

Searching for a home....

Hebrew 11.13-16

Introduction

Background: the Jewish Christians was enduring some kind of persecution and they were considering going back to old Judaism, rather than stay with the Christian faith. They were discouraged. Life had trampled them to the point of rejecting their faith in Christ.

To encourage a group of “crushed” Christians, the Hebrews 11 writer presents to us a kind of spiritual homecoming. He gathers together the names of those who have faithfully passed the legacy of faith on to the next generation. He reflects on the lives of these heroes and heroines of the faith. He talked about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel.

In the middle of this long list of the faithful, there is a momentary pause in the person-by-person account of the faithful in order to tease out certain implications from the lives of these of whom he has mentioned.

Chapter 11 describes young and old, Hebrew and Gentile, men and women, rich and poor.

Why are these great in God’s economy? These were actions which were pleasing to God, because they required dependence on Him and He received the glory from them.

The writer mentions SEVEN RICH SPIRITUAL QUALITIES OR IMPLICATIONS manifested in the lives of these Old Testament personalities.

11:13 These all died in faith without receiving the things promised, but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them and acknowledged that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth. 11:14 For those who speak in such a way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 11:15 In fact, if they had been thinking of the land that they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 11:16 But as it is, they aspire to a better land, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.NIV

1. Their Affirmation & confidence

11:13 These all died in faith without receiving the things promised, but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them...NIV

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them,^[c] embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to

*mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*NKJV

All of these heroes died with an unfulfilled dream, but confident that God would keep His word because they died, not in rebellion, but in the faith. God's promises for a better place to live were deeply engraved on their hearts. They dreamed of a place where sin, separation, and death could not plague them anymore. But they did not have the joy of seeing this fulfilled in their lifetimes. Nevertheless, down to their dying breath, they died with complete confidence that God would keep His promises to them.

A person of faith has this quiet confidence that God will take care of them, even though dreams are shattered and plans lay collapsed at their feet and they feel trampled by life. They may not see the fulfillment of all their dreams, but nevertheless they persist in the faith and die in the faith with a kind of quiet confidence.

Affirmation - "They were assured of [the promises]."

You don't spend 120 years building a boat in the middle of the desert based upon a guess it will do something it has never done before.

You don't build an Ark on a joke!! They understood faith as both evidence and substance. Heb. 11:1 Noah acted out of

confidence that it would definitely rain. How do you achieve confirmation?

2, Their CONFESSION

11:13...acknowledged [confessed] that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth...

These heroes and heroines formulated a kind of traveling community in conflict with the cultures around them.

Their values and priorities were not the values and priorities of the other nations among whom they lived.

This world was not their home. They belonged to another world and they lived their lives in obedience to that which was to come.

They refused to get themselves permanently entangled with the temporal. They never allowed themselves to get too comfortable with life.

The phrase "strangers and aliens" is well attested in the Bible. In the Old Testament narratives the patriarchs and their descendants refer to themselves as "aliens and strangers" in the land (1 Chron. 29:15; Genesis 23:4; Psalm 39:12). And Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:11, "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."

People of faith have a clear witness. While they enjoy the blessings found in God's world, they also make a statement about the control that these things have over their lives. People

of faith have a different set of priorities and speak a different language with an eye on the eternal.

3. Their Conviction - "They embraced them" NKJV

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What is a conviction?

It is more than an opinion or belief to which you pay lip service. It becomes a defining priority in your life. It is part of your character and forms a touchstone against which you measure your attitudes, actions, and behavior. This is the picture of "embracing."

What happens when you embrace something?

1. Open your arms wide...
 - Drop defenses and vulnerable, you are defenseless
 - You remove barriers so you can pull in the object of your embrace completely.
2. Creates intimacy - This is the traditional greeting for a friend, someone that you know and recognize.
3. When you hug, you draw someone close to you in an intimate fashion.
4. You cling to them using real strength in your arms. That is how you create a conviction. Once you have a

conviction, it determines your actions. Once you believe that "He is, and that He rewards" then that conviction determines your responses and not circumstances, temptation, discouragement, other opportunities, etc.

This is a faith which has substance of the things hoped for. This faith that becomes a conviction is one which is life-changing. It also permits God to use you to change other lives. That is living for more!

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5. Their pursuit

11:14 For those who speak in such a way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

These exiles and strangers were seeking a home. Their hearts were set on heaven. Their citizenship was there. This was what motivated them.

From Genesis on, the Scriptures never allow us to lose sight of the idea of traveling or the journey/quest motif. The Bible is one gigantic travel story with God’s interventions along the way!

It begins in the Old Testament with the individual patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph) journeying from one place to the next, seeking a permanent dwelling.

Then it progresses to the nation of Israel who journeyed into Egypt thanks to Joseph and journeyed back out again thanks to Moses and then journeyed through the wilderness for many years.

They were a kind of traveling community in conflict with the cultures around them. They eventually had to journey into captivity despite prophetic calls to repentance and some of their offspring even journeyed back home again with Nehemiah’s leadership.

And then, we get to the New Testament, and this journey motif still drives the text. Jesus journeyed from heaven to earth. John’s says in his Gospel that once he got here, he “tabernacled” or “tented” among us.

His parents were even on a journey when he was born. They had to journey into Egypt to protect him. After which, they journeyed to Nazareth. From there, Jesus journeyed from place to place preaching the gospel, and telling stories about prodigal sons who wander away and journey back home again.

Finally, Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, where he accomplished salvation for all of us, and then He journeyed back to heaven again.

From there, he called Paul to be one of his chief spokesmen, who took three missionary journey’s to spread the Good News.

People of faith realize that they’re on a journey, that this world is simply one little phase of this journey that extends into the eternal realms. This world is not your home; it’s a place of

temporary residence. Enjoy your homecomings, but don't get too comfortable here. You're on a pursuit and you're not home yet.

We wonder why life deals such harsh blows to us. Well, remember, you're not home yet!

The dog will bark at strangers. Don't try to find comfort in this world.

6. Their Discernment

11:15 In fact, if they had been thinking of the land that they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 11:16 But as it is, they aspire to a better land, that is, a heavenly one...

They did not just merely anticipate heaven; they evaluated the things of earth.

Looking at the things that were seen, they quickly discerned that all the marks of death, impermanence and perishability were upon them. To give their lives to these things was to misplace their time and ability. The patriarchs never looked back.

People of faith have this ability to distinguish between the temporal and the eternal.

7. Their Security

11:16 ...Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God,

for he has prepared a city for them.

Strangers and illegal aliens often experience hardship, social isolation, and economic deficiency. But God made them a promise. No matter how bad things got, He would always be proud of them and gladly provide for them and give to them a city with all the amenities and conveniences that this implies.

People of faith stand to inherit God's blessings and provisions. This is their security.

APPLICATION

The vision and the heroism of these great heroes and heroines of the faith challenge us; they confront us; they rebuke us; and they inspire us. The Hebrew writer was persuading his readers to not turn back and in so doing encourages them and us to press on. How do these heroes/heroines impact us?

1. They Challenge the Things or People in Which We Place our Confidence

Remember godly Job. He didn't know what was going on in his life – why he was suffering to the extent that he was, but he makes this incredible statement of confidence in God and His goodness. Job said, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him (13:15)." God, I may go to my grave without ever knowing what is going on in my life, but I want you to know something. You're my only hope. And if I die, I'll die believing in and obeying you. This is my commitment and confidence today.

2.They confront our fearfulness

They made bold confession to their faith in God. They were alienated and hated for their viewpoints and values. Many of them were trampled by life and yet they remained faithful.

3. They Rebuke our Materialism

The majority of people live as if this world is the only world. The faith heroes challenge that assumption and the lifestyle that stems from that kind of thinking. If this world is all there is, I must grab as much life as I can while I can. But if there's another world to come, what's the hurry?

The faith heroes call us to a far simpler lifestyle and remind us that self-contented affluence is never to become a replacement of outgoing compassion.

4.They Inspire our Obedience

Our prayer should that God will help me to live my life for the things that really matter, to extend the legacy of faith to my own children, and to live in light of the world to come.

Once a king asked a second century saint to give up his faith, or all his wealth would be seized.

"You cannot do that O' King," said the saint "for all my treasures are in heaven".

"Then I will banish you from my country", the king said.

"Send me anywhere king, my Jesus will be with me," said the saint.

"Then I will kill you," screamed the king.

"But king, I am a dead man for the last forty years" was the saint's answer

In the darkest hours of your life when it seems that all is lost, never give up.

In the hours of despair when you see no way out, never give up.

When the devil lies in your ear that you can't make it, never give up.

When your friends and family tell you that salvation isn't real, never give up.

When those ministers and pastors and men of God fail you and you are tempted to just throw in the towel and walk away, never give up.

When it seems that the promise of His coming will just not happen, never give up.

Never give up – never turn your back on God – never walk away from your love of Jesus Christ – Never give up!