

“ACCORDING TO THY FAITH”

Br. Rod Hugelman

Our subject “According to Thy Faith,” is taken from Matthew 9. You may recall the incident where the woman was healed and the Lord had said, “according to thy faith.” We’ll begin by reading Matthew 9:18-22. This is following a parable which our Lord had delivered, “While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, ‘My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.’ And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.” (On his way to this household, he was interrupted) “and behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him and touched the hem of his garment; for she said within herself, ‘if I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.’ But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, ‘Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole,’ and the woman was made whole from that hour.”

All this because of her faith. We are expected to have that kind of faith, too, aren’t we, because we are the ‘faith class’ and it will be true ‘according to our faith.’ It takes more faith than we perhaps realize. Just reflect for a moment on what was represented in this woman’s actions. She had been ill for many years, 12 years, and no doubt had tried every remedy possible. Now she had confidence in this one man. Not that he, as a physician, could somehow come to her bedside and with the latest technology cure her problem; or even that he would turn to her and through some medicine that he would prescribe give her aid and comfort. No, if she could touch the hem of his garment then I shall be whole, she said, and that took a great deal of faith didn’t it.

Think of our own case in this narrow way. Consider what’s happened to us. We’re running for the prize of the ‘high calling in Christ Jesus.’ High calling—an opportunity to be like the Most High God, not to be before the throne but to be on the throne, as it were, with our Lord. To share that kind of position, to have that kind of opportunity to be entrusted with life inherent, immortality, will require our utmost testing. The Creator of the Universe has deemed to call us sons. Can you really accept that, can you believe that, can you believe that the Creator of the Universe would look upon one small corner of the galaxy, one small star system, one tiny planet, one little dust speck in the enormity of space and select one small creature like yourself, fallen and misshapen and broken, because that’s what we are, and say, “Would you like to become a son of the Creator of the Universe and share his very nature.” No mind could ever accept and believe that without the assurances provided through the scriptures and an enormity of faith to be able to seize on to that ‘according to thy faith.’

It takes great faith to accept the course that is laid before us. Can we, like this woman, believe that we can be made whole? We cannot receive the same reward which Jesus

received for the laying down of a perfect life, unless we have a perfect life, also, to lay down. But, you say, we are so fallen, surely we cannot give so much. But we can. We can lay down our promised restitutional rights, can't we? We are promised perfection like the rest of the world, and God says we can spend that promise in advance, reckonedly; and so we, too, can thereby lay down a perfect sacrifice. What of our many failings, faults and shortcomings? They will be covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness. If we can but 'touch the hem of his garments, we will be made whole.' That same garment is what covers us and makes us whole. Through that lens Jesus we can be observed by the Creator of the Universe as though we were actually perfect. Think of that! Do you have the faith it takes to really accept that? Just think of what we are saying—faith to believe that. As we look at the many problems that beset us, do we find ourselves concentrating on our failures. If we do and are overcome by them, perhaps we are not letting our faith in Jesus' merit have its full effect. We will not be WHOLE unless we can lay full hold on that garment.

Now let's read the remainder of Chapter 9 and see what it tells us. "And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise [at that time it was customary for the people to make noise and play instruments, like a funeral service] He said unto them, 'Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth'" (and they said, Oh what a wonderful thing because now she will be healed and helped) No, "and they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all the land. And when Jesus departed hence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, 'Thou son of David, have mercy on us'. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, 'Believe ye that I am able to do this'? and they said unto him, 'Yea, Lord.' Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you."

Have your eyes been touched? According to your faith are you able to see as you've never seen before? See things which the rest of the world only dreams of. Just think, we have in this room, what we're studying, what we have is what the whole world is still looking for. We've got it. We should surely be appreciative of it. Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear—for many righteous men have desired to know these things and have not known them. "And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straightly charged them, saying, 'See that no man know it.' But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: And the multitude marveled, saying, 'It was never so seen in Israel'."

The religious leaders of Jesus' day should surely have turned to the Lord and said, "This wonderful man of miracles can teach us much." But in spite of what they saw, they said, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils." (Sound of a door shutting) They

shut the door on their own opportunity, too, didn't they? Imagine, to see the dead raised in the Name of God and yet at the same time sit there and, because it wasn't one of you or the way you thought it was going to be, declare that the Son of God did it through the power of the devil. What a terrible, terrible indictment.

