Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

An Addendum on Faith
Scripture: Luke 9:37-45
Code: 42-128

We had a wonderful week at the college. We had our Truth and Life Bible conference. We heard the preaching of Dr. Irwin Lutzer from Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, Dr. Art Azerdia from Christ Community Church up in the Bay area. And I was there as well. I'm sort of like the poor, they always have me with them. We had a great...we had a great week of Bible conference, welcoming back all of our students, wonderful times of praise and music. I think I'm still rejoicing in the opportunity to sit and hear others preach. I have the sad sentence in my life of having to hear mostly one preacher and it was refreshing to hear others. Enjoyed it so much. But it certainly is a privilege and an honor to be able to open the Word of God.

Just to take you back to Luke 9 for a moment, we have been in Luke chapter 9 looking at a portion of Scripture from verse 37 actually to the beginning of verse 43. And I've been talking to you on the theme of the power of faith because that's the essential message of this text. I want to read it to you again, just to set it in your mind.

"It came about on the next day that when they had come down from the mountain, a great multitude met Him and behold, a man from the multitude shouted out saying, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son for he is my only boy and behold, a spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth. And as it mauls him, it scarcely leaves him. I begged Your disciples to cast it out and they could not' And Jesus answered and said, 'O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.' And while he was still approaching, the demon dashed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy and gave him back to his father. They were all amazed at the greatness of God."

And we remember that account which we've discussed. We also remember that after that Matthew and Mark tell us that there was a private meeting between Jesus and His Apostles and they said to Him, "Why were we not able to cast the demon out?" And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith, for if you had faith as small as a grain of mustard seed, you could do the impossible, not because you would have the power but because you would call down, as it were, the promised power of God from heaven."

And so, we're talking about the power of faith. And essentially the bottom line in understanding the power of faith is this, if you believe, God will do precisely what He has said He will do. It is not that by

faith we can somehow mystically energize things into existence, believing hard enough to make things happen, it is that when God makes a promise whatever that promise might be, a promise of power, a promise of forgiveness, a promise of grace, a promise of mercy, a promise of answered prayer, a promise of hope, a promise of joy, a promise of peace, all of those, of course, are New Testament promises as well as Old Testament promises, whatever the promises of God are, whether it's all the way down to that great comprehensive one, "Lo, I'm with you always," whatever it is that God has promised to His people that is reiterated in the Word of God as a pledge of God to us, we can access by faith.

The illustration of that is in James 1 where you can, if you lack wisdom, ask God who will give to you whatever wisdom you need and hold back none unless you doubt. And don't let the one who doubts think he's going to get anything. God is not going to honor doubt. He's going to honor faith. Faith then is at the heart of Christian life and Christian living. It's at the heart of everything. Whatever it is I need from the Lord, wisdom, peace, forgiveness, mercy, grace, hope, joy, understanding, is available to me if I will trust Him for it. Now that's so basic. You can't be saved apart from faith and you can't be sanctified apart from faith. You were saved because you believed what God said in the gospel and you responded to that truth in faith. You are being sanctified only as you believe what the Word of God says and respond to that belief in obedient faith to those things that have been laid out in Scripture.

The key phrase here in this text I just read comes in the words of Jesus, "O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you?" How sad it was that Jesus was living in the midst of twisted and unbelieving people. And in this case it wasn't just the people of Israel, it wasn't just the religious leaders, it wasn't just the crowd that followed Him, it even encompassed the disciples who had demonstrated a pointless and useless unbelief. They couldn't cast the demon out of one man because they didn't believe the power was available. And yet Jesus had told them explicitly back at the beginning of chapter 9, it's recorded, that they would have power and authority over all demons. They did not believe what the Lord said. You will be saved when you believe what the Lord said about His Son and about the gospel. You will be sanctified when you believe what the Lord says about holy living, that's essential. Everything comes down then to believing the Word of God. That's the power of faith, when you believe that what God said is true and you ask Him to fulfill His promises, God will do that, honoring one who puts his trust in Him.

Now I can't really leave this subject just where it is because it's just too critical. We started our discussion of this section by looking at Hebrews 11, and I want you to go back there and this is going to be a little bit of a sort of an appendix or an addendum. And I honestly sort of battled this week whether I should just go on to the next paragraph and the truth of the matter was, when I got up this morning and went up and sat at my desk, I thought, "Well maybe I'll just go on to the next paragraph." I had done a lot of preparation to go right on to the next paragraph, but I couldn't...I couldn't do it, I couldn't get myself to that point because I didn't want to leave anybody short-changed on how critical

and how central faith is to our Christian living. And so I found myself back in chapter 11. And I'm just going to go back there and to tell you the truth, I'm not sure what I'm going to say, so this will be fun for me as well as for you.

