

Heroes of Faith

MEMORY VERSE: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report” (Hebrews 11:1, 2).

“Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

Suggested Reading: *Gospel Workers*, pp. 258-263. (At the bottom of this page)

1. ABEL

Sunday, March 10

a. Why did God accept Abel and his offering? Hebrews 11:4.

Hebrews 11:4

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.

“Abel grasped the great principles of redemption. He saw himself a sinner, and he saw sin and its penalty, death, standing between his soul and communion with God. He brought the slain victim, the sacrificed life, thus acknowledging the claims of the law that had been transgressed. Through the shed blood he looked to the future sacrifice, Christ dying on the cross of Calvary; and trusting in the atonement that was there to be made, he had the witness that he was righteous, and his offering accepted.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 72.

b. Why did God reject Cain and his offering? Hebrews 9:22.

Hebrews 9:22

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

“Abel chose faith and obedience; Cain, unbelief and rebellion. Here the whole matter rested.

“Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other venture to

depend upon their own merits; theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation, and thus it is not able to bring man into favor with God. It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 72, 73.

2. NOAH

Monday, March 11

a. What is written about Noah? Genesis 6:8, 9, 22; Hebrews 11:7.

Genesis 6:8, 9, 22

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. **9** These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. **22** Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

Hebrews 11:7

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

“While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. All that he possessed, he invested in the ark. As he began to construct that immense boat on dry ground, multitudes came from every direction to see the strange sight and to hear the earnest, fervent words of the singular preacher. Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 95.

b. What comparison did Jesus give about these last days? Matthew 24:37–39.

Matthew 24:37-39

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. **38** For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, **39** And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

“The sins that called for vengeance upon the antediluvian world exist today. The fear of God is banished from the hearts of men, and His law is treated with indifference and contempt. The intense worldliness of that generation is equaled by that of the generation now living. . . . God did not condemn the antediluvians for eating and drinking; He had given them the fruits of the earth in great abundance to supply their physical wants. Their sin consisted in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver, and debasing themselves by indulging appetite without restraint. It was lawful for them to marry. Marriage was in God’s order; it was one of the first institutions which He established. He gave special directions concerning this ordinance, clothing it with sanctity and beauty; but these directions were forgotten, and marriage was perverted and made to minister to passion.

“A similar condition of things exists now. That which is lawful in itself is carried to excess. Appetite is indulged without restraint. Professed followers of Christ are today eating and drinking with the drunken, while their names stand in honored church

records. Intemperance benumbs the moral and spiritual powers and prepares the way for indulgence of the lower passions. Multitudes feel under no moral obligation to curb their sensual desires, and they become the slaves of lust. Men are living for the pleasures of sense; for this world and this life alone. Extravagance pervades all circles of society. Integrity is sacrificed for luxury and display. They that make haste to be rich pervert justice and oppress the poor, and ‘slaves and souls of men’ are still bought and sold. Fraud and bribery and theft stalk unrebuked in high places and in low. The issues of the press teem with records of murder—crimes so cold-blooded and causeless that it seems as though every instinct of humanity were blotted out.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 101, 102.

3. JACOB

Tuesday, March 12

a. What terrible sin made a dark stain on Jacob's experience? Genesis 25:29–33; 27:18–24.

Genesis 25:29-33

And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: **30** And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. **31** And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. **32** And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? **33** And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

Genesis 27:18-24

And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? **19** And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. **20** And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me. **21** And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. **22** And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. **23** And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. **24** And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am.

“Jacob and Rebekah succeeded in their purpose, but they gained only trouble and sorrow by their deception. God had declared that Jacob should receive the birthright, and His word would have been fulfilled in His own time had they waited in faith for Him to work for them. But like many who now profess to be children of God, they were unwilling to leave the matter in His hands. Rebekah bitterly repented the wrong counsel she had given her son; it was the means of separating him from her, and she never saw his face again. From the hour when he received the birthright, Jacob was weighed down with self-condemnation. He had sinned against his father, his brother, his own soul, and against God. In one short hour he had made work for a lifelong repentance. This scene was vivid before him in afteryears, when the wicked course of his sons oppressed his soul.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 180.

b. When was Jacob fully forgiven and justified? Genesis 32:24–31.

