

December 25

Hebrews 10-13

What a great passage to read on Christmas Day. On the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we study the passage that demonstrates the faith that activates his LIFE in us!

Chapter 11 is often referred to as the faith chapter and includes the great list of all the heroes of the faith. The one thing that links all these heroes together is faith. Hebrews 11:1 gives us a great definition of Faith. "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Faith is not a very big word, but what a mighty word it is. Each of the heroes and heroines of Genesis walked in a measure of faith, acting upon the truths that they had come to understand about God, and clinging tenaciously to the promises that God had given – believing them, trusting them in spite of what seemed to be happening. There is very little about the Christian life that could not be boiled down and summarized by this wonderful word – faith.

The writer of Hebrews is making an argument here. It is this: People are judged for acting in FAITH based on the revelation that they had. Until Jesus, all they had were the shadows, the previews of the coming Jesus. They had prophets, angels, rest, tabernacle and sacrifice. None of these saved. What saved them? Their faith in a God who could save. They did not need all the information. They needed faith based on the revelation that they did have.

Everybody in the world has some revelation about God. Romans 1:20 says everybody can see his eternal nature and divine power – just by observing creation. Everybody has a conscience and can therefore tell that God is moral. Hebrews 11 raises some important questions about people who lived before Jesus or never heard of Jesus. It seems as though they CAN be saved. If they act in faith based on the revelation they do have.

Of course we know that if you have heard of Jesus, you are 100% judged on whether your faith is placed in him, but Hebrews offers some help in the question of those who only know shadows of Jesus' reality.

We have talked before about the warnings in the book of Hebrews. The last warning is in the middle of Chapter 12. It follows a passage which calls on us to not quit just because persecution and hardship might come our way. The warning follows - we are to be holy - no matter what - because without holiness no one will see the Lord. "See to it", we are told, "that no one misses the grace of God." Three sins in particular are mentioned: bitterness, immorality, and godlessness. The warning concludes, "See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks (Jesus). If they did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth (Moses) how much less will we, if we turn away from Him who warns us from heaven?"

There is a delicate balance here that we must work hard to preserve. Christ has done it all. His work is complete and on the basis of that work we are cleansed, consecrated and perfected. We can boldly go where no man had gone before (except for the High Priests and they did not go boldly) into the very presence of God, but that privilege can never be taken lightly or abused. That is what the five warnings of the Book of Hebrews are all about. God requires holiness and for us to persevere to the end - nothing less.

Chapter 13 is full of wonderful, practical advice about Christian living. I know that I was very convicted by the top four things mentioned at the beginning of chapter 13. Let me bullet them for you to think about today.

- Do not forget to entertain strangers – do you do that?
- Remember those in prison – do you do that?
- Keep your Marriage bed pure – do you do that?
- Keep your life free from the love of money – do you do that?
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Ouch, did we have to ask that last one on Christmas day, right after opening presents? God may have a sense of humor, or great comfort in that for us today!

Christmas day is the day that we welcome to the world the gift of God, the Prince of Peace AND the great shepherd of our souls, so perhaps the best way for us to remember the day and finish the Book of Hebrews is with the wonderful benediction of Hebrews 13: “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen”