

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Open up your bibles with me to Hebrews 11

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through the book of Hebrews

A letter that was written to a group of Jewish believers who were contemplating going back to Judaism –

And so – the writer of Hebrews writes this letter to them to encourage them to continue to endure, by faith

Now -for the past couple of weeks, we have been looking at different individuals who endured by faith –

But the writer of Hebrews is going to pause in our text this evening – because there is an aspect of faith that the patriarchs shared – and that was a longing for heaven

And the reason it is important is because one of the key measures of our faith as a Christian, one of the tests of what you truly believe is whether we long for the things of earth or whether we truly long for God's kingdom in heaven.

Let's pray...

By now, we are all familiar with the fact the writer of Hebrews gave us a description of what faith looks like in the opening verses of this chapter -

And then he continued with a series of examples of faith

- Abel in verse 4
- Enoch in verse 5
- Noah in verse 7
- Abraham and Sarah in our study last week from verse 8-12

We have looked at what they did and what they endured

And we even got a brief glimpse into why they acted in faith

The writer now goes on to tell us something important about them—something that relates very much to the great theme of ‘faith’ that we find in this chapter;

One of the things that the writer is going to point out in our text this evening is that the faith of these examples was not a temporal faith but an eternal one

That by faith, they sought something that was unseen –

We saw it last week in our study in verse 10 –

The writer – speaking of Abraham say,

[Heb 11:10 NKJV] 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God.

One of the themes throughout the bible is the reoccurring message that –

This place is not our home

This place is not our home

This place is not our home

We are here – only temporarily

We are here – only passing through

We are here – on a visa

And the more that we begin to truly grasp this theme that the earth is not our forever home, the more our affection, our interests, our desires, are going to be looking more and more to our eternal future.

What prevents us from doing this?

The corruption of the world,

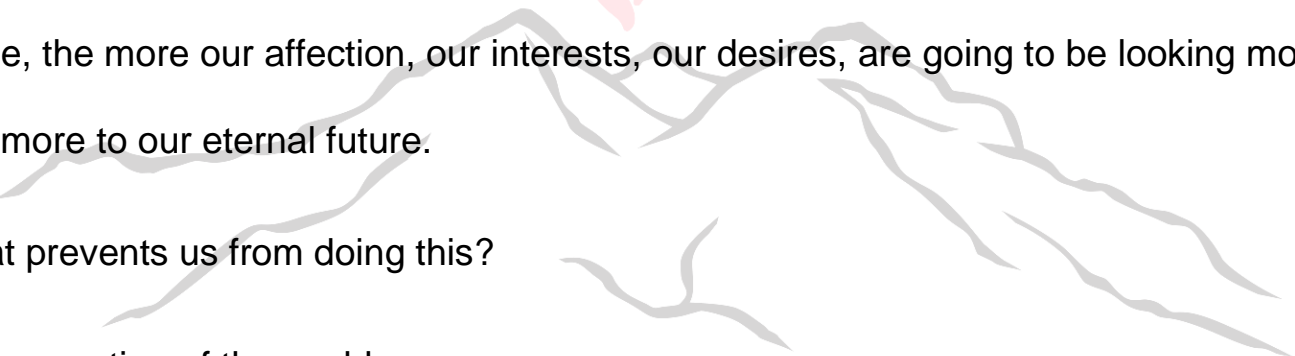
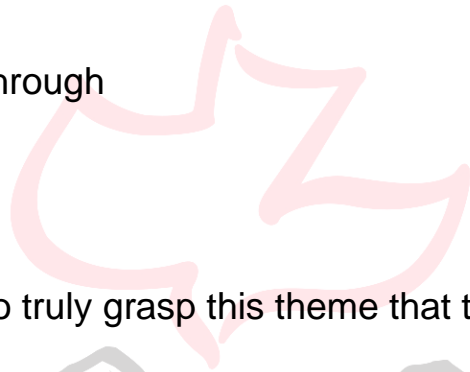
The desires of this world,

the cares of the world

the concerns of this world

these things begin to take over our lives and then our hearts

And then this world becomes a little bit more important and heaven becomes a little less important



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It is a trap from the enemy to get us sidetracked

To not finish the race

But these patriarchs – they endured by faith

[Heb 11:13-19 NKJV] 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced [them] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

These all died in faith – speaking of the patriarchs – Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob

These all died in faith – I want you to think about that for a moment –

In what way did these all died in faith?

