

Hebrews

Hebrews 10:38-39 – Living By Faith - Part 4

September 27, 2009

I. **Hebrews 10:32-39** . . . But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, [33] partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. [34] For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. [35] Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. [36] For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. [37] For yet in a very little while, he who is coming will come, and will not delay. **[38] But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. [39] But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.**

II. Prayer

III. The Final Lesson Of These Transitional Verses – Living By Faith

A. Review:

1. **To live by faith** is to believe that God exists as the one and only true God, and that we are created by Him and for Him.
2. **To live by faith** is to believe God is perfectly and eternally good.
3. **To live by faith** is to do the will of God and obey the Word of God – regardless of the cost to us.
4. **To live by faith** is to rest in God. To rest in God means waiting patiently for Him to do what He wills to do when He wills to do it.
5. **To live by faith** is to pursue humility to the point where we believe that God is everything and we are nothing.

B. Living By Faith – Continued

1. **To live by faith** is to pursue and cherish the instruction and discipline of God.
 - a. Notice, I did not say to live by faith is to accept and endure, but rather to pursue and cherish. This difference in attitude is vital to the life of faith and your spiritual development as a Christian.

- b. For what purpose pursue and cherish the instruction and discipline of God? Sanctification. Being holy as God is holy. To learn the things God wants to teach us and to become the people God wants us to be – as much as is possible in this life. Let me give you three scriptures outside Hebrews which supports this part of a life of faith.
 - (1) **Romans 8:29** . . . For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son,
 - (2) **I Thessalonians 4:1-3** . . . Finally, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God, that **you excel still more**. [3] **For this is the will of God, your sanctification.**
 - (3) **Titus 2:11-14** . . . For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age . . . **zealous for good deeds.**
- c. Why do we need to pursue and cherish the instruction and discipline of God? Because sanctification is progressive.
 - (1) Like education, the bulk of the learning comes at the beginning of our lives – during those first 25 years or so. Then we continue learning, but at a slower rate. However, the later learning is often more refined and produces a deeper impact on our lives than the earlier learning. So it is with the Christian life – and this is why we continue to pursue and cherish the instruction and discipline of God to our dying day.
 - (2) I want to also acknowledge that some Christians experience a one time boost or great leap forward or a special moving of the Holy Spirit in regard to sanctification – either at the beginning of the process or somewhere along the way. Yet this is not the completion of the process, but it is a great help along the way.
- d. Because sanctification is progressive, rather than a one time action, it requires perseverance, daily preparation, vigilance, and enduring to the end in order to keep the ground gained and to keep gaining new ground so as to get as close to perfection as possible in this life.

- (1) Keeping the ground gained is vital because our humanity is such that we cannot guarantee that we won't at some point in the future turn aside into known sin.
 - (a) Look at Abraham. God calls him, "The Father of Faith." Yet in spite of having attained to such great faith, he chose to lie several times and call his wife his sister instead of trusting God to protect him from being murdered on account of her beauty.
 - (b) Look at David. God called him a "man after His own heart." Yet his high spiritual attainment wasn't enough to keep him sinning in regard to Bathsheba or Uriah her husband or in counting the fighting men of Israel to see how powerful he was.
 - (c) And consider Moses. God called him the most humble man on the face of the earth and God and Moses had regular face-to-face meetings in the "Tent of Meeting." Yet Moses gave vent to his anger at the grumbling and unbelieving Israelites by striking the rock for water instead of speaking to it as God commanded.
 - (2) What is my point. We have no idea in what ways we will sin in the future. If we are to keep the ground gained while continuing to gain new ground, we must continue to pursue and cherish the instruction and discipline of God.
- e. For examples of pursuing and cherishing the instruction and discipline of God, look at the saints listed in **Hebrews 11**. They are not held up as super Christians or heroes of the faith for inspirational purposes. They are presented as normal Christians who we can be like – if we will.
- (1) Imagine how much like them we would be if we rooted out just one fault or sinful habit each year – from now to the end of our days on the earth.
 - (2) Imagine how much like them we would be if our zeal and progress increased day-by-day rather than ebbed and flowed with our schedule or our feelings or our felt-needs or any other competitor to living by faith.
- f. If we are experiencing trouble or slowness with sanctification, it is not because the normal Christian life is out of reach but because we are not reaching for the normal life of faith with perseverance, daily preparation, and vigilance. And so I encourage you to –

