

**HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST**  
**"Part XXII: Rising Above Persecution Trials By Faith"**  
**(Hebrews 11:1, 32-12:4)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

Living by faith and obedience to God in His Word **often** produces great blessings in life.

However, this life is not always **fair**, so godliness sometimes can **COST** a great deal of hardship and even pain in this life!

(1) Kristie Casciani shared with me that she has heard that Jon and Heidi Banker, self-supporting missionaries from Nepaug, are doing well in Ankara after the huge earthquake near Istanbul, Turkey.

However, though Evangelical missions are trying to give aid to the nation's oppressed survivors, Christians are facing even more intense persecution from Muslims. The followers of Islam think Christians are taking unfair advantage of the oppressed state of people in the region to make converts through humanitarian aid, and so they have increased their oppressions against believers!

(2) When the Kansas State Board of Education set new state science standards for its classrooms, it created a great "fallout". Besides board chairwoman Linda Holloway's note that "evolution supporters were acting as if the sky were falling," (Knight Ridder Newspapers, 8/29/99), an editorial in the August 16th, 1999 USA Today belittles the board's move as "A defeat for education standards."

Beverly LaHaye, chairwoman of Concerned Women for America wrote an **opposing** editorial in the same paper. LaHaye noted that the state board did not elevate the teaching of creationism over evolution, but "Instead of allowing the state bureaucracy to dictate that every schoolchild be taught one narrow theory of the Earth's origins, the state board of education established standards that allow children to explore various theories in the science classroom."

Now that evolution is not the **only** view allowed in Kansas state schools, the charge is made that the state education board lowered its standard of education! How can that be when evolution is not a proven fact, but admittedly an unproved theory? Isn't it less akin to the heralded "scientific method" to close the mind to all other theories but one?! The criticism of the Kansas State Board is so unfair!

**Well, what is a believer to do to handle life when it is UNFAIR to his stand and life for God and His Word?!**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . . )

**Need:** *"I WANT to live as God's Word directs me, but actually DOING that often irritates those whose lives are not adhering to God's will! That makes life DIFFICULT to say the least, especially if I get it from other RELIGIOUS folk! What do I DO about this?!"*

- I. **The author of Hebrews urged his Jewish Christian readers to worship Christ and not use the temple rituals under peer pressure, Heb. 9:7-10, 11-14 (sermon XII); Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, p. 1729.**
- II. **Thus, these believers were to LIVE by FAITH in Scripture's revelation versus yielding to godless peer pressure, Hebrews 11:1.**
- III. **In an APPLICATION of this, they were to follow the examples of Old Testament believers to trust and obey God whether that action yielded EASE OR LOSSES in THIS life, Hebrews 11:32-12:4:**
  - A. The readers of Hebrews faced troubles while trying to follow Christ:
    1. For their stand, they were persecuted, Hebrews 10:32.
    2. This suffering included the emotional and mental drain of public insults and confiscation of personal property that put a financial hardship on their family lives, Hebrews 10:32-34 NIV.
    3. With such a drain for their stand for Christ, the readers' continued living for Christ would be **experientially unpleasant.**
  - B. To **encourage** his readers to **keep going regardless** of the **hardships** involved, the writer of Hebrews laid out examples of Old Testaments saints who not only experienced earthly life **triumphs**, but also **HUGE LOSSES because of** their **obedience** to God, Hebrews 11:32-38:
    1. On the **one** hand, a large number of Old Testament saints enjoyed **earthly triumphs** and **joyful ease** as a **result of** faith, 11:32-35a:
      - a. Knowing he lacked the time to name all the heroes of faith in the Old Testament, the author mentioned Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel who were triumphant by faith, v. 32
      - b. Such people subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the sword, were made strong out of weakness, were valiant in battle, turned to flight alien armies and received their dead raised to life again, Hebrews 11:33-35a.
      - c. These heroes of faith enjoyed triumphs and ease as a result of their obedience to God as we would measure these in **THIS** life!
    2. **Conversely**, the author of Hebrews dramatically **changed** his list of heroes at Hebrews 11:35b: from this point on he mentioned those who experienced **HUGE LOSSES** in life **because of** their faith!

