The Kingdom of God will endure forever.

“By faith he forsook Egypt [that means he was willing to forsake or give up the world around him], not fearing the wrath of the king [who was quite angry]; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” Moses endured the wrath of the king, comprehending the invisible God. God was more real than Pharaoh.

The interesting thing is that Moses saw who was really in authority and he therefore trusted that God would deliver him. Later “through faith he kept the passover” in Egypt after 40 years had elapsed. He trusted that God would perform what He had promised at that time and he kept “the sprinkling of the blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them [the children of Israel].”

“By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.” Crossing the Red Sea was preceded by a series of problems and God delivered them. “The Egyptians essaying to do [the same thing], drowned.”

These are facts of history recorded in Scripture as examples to us of trusting God through all the trials of life that may come.

God will destroy sin

“By faith [later in the days of Joshua] the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” — the Days of Unleavened Bread, Josephus tells us. And when those seven days of Unleavened Bread, which represent the putting out of sin,

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Enduring Faith

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were being fulfilled, Jericho, which is the city typifying sin in the land of Canaan, was obliterated. In a sense the children of Israel and Joshua perceived that God was going to obliterate sin from the world, but it wouldn't be done until 6,000 years of human history have been recorded.

"By faith the harlot [or prostitute] Rahab [who was in Jericho] perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." Of course she had been receiving all kinds of other men before, but she comprehended something unusual in this case, that perhaps being attracted to one of them and trusting that those were the people who were going to survive, she might as well survive with them.

"And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell you of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." Through faith they accomplished certain things. They "subdued kingdoms," that is, they gained a victory for the nation. They "wrought righteousness." Faith enabled them to conquer the self and to perform the law of God (God's law is righteousness). Through faith they "obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword."

"... out of [natural] weakness," such as David, "were made strong." David was just a young person who couldn't even carry the armor that most of the other men did. "[He] waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens."

These are all great things God performed in this life as He delivered men from problems. I want you to see all the positive things that God did in delivering people, enabling them to accomplish what couldn't have been done otherwise. But most people don't want to face the other side of the coin.

Faith to endure

"... others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trials of cruel mocking and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment." Others through faith endured stoning or, presumably like Isaiah and probably others, since "they" is plural, "they were sawn asunder."

So people were "stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted [to sin], were slain with the sword; they wandered around in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise," because there has been no resurrection yet. "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Because we are all going to rise in the resurrection at the same time and, furthermore, since Jesus Christ came, something even better has been promised because we now have access to God the Father in heaven directly, which was never possible before.

Chapter 12 continues this theme for the next two verses. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside

every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, [which may be different from mine, which may be different from yours, each one has his own particular problems] and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Now normally you run with speed. To run with patience means that it's going to take a lot of endurance over the obstacles that are in the way because it's not the one who gets there first who gets the reward — everyone who gets there gets the reward, however many!

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." He both originates it in terms of imparting it through the Holy Spirit and He will accomplish it through the Holy Spirit in us. Who, in His own life, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." And that was endured by faith. "Despising the shame" that was attached to such a method, because any honorable Roman citizen would have said, "Behead me instead." But putting one on a stake or a cross was considered the worst form of execution. And He is now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God." For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Now we might say, "Well, how could there be a God who allows these things?" Yes, how could there be? Well you see, God is in control of all things. And He does allow what is ultimately going to be good for the human family. And if He says that you have to endure, He will give you the faith to endure.

Faith is what enables us to overcome temptation. The fundamental purpose of faith is to keep our mind on God and His promises and to endure and to perform what God asks of us.