

RCC in the Word
Week of October 21
Hebrews 11:16

“..God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.”
Hebrews 11:16

Before you dive into this devotional today (which spans Chapters 7-11) I wanted to ask you a question that I hope you will consider before you read on. Once you answer that though, please do read on!

What God-given circumstances might you be facing right now that require you, by faith, to choose righteousness or to take some necessary action?

Hebrews 11:1 is perhaps one of the most famous verses in the church and one that I suppose all of us are very familiar with:

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Many of us stand today between what feels like two worlds. On one hand we have actions that must be taken, decisions that must be made, temptations that must be conquered and evils that must be overcome and yet on the other hand we cannot see the future and fear what it may hold if we move forward.

Perhaps we wrestle with questions similar to these:

“What if I obey God but miss out on this opportunity or desire?”

(ex: You give your “all” to those around you (1 Peter 1:22) but lose time to further your career)

“What if I take action in this particular area and it does not work out?”

(ex: Stepping out in faith to do something God has placed on (Psalm 37:4) your soul that requires some risk)

In the book of Hebrews we see a common thread run throughout the text. That thread is that Jesus is “better.” Better than anything, or everything that pointed to Him in the OT including angels (1:4), covenants (7:22 & 8:6), and sacrifices (9:23-26).

There is a comforting connection between the realities of Hebrews 7-10 (priestly sacrifices) and the “hall of faith” as we call it in chapter 11.

Those OT priestly sacrifices were not only God’s means for men to confess and have their sins removed but symbolically a picture of Jesus and His blood being shed for sin. (Ex 28,29 Leviticus 8)

What makes Jesus’ sacrifice better of course is that His sacrifice was perfect and final. The priests before him had to “stand” (Heb 10:11).

Why?

Because they were never done offering sacrifices for sin!

The sin never ended and therefore they had to stand “daily” and “repeatedly” to offer sacrifices but it was not this way for our great priest, the Christ (anointed one). Hebrews 10 says that our anointed one, “sat down.”

Listen to Heb 10:11,12:

“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God”

This “sitting down” has huge implications for our faith. This is the great connection between Chapters 7-10 and that of Chapter 11. The words of God to us are clear.

All of our sins (Col 2:14), past present and future have been dealt with. Your debts are fully paid. Christ has sat down and it is truly “finished” as He said it was in John 19:28-30.

SO, now what? Where do you stand?

You are free indeed (John 8:36)

You have complete, joyful access to a throne. Not just any throne either. It’s a throne of “grace” (Heb 4:16)

You are free to obey because you are under grace (Romans 6:14) (Selah)

You are loved perfectly and part of His own household (Eph 2:19)

You may call upon Him as “Abba Father” (Romans 8)

Why does all that matter?

Because your faith stands on it!

Simply put your faith can now be exercised because of what has been done for you.

One of the most overlooked words in the hall of faith section of Hebrews 11 is the word “commendation” or “commended” (see v2, v4, v5, v7, v39).

The significance of this word is paramount to this section of scripture. Faith exercised as a means of worship, obedience, and Godly action is commended.

Are you, by faith, giving beyond your means in obedience?

Consider Abel in v4.

Are you, by faith, proclaiming the Gospel to a hostile audience even though you're fearful? Consider those in v33 who conquered kingdoms.

Are you, by faith, trying to please God in your work and/or hoping to see His hand provide great things?

Consider those in v33 who obtained promises.

Are you, by faith, reading scripture, praying and seeking Him and wondering, "when O Lord?"

Consider those in v6 who WILL BE rewarded for diligently seeking him.

Are you, by faith, putting to death what may be an idol and/or something dear to you so you know your heart is truly the Lords?

Consider Abraham in v17-v19

You see faith is a gift to be used. It is to be exercised and it stands on the foundation of what Christ did.

And it stands out most clearly when it chooses the Godly narrow path over the worldly tide.

Hebrews was written to believing Jews from Jerusalem who were dealing with persecution for their faith. They were learning very quickly that their faith was foundational to their perseverance. That embracing a new, better, priest, who was the ultimate picture of the old testament "Melchizedek," (Hebrews 7) would test their faith too and offer the same opportunity to be commended.

Believing promises that he would reward them (11:6) in this life, the future life or both propelled them to this upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14)

The very reason we can obey by faith or take godly, calculated risks by faith is because Jesus already paid for our shortcomings and sins.

We indeed have missed the mark but He did not.

Think about this:

His sacrifice on the cross secured a future commendation (Eph 2:10) for you.

Your priest has sat down so you can stand up with confidence and joyfully obey, freely.

Your priest said "it is finished" so you can freely proclaim "let's get it started" and take spirit-led action without fear.

Is there anything to fear with such a God as this?!?!?!?

Go out now and take action by faith:

Obtain promises (11:33).

Preach the gospel knowing you maybe verbally sawn in two or worse (11:37).

Stand up to sinful authorities or peoples knowing you may be on your knees praying that God will close the mouths of Lions or need to free you from prisons (11:33).

Do what is right before God and obey the greatest authority rather than fear man (11:31).

Leave what is comfortable and pleasurable for the sake of something greater (11:25-28).

Love your Wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Take responsibility for her spiritual condition.

Respect your husband even if he does not deserve it knowing God may turn his heart.

By faith, be the parent that does not verbally control or threaten but personifies the Gospel, knowing your children will follow your example more than your demands.

You can do all of that by faith and much more.

Jesus said if you have faith as big as a mustard seed you could move mountains.

As believers we all can have that.

The question is this my friends:

Will you offensively exercise that faith? (Selah)

And if not, is there a chance you do not fully believe Christ has "sat down?"

-Written by Peter J. Figliozzi