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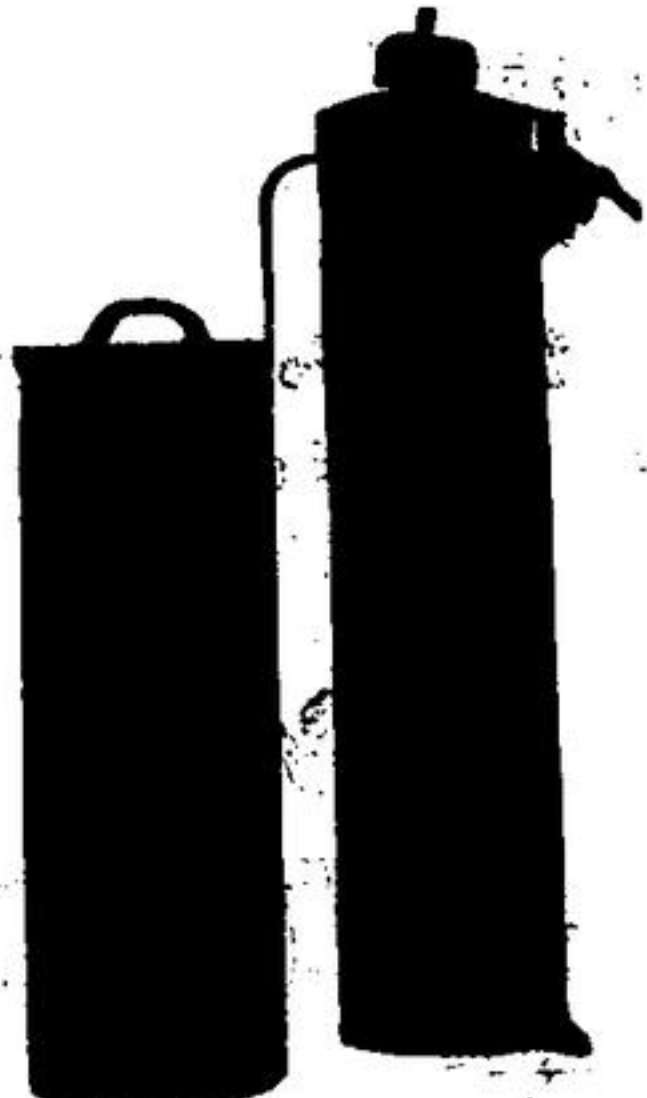
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**Sunday School Lesson**  
by Rev. R.O. Todd

THE ORNATIVE POWER of HEBREW  
LESSON: Heb. Chaps. 11 - 12.

The writer of Hebrews, in speaking of Faith, is not introducing a new principle of action into the world. Faith, as he points out by references to ancient times, and men like Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham is as old as the world itself, and as old as nature. He is applying this old principle to the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

In the general sense of faith, it is not the Christian alone who lives by faith. Faith is no imaginative or mystical thing which it is fanciful if not fanatical, to talk about. The school child who expects a reward to be earned by his good marks, or forfeited by failure, exercises faith in the expectation. The farmer who expects a harvest, and begins long months before by preparing the ground and sowing his seed, is exercising faith. The parent who anticipates the manhood of his little son and prepares for that distant maturity by instruction and discipline, is an example of walking by faith which only madmen and fools disparage or dispense with.

Hebrews 11:1 is of vital importance in understanding the New Testament conception of Faith. Dr. Moffatt translates it: "Faith means we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see." "Confidence" and "conviction" are two key words in thinking of the meaning of faith. The authorized version says: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Through old documents representing business and social correspondence of the first century which have been unearthed, we know now that the word translated "substance" means "title-deed," the legal document a man receives when he buys a house or a piece of property to assure him and others that it is his. We may therefore translate v.1 thus: "Faith is the title deed to things hoped for." Faith makes us sure that our hopes will be realized. But faith is more than that — it is "the evidence of things not seen" — the unseen world of spiritual things. It is the reality and power of the spiritual world which guarantees the triumph of those hopes which spring from God's revelation of Himself in Christ. And here we come into the realm of the Christian faith, which is based on Christ's person and work, the Revealer of God's purpose and will.

Hebrews 12:1 and 2, are the heart of this lesson. The writer is exhorting the Hebrews, who as we have seen in previous lessons are orthodox Jews who could be expected to know something about the "elders" mentioned in Heb. 11:1-8, to exercise faith similar to theirs, with respect to Jesus Christ, who "is the author and finisher of our faith."

Jesus is "the author of our faith." It is the same word as is translated "the Prince of Life" in the Acts of the Apostles, and, in another part of Hebrews, "the Captain of our salvation." He is the one who made a beginning of a new order of things in the world, the Captain of the great army of martyrs before us in Chapter 11, and of the "cloud of witnesses" of which the writer speaks in 12:1. He came first in order of time, yet, like great commanders, He rides in the centre of the march. He is the "finisher" or "perfector" "of our faith." In Him our weakness is made strength; His strength is perfected in our weakness. Jesus has begun the "way"; he is with his followers along the "way"; He himself is the "way" and He is the goal at the end of the "way."

Inseparably bound up with the "way" is the cross, which Jesus endured, in spite of the shame of it, because of the joy which was set before Him. We cannot ignore the shame, but the emphasis is upon the joy. What is the joy? It is the same joy which God had when after creating the world he looked upon it and saw that it was "good." And in the cross was the creative act the like of which the world has not seen before or since, for here was created reconciliation between holy God and sinful man. Here was made effective the salvation of a sinning world. And the joy of the Saviour in the midst of the agony of Calvary was akin to the joy which is "in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." The mention of Calvary leads the writer to the risen and glorified Christ who "is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." He has "finished" his work. He has reached the goal. He reigns and will reign until He puts all his enemies under his feet, yes, until man's last enemy shall fall, and man's salvation be perfected.

The salvation of our world was purchased there on Calvary. A world which today is hastening to destruction in spite of its inhabitants unwillingness to be destroyed, is in that position because it has rejected this salvation. Continued rejection and dishonour means most certain destruction. But the cross of Christ still stands, and the pierced hands are still outstretched to enfold the world in love. As Kipling put it: "Still stands thine ancient sacrifice An humble and a contrite heart." Lord God of hosts, be with us yet.

Let us forget — lest we forget!  
The Day of the Lord is at hand, repent ye and live.

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