Now let's turn to Matthew 13, and we'll look first at verses 8 and 9. This has to do with the parable of the sower who spread forth the seed and how it fell on certain kinds of ground, and the important aspect of it we want to consider begins with verse 8. "But other fell into good ground [and it didn't just grow you'll notice—it brought forth fruit] some an hundredfold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Our ears are unstopped, aren't they. So we can hear these things and we see as no other man has ever been able to see, this revealment of the divine message. Having seen it, what are we motivated to do? To grow and to bring forth fruit, the fruits of the spirit, in order that we might be in some small measure profitable servants unto the Lord and that is the one thing characteristic here. The fruitage may vary whether it be a hundredfold, or even thirty-fold, but all of them nevertheless brought forth fruit of some kind—so we want to be profitable servants and bring forth fruit. We should see ourselves grow in grace and in the Truth, our understanding beginning to develop and motivate us more and more each day in every way.

"And then the disciples came, and said unto him, 'Why speakest thou unto them in parables'? He answered, and said unto them, 'Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given'." Have you ever thought that what you have is truly a rare privilege. It is not a common thing at all, is it? We are members of the world's only public, secret society. We can proclaim it to everyone as loudly as we please, but nevertheless it seems as though no one understands except a few. So it is indeed a rare and special privilege to be touched on the shoulder, as it were, by God, himself, as he brings this opportunity to us and certainly it is an opportunity that must be taken full advantage of.

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." Isn't that an odd way to put it. Normally you'd think if a person doesn't have much he would be the one you'd want to give it to; or if a person has a lot, you don't want to load him up for he already has plenty. That isn't the arrangement with the Lord, is it? Here, if we have the truth, have these blessings and are taking advantage of these opportunities, we'll get more of them. But if we are not, that will even be taken away, what we have. We will lose it, won't we. These are too precious, too grand, too wonderful to be lightly thought of.

"Therefore, speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." That is the way it is generally with the world. They will hear us and some perhaps will even appreciate the truth to some measure, but

unless they have the hearing ear and the Lord has touched their mind to see these things, they will not see them. That's the miracle, isn't it? That's the thing that is the proof to you that you have been touched in the mind and heart by God, himself, because you can share these innermost secrets, because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. God is so generous in the things that he has provided for us—they are really beyond human comprehension. Surely we must in some measure be worthy of it and to that end we must strive ever to pay attention to the Lord's overrulings and leadings in our lives, to be sensitive to all that he would have us do.

We now turn to Isaiah 45 and see if we can get a little more insight into the Lord's arrangement. Isaiah 45:11,12. We read, "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, ask me of things to come concerning my sons and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." The Lord is asking us concerning his sons and work of his hands. We are those sons, aren't we? At least this is our hope. We can ask what we will and the Lord, if it be within his providence at the time, to our benefit, and if it would not do us injury, he would reveal it to us for he will do nothing but he first reveal it unto his saints. This is one other measure we have that we are in the truth, his people, living up to our privilege—if we find our heart and mind understanding and in sympathy with the divine message.

Verses 18 and 19, same Chapter 45: "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right."

Have you ever thought about that? How he proclaimed things openly, publicly tried to tell others? This is the most wonderful message in all the world in spite of which it is not received. See how different the Lord is compared to other arrangements in the world. With most all other religious concepts around the globe, its inner workings are secret. No one wants to know the innermost secrets, the higher up you get the more inner secrets you learn and the things are kept private, away from the people. That's not the case with the Lord, is it? Everything is proclaimed openly to one and all—to those who can receive it. It is always there, always in the open. Anyone can go out and buy that Bible. Everyone has access to the Word. Everyone is free to read it, study it. It's as open as anything can be. We were discussing earlier how the Bible is perhaps the most widely circulated and purchased book in all the world and certainly the least understood and perhaps the most seldom read of books that are purchased.

Now let's turn to Colossians 2. As we approach our Memorial Season and consider the

importance of the Lord's sacrifice in our behalf, I think it's appropriate that we consider the details concerning the Truth, its influence on our lives, what it really means to us. It's a very strong tendency to become numbed, as it were, by our own arrangement. We understand the plan, we study it over and over again until finally it's an ordinary thing and the words become just so much "stained glass oratory." We may perhaps miss the real and most important significance of each and every little word just as in the hymn we sang. Think just how important that first verse was, "My faith looks up to thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary." You see by faith we look up to him and we see what he has done for us, in our behalf. "Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away." Just think we can call upon him to take all our guilt away. All that has been inherited through Adam, we have a wonderful advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. "Oh let me from this day be wholly thine." One hundred percent thine.

