
Words of Truth

Hebrews 10:38-39

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After being told to have endurance to receive the promise of eternal life. Before reading about great men and women of faith (Hebrews 11:1-40). These are the words that brings those lessons together: *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul”* (Hebrews 10:38-39).

Let’s think about what it means to be just. God is just (Deuteronomy 32:1-4). Noah was a just man, a perfect man, that walked with God (Genesis 6:9). When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah Lot was a just man that was delivered from that destruction (II Peter 2:6-7; cf. Genesis 18:20-19:29). A just person is the opposite of a wicked person (Psalms 37:12, Proverbs 12:13, Proverbs 17:15, Proverbs 29:27, and Matthew 13:47-50). A just person is a student of godly wisdom (Proverbs 9:9). A just person walks in integrity (Proverbs 20:7). The way of the just is uprightness (Isaiah 26:7). A just person keeps the instructions of God (Ezekiel 18:9 and Hosea 14:9). Jesus is just (Acts 3:13-15, Acts 7:52, and Zechariah 9:9; cf. Matthew 21:1-11 and Luke 19:28-40). God chose a just man to be a parent to His only begotten Son (Matthew 1:18-25). John the baptizer was a just man (Mark 6:20). Our just Savior died so that we who were not just could be justified and brought to our Father (Romans 3:21-26 and I Peter 3:18-21). We could go on and on with these points. However, if you study the information above, that is a pretty good definition of what it means to be a just person. So, let’s take a brief look at the faith the just live by.

Belief in the existence of God is not the faith we are considering. One can know there is a Creator without ever having been taught the word of God (Acts 17:22-31). All persons of a capable mind even know basic truths about right and wrong naturally, without being taught those things (Romans 2:14-15). The faith that is taught about in these passages is an informed faith (Romans 10:5-14). That is, faith that goes beyond someone generally believing that there is a God. This faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). That does not mean that hearing the word of God is enough to make a person just. To be a just person one has to be a *“doer of the law”* (Romans 2:13; cf. James 1:18-2:26).

Consider the reason for these things being taught in this letter. Jewish Christians likely knew that the just live by faith. That was taught by the prophets (Habakkuk 2:4). That statement has greater meaning in Christ than it did under the Law and the prophets. Notice:

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:1-14).

After establishing that the just live by faith, the point returned to apostasy. This had already been taught in this context (Hebrews 10:26-31). The point is being rephrased. From the time Jesus walked on this earth to later in the first century, some chose to turn back to the world (John 6:60-71, II Timothy 4:10-15, and I John 2:18-19). Therefore, we can further understand that the just continue in the faith (Colossians 1:9-23). That is, the just are those who do not turn back to the world. If a just person were to fall, he or she would get back up (Proverbs 24:16). For the person who has chosen to be in Christ and then walk away, the faithful could not take pleasure in that. A child of God turning his or her back on our Father, our Savior, and the brethren is terrible. We all want to say, that is not us. What if it is though?

When a just person turns away from our Lord that person has chosen a path that is worse than never obeying the Lord at all. Notice: *“The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors. As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him... For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (Proverbs 26:10-12 and II Peter 2:20-22).* True believers continue in the faith and that results in salvation (John 8:31-32 and Acts 14:22). Brethren, keep the faith!