

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
September 9, 2012

Living By Faith

Read Hebrews 11:1-3,6 & Psalms 46:1-3,8-11

Key verse: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Living by faith involves trusting in God’s character and in God’s promises. Faith means that, because I believe God to be trustworthy, I trust God to fulfill His promises even though that fulfillment is not yet visible to me. “Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase,” said Martin Luther King Jr.

“Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval” (Heb. 11:2). These ancestors, heroes and examples of faith, are the people described in 11:7-40—Abraham, Moses, David, and many more. Their stories can inspire us to live by faith.

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6). If it is impossible to please God without faith, the opposite is also true: God is pleased with us when we live by faith, when we trust the Lord—His character and His promises—even though we can’t yet see the results.

Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11 call us to have faith in God during times of calamity, in those times when “the mountains shake in the heart of the sea,” when “its waters roar and foam” and “the mountains tremble with its tumult”(vv. 2-3). Natural disaster, war, personal crises—in our times of great calamity and distress, our faith can help us rest securely in God, who “is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (v. 1).

But when all hell breaks loose around us, how do we move from fear into faith? Eugene Peterson finds the answer in the two commands of Psalm 46:8-11: “Two commands direct us from the small-minded world of self-help to the large world of God’s help. First, ‘Come, behold the works of the Lord’ (v. 8). Take a long scrutinizing look at what God is doing. This requires patient attentiveness and energetic concentration. Everybody else is noisier than God. The headlines and neon lights and amplifying systems of the world announce human works. But what of God’s works? They are unadvertised

but also inescapable, if we simply look. They are everywhere. They are marvelous. But God has no public relations agency. He mounts no publicity campaign to get our attention. He simply invites us to look....

“The second command is ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (v. 10). Be still. Quit rushing through the streets long enough to become aware that there is more to life than your little self-help enterprises. When we are noisy and when we are hurried, we are incapable of intimacy—deep, complex, personal relationships. If God is the living center of redemption, it is essential that we be in touch with and responsive to that personal will. If God has a will for this world and we want to be in on it, we must be still long enough to find out what it is (for we certainly are not going to learn by watching the evening news)” (from Peterson’s book, *Earth and Altar*).

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