- a. Some Old Testament saints were tortured to death because they chose to trust and obey God, Hebrews 11:35b.
  - b. Others lived through their tortures, but lived to be cruelly mocked, scourged, bound and imprisoned, Hebrews 11:36.
  - c. Other saints met viciously horrible martyrdom, being stoned, sawn in two, tested and slain by the sword, Hebrews 11:37a,b.
  - d. Some saints survived ill-treatment to wander about as outlaws in rough clothing, being poor, afflicted and tormented, Heb. 11:37c
  - e. Their wanderings were not pleasant either as they fled into baking deserts or frigid mountains, and hid in unhealthy and dangerous dens and caves near wild animals, Hebrews 11:38.
3. What becomes so **moving** about these **troubled** Old Testament saints was that a number of them were under the **Law**, and obedience to God then was to result in **earthly ease**, Dt. 28:1-14!
  4. Thus, they were troubled by **godless fellow HEBREWS** to explain why they **so unfairly missed out** on the righteous "good life"!
  5. Yet, the author of Hebrews calls these **TROUBLED** saints who unfairly **missed out** on the Mosaic Covenant's "good life" of saints people "Of whom the world was not worthy" in Hebrews 11:38.
- C. Thus, the persecuted readers were to trust and obey God whether that produced ease **or earthly losses**, no matter **what** the **cost**, 11:39-12:4:
1. Old Testament saints of whom the world was not worthy died without obtaining their earthly blessings as God **delayed** the **earthly kingdom** of **blessing** so that **we** might enter it **with** them, 11:39-40
  2. So, in view of the **opportunity** we have to **join** these great saints in the future kingdom of earthly blessing, we should follow Christ's example of "the cross before the crown" and obey God even to the price of death if such is required, Heb. 12:1-4!

***Application: Truly lasting, rewarding experiential blessing is NOT found in THIS life, but in the ETERNAL one. Thus, we are to (1) believe on Christ to have eternal life (Jn. 3:16) and (2) live by faith in God's Word for the COMING Kingdom of blessing no matter WHAT it costs in unfair persecution NOW! It is WORTH it!***

***Lesson: Though SOMETIMES one's obedience of faith in God's Word yields EARTHLY blessings, SIN in OTHERS may UNFAIRLY cause the upright believer UNFAIRLY to MISS EARTHLY blessings for his obedience. Yet, he is to TRUST and OBEY God at all costs, anticipating entering the FUTURE kingdom of great experiential blessings!***

**Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )**

(1) We noted in the introduction that the Kansas State Board of Education's allowing creationism to be pursued in the classroom as a theory along with the theory of evolution was strongly opposed.

Though this criticism may be **unfair** as it is **unscientific**, we have added the following encouragements to uphold our faith:

(a) Charles Darwin, in his 2nd edition of On the Origin of Species (London: John Murray, 1860), p. 481 admitted: "To suppose that the eye with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree." (cited from Bill Dunn's book, Boomer Trek (Mukilteo, Washington: Wine-Press Publishing, 1997), p. 32)

(b) Over a hundred years later, evolution still admittedly lacks proof. Dr. L. Harrison Matthews, in his introduction to the 1971 edition of the same book, On the Origin of Species by Darwin, p. X, XI admits: ". . . evolution is the backbone of biology, and biology is thus in the peculiar position of being a science founded on an unproved theory -- is it then a science or faith? Belief in the theory of evolution is thus exactly parallel to belief in special creation -- both are concepts which believers know to be true but neither, up to the present, has been capable of proof." (cited in Luther Sunderland's Darwin's Enigma (Santee, California: Master Book Publishers, 1984), p. 30-31)

(2) We mentioned in the beginning of our message the unfair treatment Christians in Turkey who are supplying aid to earthquake victims. Well, in spite of the inequities, where there were 50 Turkish believers in the nation a decade ago, Kristie Casciani reports there are now 500! It's an encouraging **improvement!**

If **you** would like to send relief to Turkey, 100% of your money will go to help victims by writing to: IMI, Box 14866, Reading, PA. 19612 and marking your donation with "Turkish Relief Fund."

**We handle the UNFAIR troubles heaped upon the believer in this life by going ahead and bearing those troubles in hope for the utopia to come in the NEXT life! We live by faith at all costs in this life regardless of FAIRNESS or bearing UNFAIRNESSES!**