

The Old Paths

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“Another ‘Hall Of Faith’..”

Jarrod Jacobs

Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the “Hall of Faith” or “Faith’s Hall of Fame.” I do not dispute this description, for it surely fits when we consider the great Old Testament heroes named in the chapter. Yet, I would suggest there could very well be another “Hall of Faith” found in Romans 16:1-15. This “Hall” describes many faith heroes from the first century. These Christians are named and noted for their faith and obedience during the early days of the church. Have we ever stopped to consider what this chapter has to say? Let me suggest the apostle Paul, by the inspiration of God, opens a “window” for us to look and see some of the many faithful people living in the first century. Their examples continue to shine today! Let us learn from the examples of:

Phoebe (v. 1-2), who was known by Paul and helped many brethren. Perhaps he met her after leaving Corinth (Acts 18:18).

Aquila and Priscilla (v. 3-5), who Paul met at Corinth, and who had risked their lives and suffered much for the cause of Christ.

Epaenetus (v. 5), who was described as “*the first convert to Christ in Asia.*” (Does this mean he was of the household of Stephanus, I Cor. 16:15?) This thrills

me to think of this brother who was willing to follow the Lord before anyone else in Asia had done so. He had no other example to follow, but stepped out in true faith to become a Christian and serve God.

Mary (v. 6), who was another hard worker in the Lord, like Phoebe, and Priscilla.

Andronicus and Junia (v. 7) stand out as being “*fellow prisoners*” with Paul. They had been Christians longer than Paul, and were “*well known to the apostles.*” Why are they only mentioned here? Only God knows the reason. Yet, they stand out as noted servants of God.

To this list of godly examples and faithful servants, we add **Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Appelles, Aristobulus**, and his family, **Herodion, Narcissus** and his family, **Tryphaena, Tryphosa**, “*the beloved*” **Persis, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus**, and **Olympas**. We also add scores of unnamed folks mentioned in this chapter, whose names are known only to God.

As I pause and think about these folks, my heart soars to think of their dedication and faithfulness to God. Perhaps we would not have what we do had it not been for faith heroes like these! Truly, they left a lasting impression. Let us follow their example!

Questioning God’s Selections

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Recently, in a Bible class (not near me, nor in the church where I preach), a question was raised concerning God’s choice of Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt. Since Moses made excuses as to why he should not lead the appeal to Pharaoh for the release of Israel, why did God select him? Why was another not chosen to take Moses’ place (Ex. 3:11; 4:10)?

Regarding that point, note some parallel wonderings:

1) With the hand of the Lord upon him, Elijah forsook God’s work for a time and fled into the wilderness (1Kgs. 18:46; 19:1-18). Still, the Lord retained Elijah for his mission. Shall we question God about his retention of Elijah?

2) Jonah was so reluctant to preach in Nineveh that he fled on a freighter to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). He hated Nineveh so badly that he did not want them to be given a chance to be saved. Hence, he refused to go and preach to them (Jonah 4:2). Should we question God and inquire whether he should have called someone who was more willing than was Jonah?

3) God chose Saul of Tarsus (Acts 26:16-18). Stephen was allowed to die in Acts 7:58-60. Should we wonder why God did not give the job to Stephen? Stephen was a benevolent man

who helped the needy, serving tables (Acts 6:1-6).

He was a great preacher, too (Acts 7:2-53)! His sermon is the longest sermon recorded in the New Testament. Scholars have called it one of the great sermons of antiquity. Again, should we question God about his choice here?

4) James, the brother of John, was a strong, fiery preacher (Mk. 3:17; Lk. 9:54). Note his call for fierce, destructive action in Luke 9:54. Shall we question God and ask if James could not have done the work Saul did?

Finally, regarding such questions, the principle of Romans 9:20 comes to mind. "Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

The Church At Pergamos

Aric Russell

Revelation 2:12-17 continues with the third of seven messages to the churches of Asia Minor. Each of these messages includes a specific word to a specific church, but there are also lessons applicable to the lives of believers today. This third letter is to the church in Pergamos.

This letter, just like the others, was from the Lord Jesus Christ. This was not John's message to the church; it was a message from Jesus Christ. Jesus first affirms

the church's positive actions. He says, "I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives" (Rev. 2:13). The Pergamos Christians lived in a difficult place, surrounded by pagan influences, yet they held fast to Christ's name and did not deny Him during difficult times.

Jesus noted the positive things of this church, and Jesus also took note of their sin. Jesus said in Revelation 2:14-15, "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." The "teaching of Balaam" is explained in the context. Christians were eating food that had been sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality. The original Balaam's deceitful work is described in Numbers 25:1-3 and Numbers 31:15-16. The Nicolaitans are mentioned only in this letter and in the letter to the Ephesian church (Rev. 2:6). They were likely a group similar to

those who held the teachings of Balaam, though the exact nature of their doctrine and practice is unknown.

Jesus then issues a call to repent in Revelation 2:16. Our Lord hates religious and moral compromise. He calls His people to live differently. He also notes the judgment that would take place if the church of Pergamos did not repent. The rest of verse 16 goes on to say, "I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth." The Nicolaitans and those who were teaching Balaam's error would be destroyed, along with their followers, from the congregation at Pergamos. Jesus desires purity among His people, and we have a responsibility to remove false teachers from the church.

Jesus concludes this letter by making a final promise to the believers in Pergamos. He said, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." (Rev. 2:17). Again, there is much we can learn from this letter written to the church in Pergamos. Let us strive to listen to what the Spirit says.

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