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W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

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THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
NUMBER 87
HEBREWS 11:1-3

Dr. W. O. Vaught
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

We have waited a long time to get to this mountaintop chapter of Hebrews. The last verses of Hebrews ten have prepared us for this eleventh chapter. That closing verse in Hebrews 10 says this--"For we are not the retreating type designed for the purpose of destruction (Which is the sin unto death) but we are the doctrinal type designed for the purpose of doctrinal possession of the soul."

A Misunderstood Chapter

Through all the ages the Christian world has pointed to this chapter and have referred to this chapter as "The Heroes Of Faith." The emphasis has been placed on the great faith of these super grace heroes in Hebrews 11. Taking this idea from Hebrews 11, people have gone out into the world and have tried to copy these people by showing a similar kind of faith in their living. But the important thing in this chapter is not the great faith of these people mentioned, but rather is the great power of God exemplified in their lives by means of doctrine translated into every day living. So this is a chapter on the greatness of God rather than the greatness of people.

The Importance of Bible Doctrine

In verses 1-3 of Hebrews 11 we have an introductory paragraph on the great importance of doctrine. This theme will be continued in Hebrews 12, and all the rest in Hebrews 11 is a parenthesis to illustrate this truth. These super grace heroes in Hebrews 11 became great because of the power of the Word of God working in them. Therefore, this is God's achievement and not man's achievement. These people in Hebrews 11 are the handiwork of God.

Outline Of Hebrews 11

Verses 1-3--The importance of Bible Doctrine
Verses 4-7--The Age of the Gentiles
Verses 8-22--The Age of the Patriarchs
Verses 23-38--The Age of the Law
Verses 39-40--Difference between the Old Testament and New Testament Super Grace Heroes.

Two Dying Commands

Christ's dying command was to teach doctrine. (Matt. 28:19-20)
Peter's dying command was to take in doctrine. (2 Peter 1:12-21)

HEBREWS 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We begin with the particle de which connects this verse with verse 39 of chapter 10. It should be translated "In fact." The word "faith" is from pistis and means "that which is believed from Scripture" and this means doctrine. This word pistis has three meanings.

1. That which causes faith and trust--faithfulness, reliability, proof, or pledge.
2. Faith in the active sense of believing--faith, confidence, trust
3. That which is believed--Doctrine. And this is the meaning here. All through this chapter every time you have the word "faith" it refers to "that which is believed on the basis of Scripture."

Back in chapter 10 we ended with the admonition "Don't throw away doctrine as trash." The accomplishments attributed to these great heroes in Hebrews 11 are actually accomplishments of God, not man. So if you really want to know how great God is, then understand Hebrews 11. So we are not the retreating type, we don't throw doctrine away. We are going to live by doctrine.

So in this first verse we begin with the phrase "In fact faith (what is believed, and this is doctrine) is." This "is" is the present, active, indicative of eimi and it means it always has been and is now and always will be. So this verse is not a definition of faith but is rather a verse emphasizing the great importance of doctrine.

Next we have the word "substance" from hypostasis and it really means confidence, assurance. So thus far, we have, "In fact, doctrine is the reality, the confidence, the assurance." So we have the expression, "In fact, doctrine is the reality." This is the only safe reality in the Christian's life. So there is no excuse for not taking in doctrine (In the military when a soldier makes a mistake and is brought up before his superior he says, "No excuse, sir!" That's what we are to say about taking in doctrine, "No excuse, sir!")

When you turn from doctrine, then you admit that there is something more real to you than doctrine.

Next we have the phrase "of things hoped for" and this is the ablative plural of the present, active, participle of elpizo and this means to receive confidence. This is an ablative of source. So it should be translated "from which we receive confidence." So thus far we have this--"IN FACT, DOCTRINE IS THE REALITY FROM WHICH WE KEEP ON RECEIVING CONFIDENCE." The way this verse reads here you would think they achieved these things through their own personal faith. That is not it at all. It wasn't their personal faith that accomplished these things, but rather it was the work of God and God did this work in and through them by using doctrinal truth whereby to change and shape their lives. So it was not what they did that was important, but rather what God was able to do in them. This is our permanent reality. This is where we really live. This is the center of our affection. We drive down permanent stakes here and this is our real holy of holies. Our real spiritual food is Bible Doctrine.

The next word is "the evidence" and this is from elegchos and it means proof. It means persuasion with the view toward convincing a person. Doctrine is proof of evidence. It proves the reality of Christ and of the reality of his being seated at God's right hand. It is proof of his plan for us. God the Holy Spirit is the source of our power and this is real. There is no spiritual reality in victorious life conferences, in going out and making a vow or a dedication. Bible Doctrine is the reality of the plan of God, the reality of the Trinity, and the reality of our objective. IF GOD IS EVER TO BECOME REAL TO YOU, IT WILL BE THROUGH DOCTRINE.

