

“So, let us leave the state of infancy and be carried toward maturity, completion, not again laying the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God.”

We need to remember that the author of Hebrews is concerned that the people, whether in whole or in part, have become resistant (sluggish, apathetic, non responsive) to demands of the gospel. Circumstances as they are in the community, have brought the believers to the place where a mature confidence in God is needed in order to endure. Trust in God comes easy when our circumstances do not demand a sacrifice that may derail or end the plan for our lives.

When we are surround by conveniences that make life comfortable and manageable and predictable, true reliance upon God does not seem as necessary as, say, the circumstances of the psalmist of Ps 22 or of Christ in the garden, which may be alluded to in Heb 5,7-10. This is the warning of Deut 8. And it also the reason that God led Israel through the wilderness in the way that he did. To teach them the futility of self sufficiency. Yet, this is the lie that we love most. And it presents itself with nuclear force when the basics of existence are threatened. Our Creator makes short work of our self confidence when we are oppressed by others and by disasters.

When the fundamentals of this life are missing, we find just how weak we really are. We find just how small we really are. We find just how vulnerable we really are. And this is the crucible of rebellion and trust in God. And it is the proving ground of our reliance upon him and our reluctance to rely upon him. I have always marveled at how Jesus makes such short work of that which comprises the lion's share of our complaints in life when he says, “Therefore I say to you, do not be anxious for your life [in saying],

‘What will we eat [or what will we drink]?’ neither for your body [in saying], ‘What will we wear?’ *Is not life more than food, and the body [more than] clothing?’* In a moment Jesus reduces life to essentials for existence and then dismisses them as candidates for undue anxiety! Under it all, Jesus is asking us, “What is life then?” Let me ask you? What is life?

You know, I have heard over and over that without a purpose, you cannot develop a plan. And yet after all the events of life, people are surprised and angry that life “didn’t go the way I expected.” This complaint suggests that a plan was in place that was amended, perverted, or betrayed along the way. At those times it is reasonable to ask such a person, “What expectations did you have, and *what were the bases for such expectations?*” If you have no expectations for life (which seems intrinsically impossible), then is there any real basis for disappointment? Or even happiness? If there are no expectations for life, could there any basis for morals? After all a life without expectations demands no results. Everything and anything can come as a warranted (and obligatory?) possibility for our lives. So any abuse we may have suffered, shouldn’t have us screaming this is wrong. We should only be at peace within the subjectivity of an aimless human race which both gives and receive behaviors that stay loyal to the model that life without purpose leaves a life without direction and, thus, I am only getting what I deserve. (Yikes!)

But we all know better. We know that purpose comes to us, we did not invent it the desire. And Jesus states that life is not merely defined by the sustaining of our existence; since, this is not the purpose of your life. The purpose, which is the antecedent for the plan, is to seek first the kingdom of God. Remember that the

mandate to be fruitful and multiply systematically presupposes a trust in the creator for direction in how to best accomplish this. Jesus even reaffirms this in Jn 15 when he demands that his people abide in him. And should that be a healthy practice, Jesus then goes on to say that fruit bearing (which is acceptable to God) is the expected result. We are without purpose if we are divided from our creator. He know the reasons (and thus the purpose) for his creation of humans and the cosmos. We go to him for it in order that our plan is one of realistic expectations, which in turn results in greater reliance upon God.

And God has visited the people of this epistle in such a way that by his providential will, the people are a living expression of the parable taught to us in Mark 4. Conveniences in those precepts of faith in God, which were readily acceptable, attractive, and pleasing to those who were aimless and subject to the darkness of Isa 59 and Jn 1, are now being exercised to the point where the writer of Hebrews intercedes with the call to complete loyalty (to the point of death, if need be).

Having observed the circumstances of the congregation, and knowing the kind of confidence needed to endure, he desires that the listeners be brought to the place of maturity in order to receive that which is promised. He wants us to get past a simplistic understanding of who God is and what he has done to the place of deep, abiding, authentic faith; *for there is nothing more authentic than a legitimate threat on your existence.*

There is nothing more more authentic, and thus more fundamental, than a legitimate threat on your life. Jesus knows this in Mt 6, and the author of Hebrews is only giving what he received from those who first heard from the Lord.