Colossians 2:1-15: Now this is, of course, Paul exhorting them. "For I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea [Church at Laodicea, you remember that—now you know who we are talking about here as well] and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love [we're really knit together in love, aren't we? The one common bond, love for the Truth and the Lord—without which I doubt if there are any of us here who would chance to meet through experiences outside the Truth] and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, [Yes, we have the full assurance that we will receive an understanding of his plans and purposes] to the acknowledgement of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." We are able to acknowledge that we understand the Mystery of God. That we are a part of the Body of Christ. Just think how all encompassing that is. Can you think of anything, anything at all that is known in the way of knowledge or wisdom of any sort which is not traceable to those two sources, scientific or otherwise. It's his universe and his laws. There is nothing new to God, who created them all.

"And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." We should be in a position where we begin to feel these same things, shouldn't we? Do we find ourselves in our own meditations with our wives and other loved ones thinking of this or that Ecclesia, this or that brother and with great fondness in our hearts for their steadfastness in the Truth. If we find ourselves doing that, then we're beginning to develop the mind of Christ with the same kind of heart that Paul had in mind here. We're beginning to appreciate and joy with and suffer with those of like precious faith.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." I used to think how impossible that is. Here we call ourselves Christians, I thought, and that certainly meant to be a copy of Christ, but how could anybody follow in those perfect footsteps.

Can't be done—except in him. Only through faith in his sacrificing merit, confidence in his help on our behalf will we ever be able to follow in his footsteps.

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (To the extent that we do that, we will be able to) “Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Is there anyone here who knows anything concerning the Truth who has not been taught? Just think about it. There is hardly anything we know at all that someone hasn't had to teach us. None of us were born and as soon as we were able to hold a pencil, just started writing everything down. It just didn't come in here to start with. Someone had to teach us. It's the way of things. So we have been taught, established in the faith, and we've been rooted and built up in him. Now when you're really rooted, the winds may blow as they please and even break a branch or two and do all kinds of superficial injury, but if the roots go deep, they'll feed that trunk no matter what the damage and grow it will and continue abounding therein with thanksgiving. We should be ever thankful for what the Lord has provided for us. Think of the “*Studies in the Scriptures*.” How much of the scriptures would you know without those studies? I had the Bible before, but I didn't have the *Studies in the Scriptures* and I can tell you I understood very little, very very little. That's the way in which the Lord has arranged for us at this end of the age—that the Church of Laodicea should receive its instruction and surely we should be thankful for what we have received.

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of man and after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Philosophy can be a good thing as Brother Russell suggests—we should be philosophers so far as the truth is concerned, studying these as basic principles, but we must take care that we are not following philosophy in vain deceit—that we are not deceiving ourselves for our own vanity. We trust that no one is doing that, but we can see what a sorry lot it has left the world in—unable to accept their mistakes, unable to even face up to rudimentary problems nor to solve the things in this world for fear of having their own vanity injured in the slightest way. Think of what that alone has done to the world of mankind. We are not to go to the world for instruction. No, not to follow after the rudiments of the world but rather after Christ.

“For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the God bodily.” In the King James it reads, “godhead” but we understand that is “*Theotes*,” which means deity. “And ye are complete in him which is the head of all principality and power.” We are complete in him, aren't we. Take the Lord away and what will you be? Having embarked on this course, which of us will put down the oar which makes us go? Which of us will be blown by every wind of doctrine? We don't want that do we? No, we want to be steadfast, being complete in the Lord, and that alone, and suffering nothing else because he is the head of all principality and power.

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ,” Think of how important that is, “Ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.” All of the fleshly interests, all of the fleshly ambitions are really cut off, aren’t they? We live for Christ and Christ alone. This becomes a pre-eminent thing. We don’t make idols, as Bro. Newell mentioned, of the things in this world including our own selves and our own career. Instead we see that this is our one goal and our one hope. It’s the most important thing in our life. We have placed our entire life upon it. It is that important to us. So, we have circumcised, cut off all of those other fleshly interests. Put off the body of sins by this circumcision of Christ, and we’ve put on the robe of his righteousness, haven’t we?

“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” I think it is so important for us to realize the fundamental—that we are counted in as the body of Christ with him as the head. He is the one who will reign the thousand years. He is the one who is altogether lovely and righteous. He was the one who successfully proved himself, totally, and we are able to go along with him as the bride. We are able to participate in his afflictions. We are able to be baptized with him and to be risen with him, never by ourselves. Notice how emphatic all of that is. Therein lies the whole story of many difficulties which often times afflict the brethren concerning how some of these chronological features might work out. They really apply to the Lord. He’s the head, isn’t he? It’s like the man who after some 20 years married. His wife came out to live with him on the farm. Here he had all this wealth—now she had it, too. She had inherited it. It belonged to them now, because of him. When the neighbors came over to visit awhile, they said, “Well, how long have you been out here”? She said very delightedly, “We’ve been here for 20 years”? but she hadn’t, had she? No, they were just one flesh, weren’t they. They were one in this whole thing. All that he had she had inherited. What is the result of this?

