

Without

by Bryan Hodge

There are things that man must have for physical survival. He cannot survive very long without them. “How long can we survive without the basics? Every person and situation is different, though the ‘rule of threes’ gets at the desperate nature of what our bodies need: three minutes without oxygen, three days without water, three weeks without food” (Here’s the longest people have survived without air, food, water, sunshine, or sleep by Sean Kane, June 9, 2016, businessinsider.com). The current records for holding breath is 11 minutes and 35 seconds. Allow a breath of pure oxygen before the holding of breath, the record is 22 minutes and 22 seconds. The record without water is 18 days. The longest hunger strike without food is 74 days (ibid). There are things that are necessary, things we cannot do without.

This is also true in the spiritual realm. The book of Hebrews sets forth three things that we cannot do without. Let’s notice...

1. “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

Nearly all purification under the Law of Moses required blood [Priests and Tabernacle (Leviticus 8); Women following childbirth (Leviticus 12); Leper on recovery (Leviticus 14); Leprous house follow plague (Leviticus 14)]. There were exceptions (Leviticus 15). The Law of Moses required blood sacrifice for sin (e.g. Leviticus 4:3, 13, 22, 27; 5:5-7, 11, 15, 17-19; 6:1-7). The very poor were allowed to make a grain substitute in a sin offering (Leviticus 5:11-13). Was this an exception to the rule? Some do not believe that it was. Robert Milligan comments, “But that even in this case, the sin of the poor man was not forgiven without the shedding of blood, seems evident from what follows in the next verse of the same chapter, where it said, ‘And the priest shall make an atonement for him...’ This atonement, it seems could not be made without blood; for God says (Leviticus 17:11), ‘... It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.’ ...in the Talmud it is said, ‘There is not atonement except in blood’ (Yuma 5). It is most likely therefore that in this case, the Priest was required to make an atonement for the sin of the poor man, at the public expense” (Milligan, Hebrews, p. 334).

Christ is the ultimate sacrifice for man’s sins. He made a better sacrifice (Hebrews 9:23; note: sacrifices is in the plural in this verse. Robert Milligan explains, “The plural is put for the singular by synecdoche, because of the plurality of the Levitical sacrifices” p. 335). It was a once for all sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27; 9:24-28; 10:10, 12, 14).

The blood of Christ is something we cannot do without. If the sinner could be made righteous by law-keeping, then “Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2:21 cf. Philippians 3:9). “Without Him I could be dying \ Without Him I’d be enslaved \ Without Him life would be hopeless \ But with Jesus, Thank God I’m saved!” (Song: Without Him).

2. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

God has supplied grace to man. This grace is connected with the death of Christ. Paul wrote, “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law (lit. law), then Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2:21).

Man must supply faith. We are to: (1) believe that He is, and (2) that He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). This second point concerns a few things. (a) It concerns trust. We should trust in Him and in His promises (Hebrews 11:6 cf. 11:7; Psalm 9:10; 34:8-10). (b) It concerns desire, focus, and ambition (cf. Psalm 63:1, 105:3-4; 1 Chronicles 16:11; 2 Chronicles 15:2; Jeremiah 29:13; Amos 5:4; Colossians 3:1-2; Matthew 6:33). (c) It concerns actions (Hebrews 11:6 cf. 11:7; Psalm 119:2, 45; Isaiah 55:6-7).

Noah is mentioned as an example of the kind of faith needed (Hebrews 11:7). Noah believed God enough to do what He said was necessary for salvation.

Abraham is another example (Hebrews 11:8-ff). He was willing to follow God wherever He led him. He lived his life trusting in the promises of God. He desired that heavenly country (Hebrews 11:9-10, 16).

Moses is yet another example (Hebrews 11:23-ff). He chose rather to endure affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasure of sin (Heb. 11:25). He “Looked to the reward” (Hebrews 11:26).

3. “Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

Man’s faith should be more than a mere mental assent. It should affect one’s pursuits in life [The word translated “pursue” (NKJV) or “follow” (KJV) means “run after, pursue... fig. pursue, strive for, seek after, aspire to something” (BAGD)]. It should affect seeking to live in relationship with man and God.

We are to seek to live at peace with our fellow man. Paul instructed, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). If peace does not exist, it should not be because we did not desire such, or seek such. Furthermore, be exhorted, “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and things by which one may edify another” (Romans 14:19 cf. 15:2). Our actions should be considerate of others. We should desire to build others up in the Lord.

We should seek to live a holy life before God and man. [The word translated “holiness” signified (a) separation to God... (b) the resultant state, the conduct befitting those so separated” (Vine’s)]. Paul wrote, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 7). God cares how we live. If we want to see Him we should conscientiously pursue the lifestyle that He would have us live. This is not sinless perfection, but a lifestyle of following His will (1 John 1:7).

These three things we cannot do without. We cannot do without the blood of Christ. We cannot do without faith in God and His word. We cannot do without a lifestyle of pursuing His will.