Persuaded

Confident

Trusting

That is what it means to die in faith

It doesn't mean that I went to church once in a while

Or that I read my bible every once in a while

It doesn't mean that I was sorry and I cried some tears once in a while

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It means living one's life persuaded, confident, trusting

The believed God promises and then they kept on believing God's promises and then they died.

I mentioned this a few weeks ago – a promise is only as good as the person that makes the promise and who has the power to keep the promise.

Remember what Abraham was promised – in our study last week

- He was promised a land
- He was promised that God was going to make Abraham a great nation
- He was promised a son – despite the fact that both Abraham and Sarah were biologically – beyond the years to be able to conceive.

And we saw in our text last week that God kept the promise

God did the impossible in order to keep His promise.

What about the land that God promised Abraham –

Abraham walked the land that God had promised to give to his descendants – and at that time, he neither owned the land or had any descendants.

Likewise, Isaac died in that land of promise without seeing the promise fulfilled in his own day.

And the same was true for Jacob—and for the twelve sons that were born from him. Jacob and his sons lived out their remaining days in Egypt.

Jacob died in Egypt and as he is dying in Egypt – on his deathbed, he makes his children swear that they would bury him in the land that God had promised.

God made a promise

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died – without possessing the land

But though they didn't see the fulfillment of those promises with their own eyes, they nevertheless believed them and made them their own by faith.

How was it that they “saw” them from afar off?

It would have to be that they saw the promises of God, by faith.

As the writer said earlier, **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (v. 1).**

Faith doesn't see things with the eyes of the flesh; because the things that God promises—at the time He promises them—were not yet present to be seen and handled

[Rom 8:24 NKJV] 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

So, faith perceives these things with a confident trust and assurance in the faithfulness of the God of the promise.

That being said, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob – “embraced” the promises as their own.

They committed themselves to them.

They cut the ties that bound them to the present world in which they lived, and gave themselves over to that which God said was to belong to them and their descendants in the generations to come.

And notice that they didn't complain, they didn't gripe

They confessed – that they were simply strangers and pilgrims on the earth

Turn your bibles with me to Gen 23

[Gen 23:1-4 NKJV] 1 Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; [these were] the years of the life of Sarah. 2 So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that [is], Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. 3 Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, 4 “I [am] a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

Abraham walked in the land of Canaan for over 60 years –

Remember, God called him out of his country when he was 75

And he was 10 years older than Sarah

60 years and he says - "I [am] a foreigner and a visitor among you.

His words indicate that he didn't consider himself to be a permanent resident in the promised land, although the promised land is where he lived for more than 60 years.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

Even though God had promised to give to Abraham the land of Canaan, (where he was when he said these things), Abraham never really settled down in the land. Nor did He ever lay claim to the land.

Instead, he considered himself to be a "pilgrim" and a "stranger" in the promised land itself.

They didn't yet possess what God was giving them.

They have not yet arrived to it. But they sought it.

They were living on earth; but they were on pilgrimage upon the earth as they lived.

It is hard for us to find someone in the scriptures who modeled this attitude for us better than the Apostle Paul –

He was a man who gave up everything in this world in order to live fully for the homeland of heaven.

He counted all “loss” for the promise of Christ; and lived in the context of that hope.

To the church in Philippi – he wrote,

[Phi 1:21-24 NKJV] 21 For to me, to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain. 22 But if [I] live on in the flesh, this [will mean] fruit from [my] labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, [which is] far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh [is] more needful for you.

Paul only desired to remain here on earth for as long as it would be necessary for the ministry of his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

When he knew that the time had come – as he was awaiting his execution –

He writes in 2 Tim 4

[2Ti 4:6-8 NKJV] 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Paul – just like the patriarchs was looking forward to his heavenly reward - by faith

I want to bring this back to it's context –

At the time that this letter was written, the Jews had a homeland

But within a few years after this letter was written to the group of Jewish believers – Roman legions march into Jerusalem, they destroy the city, they burn it to the ground – including the temple and over a million Jews were killed and the rest of them were going to be driven out of their homeland –

They would become homeless

They would become strangers in a land that was not their own

What about a Christian?

Where do we call home?

Heaven is our home

15 And truly if they had called to mind that [country] from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

if Abraham considered his home-country his destination, then surely he would have had many opportunities to return.

But, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all remained in the land.

Isaac was born in the land, and remained there.

Jacob was born in the land, and remained there as well. They could have returned.

When seeking a bride for Isaac, Abraham sent one of his servants to Haran, where many of his relatives lived (Gen. 24).

In fact, Abraham made his servant take an oath that he would not take Isaac to Haran to get a wife.

His servant brought Rebecca back to Canaan. So travel was a possibility.

Regarding Jacob, the same thing happened. He, himself, travelled to Haran to obtain a wife. He spent a few years in Haran (getting more than he bargained for). But, as soon as he had opportunity, he returned to the land of Canaan.

The chance to go back was there for them, if they wanted it.

If they no longer wished to live as strangers and pilgrims in the land of promise, they could have returned back to Ur of the Chaldeans, taken up once again the earthly inheritance that father Abraham had set aside, and have mixed and mingled themselves with the people of their homeland.

Why didn't they return to their original home-country?

Because God had promised them the land of Canaan.

It was a demonstration of their faith to stay. Yet, while they stayed, they still considered themselves to be “pilgrims” and “strangers” in the land.

Abraham had no desire to go back because there was nothing there for him.

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.

I had you make a note of the word “desire”

Because the patriarchs didn’t simply have wishful thinking of heaven –

The Greek word that is used here means –

to stretch out the hand;

to reach further

to grasp

- the picture is that of a man stretching out his hand as far as he can possibly stretch – it seems to indicate that you are exercising every single ounce of your ability to stretch yourself as far as you can go

so the writer of Hebrews is inviting the reader to see, to stretch, what they had apparently had failed to grasp, to stretch themselves at what they hadn’t seen before.

And that is heaven –

They were willing to forsake the temporal “good” for the eternal “better”.

These men and women of faith (the patriarchs) they weren’t just sitting back in their tents daydreaming about heaven.

They were stretching forth to grab it as if their lives depended upon it

BTW church,

That’s what we—as “pilgrim” as followers of Jesus—also do.

We willingly give up the temporary pleasures of this world in order to gain the eternal riches that are offered us in Christ.

It is a far better inheritance

Turn your bibles to 1 Peter 1

[1Pe 1:3-9 NKJV] 3 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, [being] much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is

tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see [Him], yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of [your] souls.

Our hope ought to be in heaven. We ought to willingly leave all behind. The promises of the life to come are far greater than what we have on earth.

I also had you make a note of the phrase - **Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God**

There are many things in this life that are unsecure

Our investments – stock market – they go up and down and sometimes they crash

Our homes – natural disasters, fires - gone

Our possessions – same thing

Our friends and family – they are not going to be here forever

But, here in verse 16, we see a security, which is unmatched in all creation.

God is not ashamed to be called their God.”

God is not ashamed to be identified with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

You guys remember when God appeared to Moses

At the burning bush, God said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6)

Think about what God is saying. "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Your Fathers?

I am their God! They believed and trusted in Me.

I will freely take on their name to identify Myself.

I am not ashamed to be called their God."

Now, the great reality is this...

Not only has God delighted to take on the names of the Patriarchs.

But, He has also delighted to take on the names of all who believe.

This applies to us! We are called sons of God.

"I am the God of that person who loves Me and believes in Me, who believes the promise and embraces the promise.

That's the reality of the New Covenant – we saw this a few weeks ago –

[Heb 8:10 NKJV] 10 "For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

So, if God is not ashamed to take on our name, what does this mean of our hope for eternity?

It means that our eternity is secure.

Church: if God is not ashamed of us, what do we have to fear?

There's nothing to fear!

There is nothing that people can do to affect our eternity! **Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32).**

These men and women of faith – God not only identified with them but He invites everyone to identify with their faith.

And that is why Abraham is known as the Father of faith (Gal 3:7)

And what is the reward?

God prepared a city for them and us.

In the Greek – it is written to indicate that it has already been done

[Jhn 14:3 NKJV] 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, [there] you may be also.

The place has been prepared.

God has prepared for you and me, not a temporary city but a permanent city.

[Rev 21:1-4 NKJV] 1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them [and be] their God. 4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

And that's the promise that is held out to you and me.

It's ours if we place our faith in the promises of God, become assured of them and embrace them, and live as strangers and pilgrims on this earth for Jesus Christ.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'