- (1) Be on your guard against growing tired and giving up or settling in and accepting your current spiritual condition as if the progress made were good enough.
 - (2) Be on guard so that when trouble or tribulation comes you are not quickly disheartened or discouraged and then turn back to old worldly and sinful comforts or security.
 - (3) Join the Apostle Paul in deciding that all earthly allurements, all temporal possessions, all fleshly pleasures, and even those good things that divert your attention away from drawing near to God are to be shunned in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, our Lord.
 - g. May we join those listed in Hebrews 11 in living a life of faith that includes pursuing and cherishing the instruction and discipline of God.
2. **To live by faith** is to honor God by standing up for Him in the face of unrighteousness.
- a. Examples of this are Moses – before Pharaoh, David in facing Goliath, and the martyrs before tyrants or angry crowds.
 - b. But we not only live by faith by standing up for God in the workplace, in school, among our friends and acquaintances, in the extended family, in the midst of community sin or cultural rebellion against God – we also take a God honor stand when we resist temptation, turn away from the world, and put to death our own fleshly desires.
 - c. **Ephesians 6:16** . . . in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
3. **To live by faith** is to trust in God's love and forgiveness – knowing that repentance and confession brings mercy and forgiveness leading to the privilege to get back up and go forward in our life of faith (pursuit of God and godliness).
- a. Discouragement over progress in the Christian life or over the return of temptation or even sin in an area we thought had been dealt with is the devil's tool, not God's.
 - b. God's way is a broken and contrite heart which brings on the comfort of God and promotes putting behind what was and moving forward to what ought to be.

4. **To live by faith** is to enter into a relationship of intimate and personal communion and companionship with God.
 - a. Generally speaking, those listed in Hebrews 11 had at least one occasion of God coming to them and speaking to them – and this before the giving of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. And how do we nurture this part of our life of faith?
 - c. Pray without ceasing, meditate often on God's attributes and God's word, nurture a sense of God's presence in the daily affairs of life, confess all known sin, put to death your old, sinful nature, put on Christ, and daily draw near to God so that He will draw near to you.

C. How do we get the faith required to live a life of faith?

1. **Luke 17:5-10** . . . The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" [6] And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you. [7] "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? [8] "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? [9] "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? [10] "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.' "
2. Christian faith is not a stand-alone entity that resides within us. It cannot be separated from who we are. Therefore, faith is a way of life, a way of thinking, it's our character, and it is a settled conviction about the goodness of God and necessity of godliness.
 - a. Greater faith is not a case of size as if larger or more faith is what we need. Jesus shows this as faulty thinking in his reference to having faith like a mustard seed.
 - b. Greater faith is a case of obedience to what we know the Master (God) is telling us to do. Therefore, greater or complete or uncompromised obedience to the will and word of God in the daily affairs of life produces the kind of faith that can uproot trees and casts them in the sea.

- c. In other words, if we lack the faith or trust in God to obey Him each and every day – as a slave is expected to obey his master – then we will lack the faith to uproot trees and cast them into the sea.
 - (1) Or to say it in the positive way – as we exercise the faith required for slave-type obedience to God, we naturally have the kind of faith required for uprooting trees and casting them into the sea.
 - (2) Or to put it another way, greater holiness is the path to greater faith. This is why James tells us to confess our sins and go to those who are righteous when we need prayer for healing – because it is the righteous ones whose prayers are effective and accomplish much (**James 5:16**).
- 3. Finally, we are not to barter with God for greater faith – as if we could offer Him more obedience in exchange for greater faith.
 - a. That is pride and the kind of thinking that believes we can use God for our own ends. Such pride and evil thinking works against faith, not for faith.
 - b. Instead we are to humble ourselves before God and label our obedience as that which we owe God – calling ourselves unworthy slaves after having obeyed His will and lived according to His word. Such humility feeds faith – the kind of faith that accomplishes much for the glory of God.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Review the ways the life of faith expresses itself in the life of the believer –
 - 1. **To live by faith** is to believe that God exists as the one and only true God, and that we are created by Him and for Him.
 - 2. **To live by faith** is to believe God is perfectly and eternally good.
 - 3. **To live by faith** is to do the will of God and obey the Word of God – regardless of the cost to us.
 - 4. **To live by faith** is to rest in God. To rest in God means waiting patiently for Him to do what He wills to do when He wills to do it.
 - 5. **To live by faith** is to pursue humility to the point where we believe that God is everything and we are nothing.
 - 6. **To live by faith** is to pursue and cherish the instruction and discipline of God.
 - 7. **To live by faith** is to honor God by standing up for Him in the face of unrighteousness.

8. **To live by faith** is to trust in God's love and forgiveness – knowing that repentance and confession brings mercy and forgiveness leading to the privilege to get back up and go forward in our life of faith (pursuit of God and godliness).
 9. **To live by faith** is to enter into a relationship of intimate and personal communion and companionship with God.
- B. May we be people who live by faith – more and more each day – so that at the end of our lives it can be said of us that we have been people of faith rather than being labeled “People of the faith.”