But chapter 11 of Hebrews is known as the faith chapter. It's about faith. In fact, if you just kind of flow through the chapter, faith is mentioned in the first verse, and then you see verse 3, "by faith," verse 4, verse 5, verse 6, "without faith it's impossible to please Him," verse 7, "by faith Noah ate," "by faith Abraham," 9, "by faith he lived," 11, "by faith Sarah," and that's how the thing goes all the way down. Verse 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, nobody needs to question what is this about, it's about faith. It's such a critical subject. It's so central to our Christian living that it calls for us to have an understanding of what the Scripture indicates.

Now let's just ask the question, first of all, what is faith? What is faith? And we've endeavored to answer that. Faith is simply believing what God said because He said it. Faith is not some personal power that causes things to happen. It's not a power that brings the healing. It's not a power that solves your personal problems. It's not some...some energy that you can sort of pull up and will things into existence, or will circumstances to change. It is not a mystical power. It is not a force that causes anything to happen apart from the purposes and will of God. The simple reality of faith is it is believing what God has said. That is what biblical faith is.

The Oxford English Dictionary has more than a full page of meanings on the word faith. And I looked them up just to kind of see where they would go with the word faith and they pretty much defined faith by synonyms...confidence, reliance, trust, allegiance, fidelity, loyalty. But the best thing I found in the Oxford Dictionary was a theological definition of faith. It had that and this is what the Oxford English Dictionary says about the theological definition of faith...a conviction practically operative on the character and will. Boy, what a great definition. It is a conviction trusting in what has been said that operates on the character and will. It has implications in how we behave, how we conduct ourselves. And the Oxford Dictionary goes on to say it is opposed to mere intellectual assent. It is not just believing something and stopping there, it is acting on that belief.

So we say then faith is essentially believing God...believing that what He said was true just because He said it. And as I've been telling you, and literally acting on it, banking your whole life on it both in time and eternity. It is believing what God has said so that that belief is the dominating reality in your life. That's pretty simple, but it's also very profound. When you sin, that is an act of unbelief because your sense of self-preservation should cause you not to sin. You know that if you sin as a believer, God is going to chasten. If you live righteously, He's going to bless. And yet you sin and I sin and in a sense that's an act of unbelief that says I think I can find greater fulfillment in my sin than from God's blessing. Well that's ridiculous. The whole of life comes down to faith. That's why in the armor of the Christian, the shield that shields you from temptation is the shield of...what?...of faith. It's absolutely critical, it's at the heart of everything we do as Christians. I believe the Bible. I believe every word that

has come out of the mouth of God. I believe that. Everything written in Scripture I believe. I desire to conduct my life as an expression of those convictions. I want to behave in my home toward my wife and my children in the way that the Word of God instructs me to behave for their benefit and my blessing. I want to conduct myself in the world toward unbelieving people the way the Bible tells me to. I want to interpret the world around me and all that goes on in that world. I want to view that world and see that world through the grid of biblical revelation so that I trust God's interpretation of everything. My whole life is based upon what God has said in Scripture. I have faith in that and that controls my life. That's what living by faith means, simply trusting and believing what God has said no matter what...no matter what. It takes the bare Word of God at face value and acts simply on it because it is the Word of God and for no other reason. If you tell me God said it, that's enough.

I'm not looking for signs. I'm not looking for wonders. I'm not looking for miracles. I'm not looking for voices from heaven. I heard a guy on TBN, by the way, TBN does more to twist and pervert Christianity than secular channels. I saw a guy on there saying, "I don't want the God of the past. I'm not interested in what God has done in the past. I want a fresh experience of God." There's a good way to get the demons activated in your life if they aren't already. I don't want a sign. I don't want a wonder. I don't need a revelation. I don't want a vision, I married one, that's enough for me. I don't want any of those things. I'm not looking for God to come down somehow and verify things through some supernatural affirmation, I don't need any of that. It is enough for me to believe what God has said. Those people looking for signs and wonders and saying, "I don't want the God of history, I don't want the God of the past, I want a fresh..." That's not faith, that's doubt looking for proof.

