

Hebrews 11:1-6

“Maturing Faith”

August 7, 2016

We all face trials in this life. Our trials come from the devil, the world and our sinful nature. Those of us who are immature in the faith are in danger of shrinking back from our trials and seeking an escape into drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, gambling and various other distractions. Some pastors escape by changing churches every three years. Some congregations escape by changing pastors every five to six years. Some spouses escape by seeking new relationships every three to seven years. The immature in the faith will shrink back from their trials rather than seek the hope and strength found in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I went to the video store this week and in the midst of the violence of so many videos, I found four Christians videos. In one video the people turned their lives over to God and still things did not go the way they wanted things to go in life. As we face our trials, God is not the giver of easy answers that solve all our problems. Nor should we want God to give us easy answers. We will not grow and mature in our faith, if God is always solving our problems for us. We are like plants grown inside to be transplanted into the soil. First, we must be taken outside and allowed to sway in the wind so that we will become hardened to the weather

before we are transplanted into the ground. Likewise we must be weeded and fertilized to grow into the best fruit.

Our faith is a gift from our God. We must allow Him to feed and water it with the Bible, the faith and forgiveness of Baptism, the spiritual strengthening of the Lord's Supper, and the encouragement of our fellow Christians. When I go into a hospital room, I don't go as a doctor or nurse to heal the patient. When I go into a hospital room, I go to remind the person in the bed that God loves them through Jesus Christ and that God is present in their lives to support them through the trial that they face. Faith is trusting that God is present and that He cares for us. Faith is trusting that while the body fails us, Jesus Christ holds out the hope of His love and the hope of eternal life. Faith seeks to allow the trials we face to mature us in our relationship with our God. As the saying goes, be patient, God is not done with us yet.

In our text, Cain killed Abel because he was jealous that God favored Abel. Of course Cain gave his offering to God out of obligation. Abel gave His offering out of his love for God. Cain killed Abel thinking that God would now have to show him the favor. Cain was showing his twisted thought process that led to God not favoring Him in the first place. When life does not go our way, we sometimes need to sit back and reexamine our lives through God's Word so that we can see the flawed thinking rather than make more mistakes like Cain did when he killed

Abel. Of course Cain paid a price and that price made him an outcast among his family and friends.

In our text, we also see Enoch. Enoch walked with God and then Enoch was no more because God took Enoch to heaven. We do not know how Enoch was taken to heaven, but in the Bible we see Elijah go to heaven in a fiery chariot. Of course Enoch and Elijah were sinners like us. While they entered heaven without seeing death, we enter heaven through the death of our bodies. In addition, Enoch and Elijah needed a Savior like us. Jesus Christ paid for their sins as He paid for our sins on the Cross at Calvary. Jesus Christ life and payment for our sins opened the door for us to enter heaven. Of course it is not about how much faith we possess, but the Christ who loves us so.

When we desire to know God's love and salvation through Jesus Christ, then we need to keep the faith that God has given to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. When we desire to face the temptations of life and survive, then we need to keep the faith that God has given to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we need to actively seek to mature in our faith. Maturing in the faith requires us to rethink life through God's Word so that we are encouraged to walk the path laid out for us that leads to eternal life. We know the joy of living in Christ and no matter what trials we face in life, we have hope and God's undeserved peace. Amen.