Genesis 32:24-31

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. **25** And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. **26** And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. **27** And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. **28** And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. **29** And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. **30** And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. **31** And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

“With earnest cries and tears [Jacob] made his prayer before God. Suddenly a strong hand was laid upon him. . . . While he was thus battling for his life, the sense of his guilt pressed upon his soul; his sins rose up before him, to shut him out from God. But in his terrible extremity he remembered God’s promises, and his whole heart went out in entreaty for His mercy. . . . It was Christ, ‘the Angel of the covenant,’ who had revealed Himself to Jacob. The patriarch was now disabled and suffering the keenest pain, but he would not loosen his hold. All penitent and broken, he clung to the Angel; ‘he wept, and made supplication’ (Hosea 12:4), pleading for a blessing. He must have the assurance that his sin was pardoned. Physical pain was not sufficient to divert his mind from this object. His determination grew stronger, his faith more earnest and persevering, until the very last. The Angel tried to release Himself; He urged, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaketh;’ but Jacob answered, ‘I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.’ Had this been a boastful, presumptuous confidence, Jacob would have been instantly destroyed; but his was the assurance of one who confesses his own unworthiness, yet trusts the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God.

“Jacob ‘had power over the Angel, and prevailed’ Hosea 12:4. Through humiliation, repentance, and self-surrender, this sinful, erring mortal prevailed with the Majesty of heaven. He had fastened his trembling grasp upon the promises of God, and the heart of Infinite Love could not turn away the sinner’s plea.”—*Ibid.*, p. 197.

4. SAMSON

Wednesday, March 13

a. Explain God’s plan for Samson. Judges 13:4, 5.

Judges 13:4-5

Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: **5** For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

“To the childless wife of Manoah ‘the Angel of Jehovah’ appeared with the message that she should have a son, through whom God would begin to deliver Israel. In view of this the Angel gave her instruction concerning her own habits, and also for the treatment of her child. . . . And the same prohibition was to be imposed, from the

first, upon the child, with the addition that his hair should not be cut; for he was to be consecrated to God as a Nazarite.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 560.

b. How are we warned by the first great mistake of Samson? Judges 14:1–3.

Judges 14:1-3

And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. **2** And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. **3** Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

“Just as he was entering upon manhood, the time when he must execute his divine mission—the time above all others when he should have been true to God—Samson connected himself with the enemies of Israel. He did not ask whether he could better glorify God when united with the object of his choice, or whether he was placing himself in a position where he could not fulfill the purpose to be accomplished by his life. To all who seek first to honor Him, God has promised wisdom; but there is no promise to those who are bent upon self-pleasing.”—*Ibid.*, p. 563.

“Many mistake strong passions for a strong character, but the truth is that he who is mastered by his passions is a weak man. The real greatness of the man is measured by the power of the feelings that he controls, not by those that control him. . . .

“Those who in the way of duty are brought into trial may be sure that God will preserve them; but if men willfully place themselves under the power of temptation, they will fall, sooner or later.

“The very ones whom God purposes to use as His instruments for a special work, Satan employs his utmost power to lead astray. He attacks us at our weak points, working through defects in the character to gain control of the whole man; and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 567, 568.

c. After being unfaithful to his vow, what happened to Samson? Judges 16:4, 21. How deeply did he repent of his sins? Judges 16:22, 28–30; Hebrews 11:32.

Judges 16:4

And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

Judges 16:21

But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

Judges 16:22

Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

Judges 16:28-30

And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the

Philistines for my two eyes. **29** And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. **30** And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

Hebrews 11:32

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

“In suffering and humiliation, a sport for the Philistines, Samson learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 136.

5. JOSEPH

Thursday, March 14

a. What mistakes did Joseph and his father Jacob commit with regarding to the rest of the sons? Genesis 37:2, 3. Through their hatred against Joseph, what did his brothers do to him? Genesis 37:28–36.

Genesis 37:2-3

These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

Genesis 37:28-36

Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. **29** And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. **30** And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? **31** And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; **32** And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. **33** And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. **34** And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. **35** And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. **36** And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

“[Jacob’s] affection was to become a cause of trouble and sorrow. Jacob unwisely manifested his preference for Joseph, and this excited the jealousy of his other sons. As Joseph witnessed the evil conduct of his brothers, he was greatly troubled; he ventured gently to remonstrate with them, but only aroused still further their hatred and

resentment. He could not endure to see them sinning against God, and he laid the matter before his father, hoping that his authority might lead them to reform.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 209.

“To become a slave was a fate more to be feared than death. In an agony of terror [Joseph] appealed to one and another of his brothers, but in vain. . . . Steeling their hearts against his entreaties, they delivered him into the hands of the heathen traders.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 211, 212.

b. How did God change the fate of Joseph? Romans 8:28; Genesis 45:4–8.

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Genesis 45:4-8

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. **5** Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. **6** For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. **7** And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. **8** So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

“The life of Joseph illustrates the life of Christ. . . .

“Joseph, through his bondage in Egypt, became a savior to his father’s family; yet this fact did not lessen the guilt of his brothers. So the crucifixion of Christ by His enemies made Him the Redeemer of mankind, the Saviour of the fallen race, and Ruler over the whole world; but the crime of His murderers was just as heinous as though God’s providential hand had not controlled events for His own glory and the good of man.”—*Ibid.*, p. 239.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Friday, March 15

- 1. How can we follow in the spiritual path of Abel rather than Cain?**
- 2. What would reveal us to be Christians in the path of Noah?**
- 3. Explain the key to Jacob’s victory despite his great sin.**
- 4. How can parents guide their children to avoid Samson’s downfall?**
- 5. Why can we be encouraged by God’s working in the life of Jacob?**

Suggested Reading: Gospel Workers, pp. 258-263.

The greatest victories gained for the cause of God are not the result of labored argument, ample facilities, wide influence, or abundance of means; they are gained in

the audience chamber with God, when with earnest, agonizing faith men lay hold upon the mighty arm of power. **(GW 259.1)**

True faith and true prayer—how strong they are! They are as two arms by which the human suppliant lays hold upon the power of Infinite Love. Faith is trusting in God,—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessings. Truth, uprightness, purity, are pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these. Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency. **(GW 259.2)**

“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,” 1 John 5:4. It is faith that enables us to look beyond the present, with its burdens and cares, to the great hereafter, where all that now perplexes us shall be made plain. Faith sees Jesus standing as our Mediator at the right hand of God. Faith beholds the mansions that Christ has gone to prepare for those who love Him. Faith sees the robe and crown prepared for the overcomer, and hears the song of the redeemed. **(GW 259.3)**

Perfect faith, the surrender of self to God, simple trust in His pledged word, should be a part of every minister's experience. Only as a minister has this experience can he make the subject of faith plain to the doubting and distrustful. **(GW 260.1)**

Faith is not feeling. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1. True faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption, for presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith. **(GW 260.2)**

Faith claims God's promises and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequences of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures. **(GW 260.3)**

To talk of religion in a casual way, to pray without soul-hunger and living faith, avails nothing. A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith, cannot receive blessing from God. **(GW 260.4)**

It is not enough to believe *about* Christ; we must believe *in* Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. But saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine

faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power. **(GW 261.1)**

Unbelief and Doubt

Faith takes God at His word, not asking to understand the meaning of the trying experiences that come. But there are many who have little faith. They are always fearing and borrowing trouble. Every day they are surrounded by the tokens of God's love, every day they enjoy the bounties of His providence; but they overlook these blessings. And the difficulties they encounter, instead of driving them to God, separate them from Him, by arousing unrest and repining. **(GW 261.2)**

Do they well to be thus unbelieving? Jesus is their friend. All heaven is interested in their welfare, and their fear and repining grieve the Holy Spirit. Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust His promises. When we come to Him in faith, we should believe that every petition enters into the heart of Christ. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we have it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be sent when we need it most. When we have learned to do this, we shall know that our prayers are answered. God will do for us "exceeding abundantly," "according to the riches of His glory," and "the working of His mighty power." Ephesians 3:20, 16, 19. **(GW 261.3)**

Often the Christian life is beset with dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before, and bondage and death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, "Go forward." Let us obey the command, even though our sight cannot penetrate the darkness. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every uncertainty disappears, and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey. Faith looks beyond the difficulties, and lays hold of the unseen, even Omnipotence, therefore it cannot be baffled. Faith is the clasping of the hand of Christ in every emergency. **(GW 262.1)**

The worker for God needs strong faith. Appearances may seem forbidding; but in the darkest hour there is light beyond. The strength of those who, in faith, love and serve God, will be renewed day by day. The understanding of the Infinite is placed at their service, that in carrying out His purposes they may not err. Let these workers hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end, remembering that the light of God's truth is to shine amid the darkness that enshrouds our world. **(GW 262.2)**

There is to be no despondency in connection with God's service. The faith of the consecrated worker is to stand every test brought upon it. God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need, and to give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand. He will more than fulfil the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. **(GW 262.3)**

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our

perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Psalm 72:12. **(GW 263.1)**

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isaiah 26:3. The arm of Omnipotence is outstretched to lead us onward and still onward. Go forward, the Lord says; I will send you help. It is for My name's glory that you ask; and you shall receive. Those who are watching for your failure shall yet see My word triumph gloriously. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matthew 21:22. **(GW 263.2)**

God never leaves the world without men who can discern between good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness. He has men whom He has appointed to stand in the forefront of the battle in times of emergency. **(GW 263.3)**