We just looked at the chapter. I'm not going to take you through the whole thing, just kind of overview it. Abel didn't question God. He heard God's Word regarding sacrifice and he did what God said and he died because of it. His, in some ways, his reward for obedience to God bringing an acceptable sacrifice was to be murdered by his brother. Everything you might expect because you act in faith may not happen that way. You could be killed for doing what's right. Enoch didn't question God. Enoch believed what God had said. He separated himself from the world. He walked with God because God wanted him to do that. Noah didn't question God. Noah was told to do the most ridiculous thing anybody up to that point had ever been told to do, to build a huge, massive boat and to spend 120 years doing it. And then collect all the assortment of animals into it because it was going to rain and there never had been any rain. But he did what God told him to do because God told him to do it. God didn't say to him, "Hey, I'll give you a little shower over here just to show you what it's like when rain does come." While he was spending 120 years building that thing, he was a preacher of righteousness and while everybody was mocking the stupidity of this boat, all his contemporaries were laughing at him, he believed it would rain. And he did have his faith rewarded. Did he see clouds? No. Did he have signs and wonders? No. God said it would rain, he believed it would rain, it rained.

By faith Abraham, it says in verse 9, believed God, left Ur, his home. Spent his life as a nomad. Patricia and I have been reading through the book of Genesis together. It's really something to try to follow Abraham. He left the settled life to just wander all over the place, a nomad, a wanderer, simply because God told him to go. With no detail, no real picture of the future, yet he never questioned, he believed God. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph mentioned in verses 20, 21, and 22, against the natural course of human events, their stories are really compelling and fascinating. Against the natural course of human events they accepted God's Word without question and they all died in faith without the realization of what they had been promised. They never saw the Abrahamic promise fulfilled. Abraham didn't see it. Isaac didn't see it. Jacob didn't see it. And certainly Joseph didn't see it. They died believing, however, that God would make His promise good. And then there was Moses who made the right choices, who made the choices of a man who believed in God simply because God told him what to do. It cost him the world. It cost him a position of power in Egypt. But he did it because God commanded him to do it.

So that's why those people are all here. They're all here because they represent what it is to live by faith when you can't see the outcomes. If Abel had seen the outcome, his own death, it might have been too much for him to bear. If Enoch had seen the outcome of his faithfulness, his exaltation into heaven, it might have made him proud. If Noah had had a preview of what was to come, it might have panicked him. And so it goes, they just took what God said, nothing more and obeyed God. And that's why they're in the Hall of Fame here, heroes of faith. They lived by believing God's word. That's what it's about. That's what faith is. It may be difficult. It may seem strange. It may be against human reason. It may bring suffering, persecution, hostility, separation from the world, separation from the family. It might cost you your ambition. It might cost you your goal. It could cost you even your life. But you obey. So faith then is based upon your attitude toward God. That's why an unbelieving and perverse generation was so distressing. The reason they were unbelieving was they had a perverted view of God. If you have a twisted view of God, if you don't think God is able to do what He's able to do or God won't fulfill the pledges and promises He's made, then you will have doubt engendered.

All of these heroes of faith, as they're called, had such a lofty exalted knowledge of God. They knew Him to be the sovereign, loving, almighty, all-wise, covenant-keeping, faithful God and no matter what He said and no matter how against the grain of conventional wisdom and human intuition it might have been, they did what He said, all obstacles aside.

Now having looked at that, let's go back to the beginning of the chapter and get a more explicit definition of faith, a more explicit definition of faith. Verse 1, "Now faith...and here's the definition...is the assurance," or as some translations say, the substance, "of things hoped for, the conviction, or the evidence, of things not seen." Those are two very important features. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. What faith does is it transports God's promises from the future into the present tense. Again it takes God at His word. Saving faith, for example, is an act by which a sinner totally commits his life to Jesus Christ because he believes in something that hasn't happened that he hasn't

seen, and that is his own exaltation to eternal heaven. I've never seen Christ. I have never seen heaven. I don't know what's beyond the grave. So faith is the assurance of something hoped for.

Why would I hope for that? Why would I go out on that limb? I mean, I could live in this world any way I wanted. I could live like everybody else in this world lives, just following all my human desires to the maximum level of fulfillment possible. I could live that way and suck everything out of this fallen world that my humanness would want to get. I could live that way but I don't. In fact, I go through my life as you as a Christian do saying no most of the time to those things which reflect natural longings. And you go through your life trying to restrain your fallenness on all fronts. Why do you do that? Why is that important? Why are you living that way? Why are you living under such restraint? Why do you want to make life so narrow and so tight? Why are you doing that?