Next we have the word "things" and it is from pragma and means events, matters. The sentence ends with the present, passive, participle of blepo and has the negative ouk so it means "Not being seen."

Correct Translation Of This Verse

"In fact, doctrine is the reality from which we keep on receiving confidence, reality, the proof of matters not being seen." Doctrine is more real than anything in life. So this verse is just a continuation of Hebrews 10:39. This verse says, "But we are not the retreating

type of believers, designed for the purpose of destruction (Sin unto death) but we are the doctrinal type of believers designed for the purpose of the doctrinal possession of the soul."

Three Principles Emerge Right Here

1. The more doctrine we learn, the more real are the unseen super grace blessings designed from eternity past.
2. The more doctrine we learn the more real becomes the Lord Jesus Christ. "We see Him who is invisible."
3. The more doctrine we learn the more real becomes the plan of God and the essence of God and the character of God which stands behind that plan.

HEBREWS 11:2 "For by it the elders obtained a good report." We begin with the explanatory use of gar and it means "for." Now how was doctrine related to the people of the Old Testament? He is going to tell us right here. Next we have en houtos and this is translated "by it" and it refers to something that is close at hand and that "it" is doctrine. "For by means of (doctrine)." Next we have the words "the elders" and this is from presbuteros and here it really means "men of old" or "ancient people." It refers to these super-grace heroes mentioned in this chapter. The next word is "obtained" and this is the aorist, passive, indicative of martureo. In the passive voice, this word means to be well spoken of, to be approved. This passive voice means they received divine approval. So thus far we have, "For by means of doctrine these men of old received approval."

Three Principles Emerge Here

1. The gaining of divine approval is the entrance into the super grace life. Men of old, these ancient people, were able to reach super-grace without having this doctrine in writing as we have it today. Now they began to have it in writing with the time of Moses, but their written Scripture was limited. They submitted themselves to the discipline of being taught by angels, and by prophets, and often Jesus Christ taught them. Enoch and Noah both communicated doctrine.
2. If these ancients could take the high ground to the super-grace life without the aid of Scripture, what should we be able to do when we have the written Scripture? There is absolutely no excuse for us not to reach this super-grace status.
3. Perseverance is always the key. They followed the paths that were open to them and they clung to the truth and the truth made them free.

HEBREWS 11:3 "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." Now we have the emphasis on the importance of Bible Doctrine in understanding history. We begin with the words "Through doctrine" and this is the instrumental of means of the word pistis so it means "By means of doctrine." Next we have the present, active, indicative of noeo and it means "we perceive." We have learned something and now we know it. We learn doctrine and it unlocks for us the meaning of history. Thus far this verse has said, "By means of doctrine, we have come to know, we understand."

The Ages of history

The word "worlds" is a mistranslation. The word is aion and aion means ages, dispensations, eras of history according to the mind of God. Next we have the words "were formed" and this is the perfect, passive, infinitive of katartizo and means to put in order, to put together, to arrange. So it says, "That the ages, the dispensations have been put together, have been arranged." This passive voice means that the dispensations have received being put together by God. THIS MEANS THAT GOD IS CONTROLLING HISTORY. History will never get out of the hand of God.

Importance of The Word

The next word we have is "by the word of God" and the word for "word" is rema and rema means planning, it means the perfect plan of God from eternity past. This actually is referring to the divine decrees of God that were set and fixed before the foundation of the world. The word for God is THEOS and is the ablative of source and it means from the ultimate source of God.

Correct Translation

"By means of doctrine we learn (we have come to know) that the dispensations have been put together by the eternal decrees of God..." The next words "so that things which are seen" come from the present, passive, participle of blepo and it means "what is being seen." So, it says "with the result of what is being seen."

God's Great Protection

God caters to his Royal Family and he will not let the world fall apart until his believers are all in the body of Christ. The Communists haven't taken the world and never will. God controls history. Therefore, the events of history never get out of his hands. Next we have "were not made" and this is the perfect, active, infinitive of ginomai plus the negative me and it means "has not come to pass." Therefore, this means that the events of history actually fall into the hands of the positive volition of God's children. Believers devoted to Bible Doctrine actually are God's instruments in controlling history. Next we have "of things which do appear" and this is ek plus the present, passive, participle of phaino and means "from the things which are visible." This whole verse says, "By means of doctrine, we learn (have come to know) that the dispensations have been put together by the decrees from God; with the result that what is being seen in history has not come to pass from that which is visible in history."

