



HAVE FAITH

BY MAXINE WILLIAMS

HAVE FAITH!" we are urged. "Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]," we read in Hebrews.

So we pray, "O God, give me faith." We need faith to receive answers to our prayers. Through faith we are saved. By faith we are healed.

But what is faith? On what do we base it? How does it come?

The most familiar definition of faith is found in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the *substance* of things *hoped* for, the *evidence* of things not seen." *Hope* in the Bible denotes anticipation of what is certain to come because God has promised it. An example is the Blessed Hope of Christ's return. This is more than a wish; it will most certainly come to pass because He promised it. The understanding of hope is vital to the understanding of faith.

The word *substance* in this passage is equivalent to *title-deed*. "Faith is the title-deed to those things anticipated with certainty."

EXAMPLES OF FAITH

Hebrews 11 is filled with illustrations of the operation

of faith in the lives of God's people. The relationship between faith in God's Word and actions is clear in every case. The act of faith always started with a word from God, and the person with faith proceeded on the basis of the integrity of God in regard to His Word. Let us look at three examples.

1. "By faith Noah, being warned of God . . . prepared an ark" (v. 7). He had nothing to go on but the word God had spoken. There had been no rain; it seemed incredible that everything would be destroyed. He was the only one in the world who had been told what God was going to do. But he acted upon that word. Faith does not depend upon reason or numbers. When God speaks, it comes to pass.

2. "By faith Abraham . . . offered up Isaac" (v. 17). Four times in this chapter Abraham's acts of faith are mentioned, but the most staggering expression was in connection with the offering of Isaac. How far does one go in trusting God's integrity? Death is so permanent. Yet Abraham knew that somehow Isaac would be restored, for God had said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

God had said that when Isaac was three years old, and we have no record that He kept repeating it. The fulfillment of God's Word does not depend on immediacy. He had said it once, and Abraham believed it.

3. "By faith Joseph . . . gave commandment concerning his bones" (v. 22). God had revealed to Abraham that his descendants would serve God in Egypt and that after 400 years they would be a nation and He would bring them out. Those 400 years had just begun, but Joseph was so certain God would keep His Word that he said, "When you go, take my bones." Time is no obstacle to faith.

The list of victories through faith is long, but then we read, "And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance. . . ."

The godly line, from Seth onward, lived in anticipation of the Messiah. He would come! He would undo the curse of sin. He would restore fellowship with God. God had promised it. But how they suffered at times for this faith. They were beaten and sawn asunder. They were thrown to lions and imprisoned and made destitute. They could have been released at any time, had they been willing to sever their identification with the coming Messiah. But they would not. By their tenacious adherence to God's Word in the face of severest persecution they were saying, "God is to be believed."

DO WE HAVE FAITH

"Without faith it is impossible to please God," and, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." If we are afraid to act according to God's Word, then we are questioning His integrity or His ability to fulfill His Word.

Faith says that God's integrity is so complete that we can trust our whole lives to it whether we understand all His ways or not.

One of the most crucial areas of trust is in connection with salvation and life after death. We who have trusted Christ as Saviour believe without fear that the blood of Christ is our atonement and will plead for us in the day of judgment.

The unbeliever contradicts God's Word by refusing to