Because I believe that it is up to me to be faithful to persevere in the truth to live a life of righteousness in order to honor God so that one day I will enter into eternal life and receive from Him the heavenly reward which I'll enjoy forever and ever. And I've never been there and I've never seen it, but I hope for it.

You say, "Well you better have a pretty good reason to hope for it?" Oh, I have a great reason to hope for it. God said it. It's all a matter of believing Him, isn't it? Folks, you know, when it comes down to the very bottom line, this is why and you know me well enough to know this, everything is predicated on your view of Scripture...everything, absolutely everything. That's why we battle through the years to maintain the integrity of the Word of God. Faith then is reliance on God's promises.

Now I want to take you a little step further. This is not natural, this is not natural. You say, "What do you mean it's not natural?" Well, you say..., "Everything...everybody's got faith. Everybody has faith. Everybody believes in things." Well that's true. But that's not what I'm talking about. Every time you turn on a faucet and drink the water, that's an act of faith. That is.

You have no idea what's going on in your pipes, you have no clue. You don't even know where that water comes from. You go to a restaurant, you eat whatever they stick in front of you. You don't know what it is. You don't know what's in it. I look a little bit, occasionally, just to be sure. The other day Tom and I were having lunch and I found a big huge piece of glass in the middle of the salad. So I am a little bit careful. That's the second time for me, the first time I crunched it in my teeth, so... But generally speaking I eat what they give me.

I get on an airplane and I don't know if anybody is up there behind that door. I assume somebody's up there, they're sober and they've done this before. There's certain things that's natural faith. I mean, sure. And we've all, you know, gone under some surgical procedure where they put us to sleep and some guy cuts us open and fools around in there. We don't know the guy or what he's doing. You go to the pharmacy, they give you a bottle, you don't know what's in that, you pop it as if you did cause

somebody put on the label that this is good for you, do it twice a day. That's...that kind of faith is intrinsic to human nature. And, you know, that is simply based on experience. Your experience is, you drink, the water and it's okay. Your experience is you go the restaurant and it's okay, particularly if it has an "A" on it, right? Somebody's checking it. But you've been there before. You've eaten out before. Your experience is that it's okay. You get in a rental car and you don't expect to get in a rental car, be going 65 miles down a highway somewhere with no brakes. You assume somebody is in charge of that because you've experienced that before. You get on an airplane and your experience is very good, you know, this whole year, I read the other day, the year 2002 nobody died in a commercial air accident, so there's a lot of experience that tells you this is a good thing to do. You can get in the plane, you can trust the people up there, somebody's checking on them, they're going through flight training, etc., etc., and it's a safe place to be. You know that there are certain things that control the medical profession and so experience tells you what you can trust.

We're not talking about that when we talk about spiritual faith. We're talking about trusting without experience. Right? You haven't been to heaven. You haven't seen Jesus. You haven't been to the other side. This is very different. This is believing what you cannot experience simply because God said it. How critical is our faith in God's revelation?

Now notice the word "assurance," *hupostasis*, substance, essence, content. This is not a contentless faith. This is not wishing. We now have a substantial, I like to use that word, a substantial confidence. In fact, this confidence is so substantial that it is a conviction and a conviction takes it a little bit beyond just the idea of faith. Well I believe...you could say, "You know, I believe that's going to happen...I believe that's going to happen." We could use believe that way. But that's very different than saying, "I am convinced that that's going to happen." Well, faith, the faith that saves, the faith that sanctifies, is a substantial confidence that has become an absolute conviction. Spiritual faith then is a God-wrought conviction that the promises and truths of Scripture are true. The word *hupostasis* can even mean a foundation, or the ground on which something is built. So the kind of faith we're talking about here is not wishful thinking, it's a strong, substantial faith in things we can only hope for. It's a firm conviction in things we can't see. Spiritual faith says the Bible is enough evidence. The word "conviction" there is, in the margin, also evidence. All the evidence I need is the Word of God. And the more I study the Bible all these many, many years, the more I teach the Bible, the more I know it's a supernatural book written by God. That's what faith is. And that's what's required of us to be saved and to live a Christian life that progresses in sanctification.

Now this faith...and this has been traditionally the theological sort of explanation of it...falls into three categories. This kind of faith has three elements. There is an element of knowledge. If I'm going to trust God, I'm going to have to know what He said. That's the intellectual element. The second one is the assent. They talked about a census in the Latin. I know it, I assent to it. I affirm it. So it goes from the intellectual knowledge to the emotion and then finally to the will which is the volitional. I know it to be true. I assent that it is true. Therefore I act on it. That's essentially what we're talking about.

Verse 3, "By faith we understand." That's the knowledge. First we understand. Then back to verse 1, then we assent to it. We are assured that it is true and then we totally trust and act on it. It is a conviction. Faith then is believing what God has said.

Go down to verse 6 for a minute. "Without faith it's impossible to please Him." You cannot please God if you don't believe Him. If you don't believe God you're calling Him a...what?...a liar. If you have doubts, you're double-minded and you're not going to receive anything from Him because He's not going to reward the person who doubts. So He says in verse 6, "He who comes to God must believe that He is." That's wonderful. You must believe that God is the God He really is. He's not the "Man Upstairs." He's not the "Ground of Being," as Paul Tilla(?) called Him. He's not "The Holy Other." He's not "Allah." He is the God who is God. He is the great I AM. He is the God who is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God of Scripture and no other God. It's not enough to believe that God is the God of some pagan imagination. We've been talking about the people today in this "Wider Mercy Movement" who are saying that as long as pagans believe in some God, even though they don't have the right name, God will accept them. That is not true. If you're going to come to God, you must believe that He is who He is. You must believe that He is who He is. And He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Covenant, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then you must believe that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him...He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

This sets Him apart from everybody, every other deity. If you look at the pantheon of gods in the world, they are not rewarders. Irwin Lutzer(?) was speaking on the uniqueness of Christ at the college and I thought it was interesting, he...he said that he attended the Word Congress on Religions, a bizarre event in Chicago with 5,000 people from all the religions of the world...all but the true religion. And he said he decided to go through the exhibit area where all these religions had their little booth to see if he could find a Savior, a God who was a rewarder of those who seek Him, a God whose desire was to give not take, a God who was a Savior. So he said he...he went to Bahai and he said, "You know...he said...I'm a sinner and I really need a Savior, does your religion have a Savior?" No, we don't have...we don't have a Savior.

Okay. Then he said he went to Buddhism and asked, "I am a terrible sinner, I'm looking for a Savior. Do you have a Savior?" Well no, we contemplate things. Then he went to Islam, "I'm a terrible sinner, do you have a Savior?" No, we don't have a Savior.

He said there was only one Savior. None of them had a Savior. None of them had a God who is a rewarder of the one who seeks Him. So if you're going to come to God, you have to come to the God who is God and the God who is by nature a Savior, a God who is a reconciler, 2 Corinthians, a God who is a Savior of all men, especially those who believe, our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So when you talk about faith, essentially you're talking about believing the Bible completely in its revelation of God, the true and living God and the only God. And that He is a rewarder, or, if you will, a Savior, a rescuer because the reward is salvation, isn't it, eternal life. And this is an act of faith. Faith then is taking God at His Word. It is not wishful, it is confident. It is a conviction. It is based on understanding, assurance and leads to conduct. And we believe the God of the Bible to be the only true God.

There's a second question that could be posed in this chapter and I would briefly pose it to you. We've seen what faith is, let's ask the question...what does faith do? How does it act? And we'll go right back through it again. First of all, in verse 4 faith worships God the way God said He wanted to be worshiped. Verse 5, "In the case of Enoch, faith walks with God." Verse 7, "Noah, faith works with God." Abraham, "Faith obeys God." With Sarah, "Faith overcomes barrenness and overpowers the fear of death." Faith enables people to persevere unto death. Verse 13, "All these died in faith." All the people that he's just named, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, they all died with their...their faith unrealized. I mean, they never saw what they believed in. Faith trusts God, verse 17 and following, with the dearest possessions. And what was the dearest possession that Abraham ever had, what was it? Or who was it? Isaac. But he was willing to pick up a knife and stab him if God told him to cause he believed that God would raise him from the dead. Faith trusts God with the dearest possession. Faith believes God for the future, as Isaac, Jacob and Joseph did. Faith turns from earthly things to heavenly things as Moses did, choosing rather, verse 25, to endure ill treatment with the people of God than enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Boy, that's an important element of faith. Faith reaches out for what is heavenly. It sets its affections on things above and not on the things on the earth. And the reason is, verse 27, so important, "By faith he left Egypt," Moses did, "not fearing the wrath of the king for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Oh that's so great. He could see the one who is invisible. That's really faith. Literally in his heart he was so confident that God was God that he saw with the eye of faith the One who could not be seen. Faith activates the power of God so that His work comes through the servant. Verse 28, "He kept the Passover, the sprinkling of blood and then was there leading the people through the Red Sea, seeing the drowning of the Egyptians." And later on the people of God, of course, saw the walls of Jericho fall down. Faith then receives the power of God. Faith possesses immense courage, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, verse 32, David, Samuel, the prophets, conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions. Pretty amazing. Quench the power of fire, escape the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put armies to flight, possesses immense courage. Saving faith overcomes death. Saving faith endures torture, outlasts chains and prisons, withstands temptations, suffers martyrdom, survives hardship. We see that in verses 35 and following. Women received their dead back by resurrection, others were tortured, some were receiving mockings and scourgings and chains and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn in half, that's what happened to Isaiah. They were tempted. They were put to death with the sword. They went about in sheepskins, goatskins, destitute, afflicted, ill treated, men of whom the