The Hidden Force

This is actually very important to us. The positive volition people, the people who take God at his Word and take in doctrine, these are the people who are the determining forces in God's plan. Doctrine and the positive volition of believers is the force which holds the universe together. The unseen power of Christian devotion is amazing and unbelievable.

Right forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne;
Yet that scaffold sways the future
And behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadows
Keeping watch above his own.

THE DOCTRINE CONCERNING GOD'S DISPENSATIONAL PLAN1. THE DOCTRINE OF DISPENSATIONS.

Dispensations teach us that history is in the hands of God and never gets out of his control. People and life and circumstances get out of control but never out from under God's control. Even though history occurs in the Devil's world, the events of history are shaped by God. God had the good sense to know in advance every event that is coming in all history. No event or happening in history has ever caught God off guard. He knew about all of it millions of years ago. God made plans for controlling human history without violating or disregarding human volition. Free will is still the issue in this stage of human volition. Therefore, our ability to understand and properly evaluate history depends on our ability to understand and know doctrine. Bible Doctrine resident in the soul is the basis of correctly evaluating our own spiritual advance and our personal relationship to history.

2. DISPENSATIONS ARE PLANNED BY GOD.

The word aion is very important in this message. It does not mean "worlds" as translated here, but it rather means periods of history as planned by God, such as the Age of the Gentiles, the Age of Israel, the Church Age, the Tribulation, the Millennial Reigh of Christ, and Eternity. These are God's dispensations.

Correct Translation Of Hebrews 11:1-3

"In fact doctrine is the reality from which we keep receiving confidence, the proof of matters not being seen. For by means of doctrine men of old gained approval (they reached super grace). By means of doctrine we came to understand that the ages (the dispensations) have been put together by the decree from God with the result that what is being seen has not come to pass from what is visible."

THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE1. DEFINITION.

Bible Doctrine is the content of the Canon of Scripture, with emphasis on the communication of that content through instruction. Bible truth must be communicated on the basis of exegesis of Scripture, classification of doctrine, analysis and interpretation. Since the Bible is The Mind of Christ, it must be communicated by authorized personnel. Prophets, the Levitical Priesthood, then apostles and now Pastor-teachers.

2. HIS DYING LEGACY.

In his dying legacy, Christ made doctrine the spiritual legacy of the members of the Royal Family. Psalm 31:5 is quoted in Luke 23:46. Jesus said, "For you have delivered me, O Jehovah, God of Doctrine." Jesus went to the cross because of doctrine and he was delivered because of doctrine. He left doctrine to us as the content of our message.

3. HIS LEGACY IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES.
Psalm 138:2 "Toward thy holy temple" is a reference to heaven. No temple had been built down here by that time. He says, "You have magnified your teaching above your person." God took all the positive volitions of all the believers and weaves them into one great rope by which he holds the world under his control.
4. BIBLE DOCTRINE BEFORE MAN
Doctrine existed before the human race existed. Bible Doctrine was with God in eternity past. (Proverbs 8)
5. ATTITUDE TOWARD DOCTRINE OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE.
Your attitude determines whether you are blessed or disciplined. (Proverbs 8:33-36)
"Heed instruction of doctrine and be wise and do not neglect it."
"Happiness to the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates (place of assembly) waiting at the doors to get in. (Positive volition) Verse 35 "For he who finds me (doctrine) finds capacity for life and obtains super grace from the Lord. Verse 36 "But he who sins against me injures himself. All those who hate me (doctrine) love death. (The sin unto death)
6. DOCTRINE AND BLESSINGS.
Therefore doctrine is the basis for the distribution of super grace blessings. But it must be doctrine resident in the soul. (Isaiah 53:12) This is a prophecy looking forward to the cross.
7. BIBLE DOCTRINE MORE REAL THAN EMPIRICISM (Knowledge by the senses)
If there is any conflict between Bible Doctrine and what you see or taste or smell or feel, then doubt what you see and hear and believe doctrine. In 2 Peter 1:12-21 Peter says that doctrine is more reliable than anything you see.
8. BIBLE DOCTRINE VINDICATES THE PLAN OF GOD. (Isaiah 53:10)
"And the plan of God shall prosper in his hand." Also Romans 3:4 "It stands written, that you might become vindicated by means of your doctrine and that you might become victorious when you are being maligned."
9. LACK OF DOCTRINE DESTROYS A NATION.
(Hebrews 11:4 and Hosea 4:1-6)
10. THE COMMUNICATOR OF DOCTRINE IN THE CHURCH AGE IS THE PASTOR-TEACHER. (Eph. 4:11-13, Col. 1:25-29, Heb. 13:7 and 17)
11. DOCTRINE STABILIZES ALL OF LIFE.