

Series: Hebrews

Lesson: #52

Title: The World Was Not Worthy

Text: Hebrews

Date: Sunday, October 12, 2008

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

If you were tied to a rack so that your arms and legs were pulled in every direction to the point that your bones began to pop out of joint and you were told that all you had to do was simply deny Christ and you would be freed from your torture, would you deny Christ?

If you were told that not only would you be freed but you would be given a larger home, or promoted to position of prominence, or given many riches, as you lay there about to be sawn in half by the jagged blade of a saw, would you deny Christ?

Some have never professed Christ in the first place or keep secret the fact that they trust the Lord Jesus for fear of a mere word or look they might endure from worldly associates. But what if every neighbor, every business, even the government and the religious world turned on you so violently that all your basic necessities were taken from you--home, clothing, food--so that you had to wander with nothing and scavenge for what little food you could find? Would you deny Christ then?

Hebrews 11: 35...and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36: And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38: (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

If you say, "I really don't know if my faith is strong enough to persevere in the face of such affliction."

To that I ask you, "Is it the strength of your faith which causes you to persevere when *not* faced with such affliction? Or is it the strength of the Lord who gave you your faith and preserves you through faith in him?"

Proposal: When God allows the deepest depths of human depravity to be unleashed *upon* the faithful then the greatest height of God's grace is manifest *in* the faithful.

That is what is put on display in this whole book of Hebrews. These were real men and women just like you and I. They had families and friends they loved like you and I. Their bodies felt pain just like ours do. They preferred peace and calm to affliction of mind and body just as much as you and I do.

Yet, when faced with the option of either being tortured or of being tempted with a great deliverance and reward if only they would simply say, "I no longer trust the Lord Jesus Christ" these real men and women said to their captors, "I will not deny my Lord."

The encouragement we draw from them--the reason we are told about these saints--is so that in them we might behold that our God is our great strength--no matter how severe the trial. The believer's strength is Christ in us. The Lord of salvation is faith's power to continue believing him.

That is why true faith is always bettered for having passed through the fiery trial. Trials merely remove the dross that hinders us from looking to Christ our Strength.

Illustration: Explain the refiner's fire which removes the dross from gold.

What is dross for the believer? **Hebrews 12: 1:...lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us...**

- The weight is the world and the flesh the believer still has...
- The sin is unbelief

Through trials, the Lord reveals his grace is our strength, not this world, not this flesh. And through trials, that dross of unbelief is purged and the gold of faith is refined.

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION (p. 268.)

When thru fiery trials thy pathway shall lie
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply
The flame shall not hurt thee
I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine

It is good to have the songwriter's word on it, but do we have the Lord's word on this?

Isaiah 43: 1: But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. 2: When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3: For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour...

Isaiah 1: 25: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: 26: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

I Peter 1: 7: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 11: 39: And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

Three things:

1. In their lifetime the promised Redeemer did not come, yet they OBTAINED the good report--the good doctrine--the good news--they received the gospel of Christ their Savior and believing Christ they received strength by the Spirit even in the most trying circumstances.

- By faith they not only saw Christ their Savior but they saw something of what he would suffer on their behalf. They saw it in the spotless lamb which died in their place. They saw it in the blood which flowed throughout their generations.

2. And through faith, they obtained another kind of good report--a faithful standing in Christ

- A believer can be said to be justified by faith in the sense that through God's gift of faith he brings us to believe on Christ alone in whom God has justified us.
- Through faith they obtained this good report--JUSTIFIED!

3. And in *them*, he left *us*, a good report of what it is for a believer to persevere through faith in Christ.

- So in **Hebrews 11: 32**, when the writer says, "**And what shall I more say?**" The point made in the beginning of the chapter back in verse 1 has been sufficiently illustrated, "**Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**"
- The glories of Christ's person and accomplished redemption; the assurance that he has saved us, is saving us and shall save us; the hope of one day knowing him as he knows us; this is the substance which faith lays hold of, these are the things not seen by the carnal eye but clearly evident to the eye of faith.
- So no matter how severe the trial may be--we know who sent it, we know why he sent it, and we know this... **Romans 8: 37: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**

Hebrews 11: 40: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Here is what I want you to take home from this verse. These trials, through which the Lord takes away Christ-blinding dross-- is how the Lord "makes perfect" his people. The dross of trusting in this flesh, of lusting after this world, of the sin of unbelief is mixed with all we do. It will be with us in the flesh till the end. But God constantly refines the gold of faith which lays hold of Christ our strength Alone. He does it through every lesser trial as we experience his grace. And the final trial, whereby he will totally remove all dross and brings us into perfect conformity with Christ shall be in death.

Illustration:

In these saints of old, in a very real and practical way, we see how God finally removes all dross and brings us into perfect conformity with Christ.

When they entered the trial they were hindered by the Christ-blinding dross of their flesh. But by God's grace, they beheld Christ through faith...and endured even unto death.

And when they died, the dross of their flesh was totally removed and then they beheld Christ in glory face-to-face--perfectly conformed to the image of Christ.

And the Lord, having provided Christ--that "some better thing"--for us as well as for them, shall not withdraw his hand of grace but shall bring every last child of God into perfect conformity with Christ in glory.

Hebrews 11: 38: Of whom the world was not worthy...