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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson XI.—Second Quarter,
For June 13, 1909.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Heb. xi, 1-3, 17-29. Memory Verses 24, 25—Golden Text, Heb. xi, 1—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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The word "faith" being used twenty-four times in this chapter, we may call it the great "faith" chapter, as Rev. iv is the great "throne" chapter, the word being used fourteen times, and I Kings, xiii, the "man of God" chapter, the phrase being used fifteen times. We sometimes thus obtain from a word or phrase the key to the portion we are reading or studying. The word "believe," used over ninety times in John's gospel, helps us to understand John xx, 31. In a recent lesson we had an Old Testament saying used three times in the New, and now we have another. "The just shall live by faith" is first found in Hab. ii, 4, and is quoted in Rom. i, 17; Gal. iii, 11; Heb. x, 38, and probably, as some think, each time with a different emphasis. When we remember how our Lord was refreshed by the great faith of two gentiles and how He repeatedly reproved His disciples for their lack of faith, we can see at least one way in which we can please Him or grieve Him. One has well said:

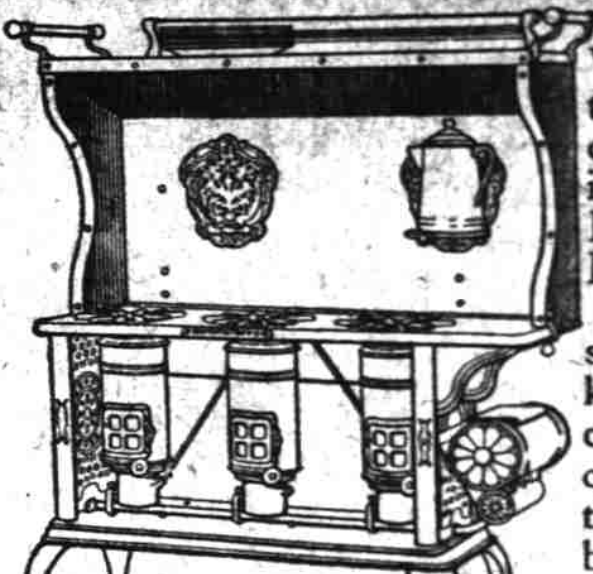
Faith is not what we see or feel, but is a simple trust
In what the God of love hath said of Jesus as the just.

By faith we look at things not seen and are thus lifted above the things we see. The true believer walks by faith and not by sight. Believing Gen. i and Ps. xxxiii, 6, 7, we know how the worlds were made. Some want to understand in order to believe, but verse 3 says that we must believe in order to understand. The world says "Seeing is believing," but Jesus said that if we believe we shall see (John xi, 40). We must hold fast that the way to understand is to believe and that without faith it is impossible to please God (verses 3, 6). In the first half of our chapter we have faith illustrated in seven men from the book of Genesis, five of whom were mentioned by name by the Lord Jesus. He thus indorsing their record. Dr. Saphir says that in the first three we have the sacrifice of faith, the walk of faith and the obedience of faith. The first is of necessity sacrifice, for unless we have the forgiveness of sins by the shedding of blood there can be no fellowship and no works of faith or labor of love. Abel could not offer a sacrifice of faith unless he had some word of God to guide him, for faith cometh by hearing the word of God (Rom. x, 17).

That word was spoken by word or deed, or perhaps both, when the transaction of Gen. iii, 21, occurred, and Adam must have instructed his children that there could be no access to God but by sacrifice. Cain brought the best he had, but there was no shedding of blood. He was disobedient and therefore not accepted. There is only one way to God, and all other ways are the way of Cain—that is, of the devil (Judg. ii; I John iii, 12). Being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, it is our privilege to walk with God as Enoch did, or as it is written of Levi, "He walked with me in peace and equity and did turn many away from iniquity." We cannot walk with God as He would like us to unless we are agreed with Him about everything, but if we are simple, whole hearted believers He will dwell in us and walk in us, and we may have the consciousness of pleasing Him. The question with us should never be, Is there any harm in this? but rather, Will this please Him who has taken up His abode in me? As Enoch and Elijah were taken to glory without dying, so will all believers who shall be alive on the earth when Jesus comes. It may be our privilege, for the end of this age is surely upon us. If, like Noah, we believe things not seen as yet, our deeds will be a reproof to the world lying in the wicked one, and we will both preach and live righteousness (II Pet. ii, 5) as Noah did.
If we believe as Abraham did we will look for the same city for which he looked, and rejoicing in that citizenship, we will live as strangers and pilgrims here. We will not consider ourselves or our circumstances, but be fully persuaded that what God has promised He is able to perform (Rom. iv, 21). Isaac, Jacob and Joseph all lived in the assurance of things to come (verse 20). Moses had such respect unto the recompense of the reward that the prospect of power and position in Egypt was nothing to him. The reproach of Christ was more attractive than the pleasures of sin for a season.

We would not have put Samson in there, nor Jephthah. O heart of man, take courage! Is there faith in thee? Even though thou dost blunder and seem to fall, thy faith is accounted for righteousness. And then, as though deeds were most important, he masses them—"subdued," "wrought," "obtained," "quenched," "escaped," "waxed valiant." The story is not ended. Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs, seers, visionaries—the men of today at whom we laugh—are the men of faith. The vision creates a passion, the passion becomes a mission, and the life is lived till eventide.
I like that saying in verse 34, "Out of weakness were made strong." In connection with II Cor. xii, 9. Then think of all these with us waiting for Luke xiv, 14.

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