world was not worthy, wandering in deserts, and mountains, and caves and holes in the ground.

Why did they do that? Why did they do that? Because they were obedient to God. They were doing what God told them to do in faith. Faith is sacrificial. Faith limits itself to whatever God has promised and said. And verse 39 is so wonderful. "All these having gained approval through their faith didn't receive what was promised." So they all died, in a sense, without the realization. This is how wonderful their faith is, how great it was. And that faith, of course, was matched by the faithfulness of God. Verse 39 is the key, they gained approval through their faith. They gained approval through their faith. They're the heroes. They didn't know what we know. Verse 40 then says, "But God had provided something better for us...something better for us." Everything they hoped for we've seen. What was in the future for them is in the past for us. We know about the Messiah coming, being virgin born, living a sinless life, dying a substitutionary death, rising from the dead, we know that. We have the whole New Testament to build our lives on. But they were not made perfect apart from those great New Testament realities concerning Christ.

So here are the heroes of the faith. They believed God. They died, all of them, never seeing the fulfillment of the hope of their hearts, but it was a conviction strong enough, substantial enough, grounded enough that they literally gave their lives rather than recant, or turn from these assurances and convictions.

How strongly do you believe? Enough to give your life? Give your possessions? How strongly do you believe in the Word of God, enough to obey faithfully, to trust that what God has said is really true? That takes us into the twelfth chapter, a good place to just close.

Verse 1, "Therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses," we have so great a cloud of witnesses of what? "The benefits, the blessings of living a life by faith." And all those witnesses are just given to us in chapter 11, that's the great cloud of witnesses. They surround us. What do they testify to? The benefits of the life of faith because God was faithful to every one of them in every circumstance. "Let us then lay aside every encumbrance, the sin which so easily entangles us, let us run with endurance the race." And what is the race? It's the faith race. Stay in the faith race. And at the time we're running we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. Jesus lived by faith, complete trust in the Father, He is the model. He trusted the purposes of God to bring Him joy and so for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. You have all of the heroes of chapter 11 and you have the greatest of all, Jesus Christ, who took upon Himself the form of a man, came into the world, lived humbly, lived in total submission to the Father, all the way to death, even the death on the cross because He believed the promise of God the Father that out the other side of the cross there would be for Him eternal joy. And so He also lived and died in perfect faith. He is therefore the author and perfecter of faith.

The word "author" is *archegos*, it literally means the pioneer, the front runner, the greatest example, the leader of faith. He is the greatest example of faith and He is the perfecter of faith who lived in complete submission to God through the most horrific experience, sin-bearing and death because He believed that on the other side God had joy for Him. That was His act of faith and it came to pass that God did and it's indicated when He sat Him down on the right hand of His throne. No wonder it grieves the Lord Jesus to say to people, "You perverted and unbelieving generation." How sad...how sad. If there were a hero of faith chapter being written today, would your name be in it somewhere? "Truly, truly I say to you," Jesus said in John 5:24, "he who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and doesn't come into judgment but is passed out of death into life." If you hear the word of Scripture and believe it, you'll be saved. You'll enter into life. And once you enter by faith, you live by faith. Let us not be like those disciples to whom the Lord had to say, "You're very little different than those who don't believe because they have a warped view of My promises, My Word.

Father, we thank You this morning for the lives of these people. If there were no other reason to read the Old Testament, this would be enough, to see the sustained stories of these people who never saw what they hoped for, who never saw what they were assured of, who never saw what they were convinced of. But who gave their lives for what they hoped for, what they hadn't seen because You told them it was true. You have told us that heaven is a reality and that Jesus is the only Savior and the way of sanctification is by obedience and obedience alone to the truth of Your Word. Help us to believe that savingly and sanctifyingly for the honor of Christ. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).