

Journey of Faith - Trusting Jesus with Eternity

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel, and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy.... (Hebrews 11:31-40, ESV)

Heckling PGA players during a round is fairly common these days. There is, as always, substantive debate about whether this brutish behavior is rising due to the uptick in gambling.

For example, Brian Harman had a “chap” verbally dog him from the sixth hole to the tenth hole on the final day of The Open. He finally had this “bloke” removed. Ultimately, the heckler’s taunts backfired; the verbal abuse only inspired Brian to hunker down and win by a significant margin.

Max Homa had a rude encounter with another heckler this past weekend. As Golf Magazine reported, “This mystery man...rooted aloud for Homa to yank his five-foot birdie as he began his stroke...Homa got vocal in response, calling the man a clown. He admitted he may have added a colorful adjective, too.”

Whatever boorish behavior we observe from outside the ropes, it is always inappropriate in a game that has Bobby Jones as its “patron saint.”

In today’s text, notice that the first few verses mention men and women who, by faith, achieved victories over things significantly more difficult than verbal abuse: “Rahab does not perish; Gideon, David, and the prophets, to name a few, “stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.”

But also notice, “Some were tortured, refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, and they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy....”

It’s critically important to notice for those called by God to partner with him in his “Cosmic Restoration Project,” that doesn’t always mean endless victories in this life.

Since the Fall (Genesis 3), God has been appointing men and women to work with him towards the ultimate goal of bringing the whole world under the cosmic reign of Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 20-28; Romans 8:18-25).

In the end, at Christ’s return, all Christians—those who triumph and those who undergo unmentionable suffering—will “rise again to a better life” (Hebrews 11:35b, ESV) in a wholly restored new heavens and new earth.

For those of us living in America in the present hour, according to one author, we don’t know if this is a “Wilberforce or a Bonhoeffer moment.”

Wilberforce faced the horrors of the slave trade and abolished it through faith and perseverance. On the other hand, Bonhoeffer faced the evils of Hitler’s Third Reich and was martyred through faith.

Even though Wilberforce won and Bonhoeffer lost on this side of glory, both men, with all who persevere in faith to the end, “will rise to a better life.”

Prayer: Jesus! Increase our faith!

READING - Hebrews 11:31-40.

1. Create a list of obstacles that come at you in golf, e.g., bunkers. How do you normally handle the tougher moments in a round?

2. Discuss contemporary examples of those who overcome through faith and those who suffer in faith.

3. After reading Hebrews 11:31-40, what do we discover about these men and women that gave them strength during what some have described as the “dark night of the soul?”