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” That’s very difficult to do, isn’t it? To realize, to have the faith sufficient, just as the woman who touched the hem of his garment was made whole because of her faith. So we have to have faith sufficient to realize that through this circumcision of the flesh the robe of Christ’s righteousness and his quickening spirit all trespasses have been forgiven us. All those things behind us are gone and we start new and clean. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” (That was doubly true of the Jews, wasn’t it, who were, also, under the law at that particular time) “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

Here was this humble man, the carpenter’s son, can any good thing come from Nazareth,

accused of performing miraculous things even by the power of the devil? Finally to be crucified between two thieves, scourged by the religious leaders of the day, who proclaimed to be the proponents of the God he served, his own Heavenly Father. They accused him of blasphemy for even claiming that he was his Father. Now humbly brought before Pilate, he said that he came to bear witness unto the truth, and Pilate said, “What is truth”? Wondering why he had not made a defense for himself, Pilate said, “Don’t you realize that I have power over you?” Now think of ourselves in that same situation—we would be essentially almost bargaining for our lives, and Jesus turned to the Magistrate of the Roman Government and said, “Ye would have no power over me except that given unto you by my Father.”

Now let’s turn to I John 3:14. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” Think how important it is for us to love our brethren. Here it is said to be so important that we know that we have passed from death unto life because we do love them; and that if we don’t love our brethren, we are still dead—we are abiding in death, you might say. I think this is perhaps misunderstood more than we might realize. We must never confuse emotional affection with real love for our brethren. A mother will faithfully perform that which is necessary and helpful for her own children even though they don’t like it sometimes—that is really love, isn’t it? No one would accuse the parent of a lack of love. Discipline is a very important thing and so, if we love our brethren, we will do all that we can on their behalf. In doing, we will demonstrate that God’s love has come into our heart because we are able to pass it on to others and we will indeed love our brethren.

You know there is a very important sidelight here. If we’re busily engaged in helping our brethren, the very action of doing it will cause us to kind of ignore many of our own problems. I think we’ll find that our own problems are not really very important after all, and we’ll be so intent on helping them that many of the weaknesses of our own flesh will slowly pass away as we concentrate our efforts on others besides ourselves. Even so, often times we are pricked in the heart, aren’t we, because of our failure from time to time to do as we would like? “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” Think of that for a moment. Even though our heart condemns us because of what we have done, perhaps through some weakness, do we think for a moment that the Lord is not aware of that, that he didn’t realize that we were indeed but dust. He was aware of that, wasn’t he, and so he is greater than our heart, he knows all things? “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” As our confidence grows and we begin to trust more and more in him, we begin to see more and more the tremendous effect of the robe of Christ’s righteousness, which covers us and how tremendously important it is.

“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” That’s a very important text, isn’t it?

Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. That last half is the big IF, isn't it? We cannot expect to receive whatsoever we ask of him if we ask amiss, or if we are not keeping his commandments, can we expect the Lord to be pleased with us and to reward us? If we are not doing those things that are pleasing in his sight, we cannot expect the Lord to bless us and thereby encourage us in that conduct. Because that is what it would do. It's a natural human tendency whenever we receive a blessing in relation to something we do to accept it as a mark of approval—"Well, that's the way I should go." The Lord is anxious to bless us if we are proceeding in the right direction. "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment," and that means to love one another and help each other in this narrow way. It is a narrow, lonely and difficult way in which we travel. We need all the help we can get, and we have the most wonderful family with which to do it. Surely we must be able to extend a hand one to another.

"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." We have his Spirit, don't we, and we appreciate the love that is shown thereby? "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." So we do have to be exceptionally careful.

Now let's examine our Lord's own words again in John 15:12-16. It shows us both the narrowness of the way, the importance of it, and how we can best express it to each other. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." Jesus didn't always pat everyone on the back, did he? Quite often he had to rebuke his own apostles, he had to encourage them, he had to help them and he had to instruct them. That should be our course one towards another as we endeavor to serve one another. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That's what we would be doing as we help our brethren and it can be done in very, very humble ways. You'd be surprised what a simple letter can do, and Bro. Hugelman is standing up here somewhat condemned by that because I'm not the world's greatest letter writer, but I should be. A letter can be so helpful. We all love to receive them. It's a pity that my pencil always seems to be broken, but I'll strive to do better.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," and our Lord exemplified this, didn't he? "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." If we don't follow his commandments, then we will not be his friends. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." The Lord has instructed us, he now calls us friends—no longer servants. We can call the Son of God our elder brother. Now just think of that. He has instructed us. He has reminded us that if we were but servants, we would have no right to know the

