

Sent: Wednesday, April 19, 2017 7:17 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Hebrews 12

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us; let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance (patience) the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter (finisher) of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God! For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart...!" (Hebrews 12:1-3)

The readers of the book of Hebrews (mostly Hebrew believers--but we as well!) are called upon to follow the examples of the "heroes of the faith," recorded in Hebrews 11. But even more so in view of the "confidence" we have been given to "enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil...having become a great high priest over the house of God!" We are also summoned to "draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..." and to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering..." (Heb.10:19-23)

It's inspiring to know that so-called "heroes of the faith" form a kind of "cloud of witnesses" (better than any "i-cloud" concoction!) to cheer us on as we "run the race" of our lifetime--"laying aside" anything that would "beset" us! But this can only be done as we "fix our eyes" on Jesus--who is not only our example, but also the "originator" of our faith, and "captain of our salvation"!

And how encouraging it is to realize that God actually "deals with us as sons"! Which entails a discipline, sometimes accompanied with suffering, that trains us to follow Him, and to identify with His sufferings--and, afterwards, "yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness"! (Heb. 12:11) The apostle Paul notes that our "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison"! (II Cor. 4:17)

We're also instructed, as his sons--and representatives of Him in this world--to "pursue peace with all men," as well to live a life of holiness, and to "see to it" that "no root of bitterness springs up" in our lives, something, the author notes, causes many to be defiled!" (Heb. 12:15) The heart of this passage, however, is probably recorded in verses 18-24--which Hagner describes as "one of the most vivid passages in the Bible, drawing a contrast between the old and the new covenants"! In essence, it's the gospel of law versus grace! Grasp the profundity of the words:

"For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, "if even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned!" And so, terrible was the sight that even Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling"! Even Moses!

"But you (includes us!) have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel"! Whew!

So why, the author suggests, would anyone want to go back to the old covenant--where priests "stand daily ministering and offering, time after time, the same sacrifices which can never take away sins, when He (Jesus!) having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God!" (Heb. 10:11-12) That's the bottom line argument the author returns to again as we near the end of our study of Hebrews!

Hebrews 12 ends with the warning that God will "yet once more shake not only the earth, but also the heavens," when He returns to judge the world! But, the good news is that as believers and followers of Jesus we are part of a kingdom that "cannot be shaken"! And this awareness, the author notes, should fill us with great "gratitude," and spur us to want to "offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe"! (Heb. 12:25-28)

Do we as men of the Bible really realize all that we have in Christ? Having studied the book of Hebrews has hopefully brought us closer to this realization! And realizing it should move us to want to serve and honor Him as never before, with all that is in us!

Well, we're almost through this great book of Hebrews! Next week Hebrews 13:1-17 and some concluding exhortations!

And so, again men, walk with the Lord this week, and be a blessing!

Lowell