

REMEMBER & HONOR THOSE WHO ARE GONE... THEY STILL SPEAK

Hebrews 11:1-6

INTRODUCTION: Since this is the season of Memorial Day, we must not forget there are some who are gone that still speak to us; they speak to us of some vital things about God that ought to stand out to His people.

NOTE – A church had a bulletin board decorated with pictures of soldiers who had been killed in service to their country. The board was trimmed in red, white and blue and had little flags on it. A little boy was looking up at the board when the pastor came up. He asked the little boy how he liked the board. The boy asked what it was about. The pastor explained that the pictures were the men from their church who had died in the service. The little boy said, "The morning service or the evening service?"

Turn to Hebrews chapter 11. This chapter is known as the "**Hall of Faith**" and it honors those who set a great example of faith for us to follow. The first person in the Bible to die was Abel. Verse 4 says that though he is dead he still speaks. I think that is true of any person of faith. Their death is not the end of them. They still speak through their influence. Five attributes of their faith I want us to see:

I. They Understood the Words of Faith.

FAITH / SUBSTANCE / EVIDENCE

A. A Definition of Faith (11:1)

- Bro. Lester Roloff often spoke about "**NOW** Faith..."
- Vance Havner said, "**When faith is a reality, people see the invisible, choose the imperishable, and do the impossible.**"

B. A Definition of Substance (11:1)

"**Substance**" means faith grasps God's promises and brings them right into the present moment of our experience. Faith is the act of grabbing hold of that which has substance. Faith is not uncertain. Faith and its basis—the promises of God—have as much substance and reality as this book you are holding in your hands.

C. A Definition of Evidence (11:1)

Faith is "**the evidence of things not seen.**" We live most of our Christian lives on the basis of things we have never encountered with our senses. Faith doesn't act on the basis of what is revealed to the 5 senses—touch, taste, sight, smell, and hearing. It doesn't ignore them; living in an out-of-touch world; but it doesn't base its decisions on them. Faith is based on what God says, not on what our senses discern. We haven't touched the Lord Jesus or spoken to the prophets. And yet this shouldn't be a detriment to our faith.

1 Peter 1:8-9 "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

II. They Began a Walk of Faith.

Examples:

Abraham – Verse 8. Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. Abraham speaks to us today saying, "When God calls, GO."

He also says, "When tests come, trust" (v.17 offering Isaac).

Moses – Verse 29. Moses led the children of Israel through the Red Sea. Moses speaks to us today saying, "Against overwhelming odds move forward."

Joshua – Verse 30. Joshua marched the army of Israel around Jericho 7 times.

Joshua speaks to us today saying, "When it doesn't make sense, keep going."

III. They Accomplished Works of Faith.

Illus: A bus load of politicians was driving down a country road when, all of a sudden, the bus ran off the road and crashed into a tree in an old farmer's field.

The old farmer, after seeing what happened, went over to investigate. He then proceeded to dig a hole and bury the politicians.

A few days later, the local sheriff came out, saw the crashed bus and asked the old farmer where all the politicians had gone.

The old farmer said he had buried them.

The sheriff asked the old farmer, "The coroner wasn't here. Are you sure they were all dead?"

The old farmer replied, "Well, some of them said they weren't, but you know how them politicians lie!"

Examples:

Noah – Verse 7. He built an ark.

Noah says to us today, "Though it is hard work and may take a lifetime (600 years) keep working." (Ark symbolic of the church)

Rahab – Verse 31. She hid and protected the spies.

Rahab speaks to us today and says, "Even though it involves great risk, side with God." (Joshua 2)

Others – Verses 32-34. These speak to us today saying, "Every victory in life, every accomplishment is given to us by grace through faith."

IV. They Endured the Wants of Faith.

Illus: Los Angeles Dodger's manager, Tommy Lasorda, describes his battle with bad habits:

- "I took a pack of cigarettes from my pocket, stared at it and said, 'Who's stronger, you or me?' The answer was me. I stopped smoking.
- "Then I took a vodka martini and said to it, 'Who's stronger, you or me?' Again the answer was me. I quit drinking.
- "Then I went on a diet. I looked at a big plate of linguine with clam sauce and said, 'Who's stronger, you or me?' And a little clam looked up at me and answered, 'I am.' I can't beat linguine."

Examples: **Nameless others** – verses 35-38

They speak to us saying, "When life goes bad don't give up. There is a better life coming." They didn't receive the promise but saw it from afar, verse 39, 13.

Illus: J. H. Goldner wrote, "The prevailing tendency in the present-day church is to make religion too easy. It is kept within the realm of convenience and comfort. Rarely is there a call for real sacrifice. By means of suppers and sales, people are tricked into giving. Through entertainment and other alluring programs, an effort is made to inject a little religion into the unsuspecting. And when people have come into the church, the greatest care is exercised to spare them, so that only a minimum of anything is asked of them."

You might be interested to know that J. H. Goldner wrote these words about the church in 1926. I wonder what he would say about the modern day church?

Illus. Stephen in Acts 7:55-56

V. They've Become Our Witnesses of Faith (12:1).

There's a gallery of witnesses watching us, pulling for us. They along with the Trinity and the angelic hosts cheer us on. We should draw strength from these witnesses.

Conclusion:

A man fell off a cliff but managed to grab a small branch sticking out from the side of the cliff. He shouts, "Is anyone up there?"

"I am here, I am the Lord. Do you believe in me?" came the reply.

"Yes, Lord I believe. I really believe, but I can't hold on much longer."

"Don't worry, I will save you, just let go of the branch."

A pause, then the man shouts, "Is there anyone else up there?"

During this season of remembering, we have great reason to hold fast in faith. The War on Terror is being waged valiantly by our troops in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places.

There is a great "cloud of witnesses" cheering us on. They still speak. Some of these are fathers, grandfathers, husbands and children who have given their lives to protect our freedom. And, beyond this, there is the Heavenly Father who helps us in this just cause.