inner workings of the Father's family; but because we do, we are no longer called servants "I've called you friends," and then he reminds us once again, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you..." That is a very difficult thing for us to accept sometimes when we witness to others and have opportunities come our way. We would like to choose this one, this one, or that one—we would have a class full of brethren of our own choosing which would really be a problem. The Lord knows better doesn't he? He says, That's alright. You just present the message, you present the Truth and that's all you need to do. I will do the choosing, he says, and aren't we glad of that, because those who are running for the prize of the high calling are in jeopardy of their eternal existence? Very serious matter, isn't it? Would we like to take the responsibility of placing one in that kind of a condition, subject to that? Aren't we glad we don't have to do that? We need but present the message and the Lord will do the choosing. He will know who is able and who is not able. He will know who he can select and who could have made good if they but would. We can never read that in the heart and we're glad that we don't have to.

Now just briefly, let's turn and compare the magnitude of our situation with other heroes of faith in the past. Hebrew 11: That is the right wording, isn't it? "other heroes of faith." Have you ever thought what it will be like in the mediatorial phase of the kingdom when the world of mankind says, "You know this sounds very familiar: I used to have a neighbor who would talk to me about things like this. Where is that person? Why, they were born in Zion." You'll be a hero of faith, won't you? It's hard to think of yourself as a hero perhaps, but that is the way it will be viewed by others. We want to be worthy of that, don't we? We are being made spectacles unto both men and angels, representatives of the Lord—his ambassadors. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report [speaking now of the ancient worthies]." "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." And that's quite true, isn't it? By faith we understand that the physical world we see about us was framed and made by unseen powers, invisible powers, things which do not appear.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Think of the volumes that speak. One of the very first heroes of faith that Paul brings to our attention. Abel in his offering of the lamb pictured our Lord's sacrifice, didn't he? and so it was a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and that lesson recorded in Genesis yet speaketh even though he is dead. His course and what he

had done still spoke volumes even at that time.

Then begins a complete listing of the heroes of faith of the past and the wonderful things they did. How faithful the ancient worthies were. “Of whom the world was not worthy, vs. 38, 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 [good report now] received not the promise.” In spite of it all, they did not receive the promise—not yet filled, “God having provided some better thing for us [church class] that they [ancient worthies] without us should not be made perfect.” Just think, it will be our privilege to be the instrument for the blessing of the whole world of mankind. It will be our privilege to be a part of the salvage crew that will bless and raise the ship which has been sunk since the days of Adam. The rights having been purchased by the Lord, the salvage crew, now almost complete, will soon begin the great work.

Now, as our time rushes on, we will turn to Hebrew 12:1-6. “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, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Think of the importance of those words in view of all of Chapter 11. Those heroes of faith of times past, all that they had done, and for what reason—for the privilege of just being able to serve the living God. Ours is a greater privilege. To receive the possible reward for the prize of the high calling. So, therefore, we should look at that cloud of witnesses and surely lay aside every weight and sin which so easily besets us.

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is 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.” The Lord was perfect, he didn’t deserve any of the scourging and the contradictions of sinners that befell him. When we are rebuked by neighbors or others we may talk to, can any of us say that we might not deserve it in some small measure? It would be hard for us to say that. We’re easily beset in that regard and tend to feel that maybe we didn’t deserve that, and so we begin to feel badly about it and our hearts begin to disturb us. We must at once go to the Throne of Grace and realize that the Lord understands and we are being judged according to our will and not according to our success. We should not be faint, should we? and we should not be surprised. Finally verse 4, “for ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” We’re still here. We’ve not finished our course. We’ve a long road yet ahead of us. We’ll need all the help we can get from the Lord and from his agencies, each of us. Yes, each of us is an agent of the Lord able to help one another.

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou are rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he

receiveth.” Were it not so, we would not see his hand over us and his scourging and his rebukes, which are by way of instruction. For if the Lord were not dealing with us, he would simply abandon us, let us go our own way and we would be lost. We are still being taught, instructed by his hand so we should see everyone of these scourging and chastenings as another indication that we’re still alive in the faith. We’re still alive and striving for the prize of the high calling. His hand is still over us, his love is still with us.

Now let us turn to Philippians 3 in closing. You all recall the text that is used so often and is so important. Paul had reminded them of the wonderful zeal associated with the truth and how it should motivate us. Verse 11, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, [Yes we should strive as hard as we can, suffer anything, endure anything in order to obtain unto the resurrection of the dead] not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Let us all press a little harder towards the mark for the prize of the high calling. “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the very crown of life.”

MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU ALL.