

Hebrews

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Hebrews 11:13-19



Vss. 16-19

- In our culture of instant gratification this is a hard passage to swallow, for the message here is that Noah, Abraham, and Sarah all died without seeing the realization of the promises that God made to them. Today, if God makes us a promise, then we want to see it and see it soon. But the preacher told us at the beginning of this chapter that "faith is the assurance of things HOPED for, the CONVICTION of things not seen" (vs. 1).
- And so these forerunners of our faith "were strangers and exiles on the earth". In ancient times it was very hard to be a stranger in a strange land. You were not part of the local tribe and you were certainly not part of the family. To be a stranger in a strange land was a humbling, if not humiliating, experience. One thing all the ancient cultures agreed on was that it was better to be the poorest man in your own country than to be a stranger in a foreign country.
- Says William Barclay: All their days the patriarchs were strangers in a strange land. That picture of the faithful sojourner became a picture of the Christian life. Tertullian said of the Christian: "He knows that on earth he has a pilgrimage but that his dignity is in heaven." Clement of Alexandria said: "We have no fatherland on earth." Augustine said: "We are sojourners exiled from our fatherland." It was not that the Christians were foolishly other-worldly, detaching themselves from the life and work of this world; but they always remembered that they were people on the way... The Christian regards himself as the pilgrim of eternity.
- But for us, the key is to realize that these people never lost their faith nor their hope. Even when they understood that the manifestation of their hope would not come until after they had died, their spirits constantly were illuminated by their faith.
- And in spite of all their struggles, trials, and disappointments there was never a time that they wanted to go back. When Israel was following Moses in the desert, they cried to go back to Egypt, but never the patriarchs, never the people who led by faith. What the preacher wants us to know is that when we receive the call from Jesus, from that moment, there

is no going back. Jesus said in Luke 9:63, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God”.

- Because of such a high level of faith, God Himself is not ashamed to call these people His own. God is not ashamed for them to call Him their God and He has prepared their reward.

Vss. 17-19

- The story of the sacrifice of Isaac is found in Genesis 22. We are told in Genesis 21:5 that Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. He had been waiting a long time to see God’s promise of a son fulfilled. But that was only half the promise. There was still the matter of Abraham’s offspring numbering more than the stars or the sands of the beach. Now in Genesis 22 God is asking Abraham to give Isaac as a sacrifice, as a burnt offering (Genesis 22:2).
- Here is the ultimate test of faith. When you don’t get your only son until you are 100 years old, that boy would be hard to give up. And how would God’s promise of a nation come true if Isaac dies? But then, how much do you trust God? Are we ready to sacrifice what we hold dearest for the sake of the Kingdom of God? Career? Friends? Family? I have known divorces to happen when the pastor’s wife decided she didn’t want to live that life anymore. When you KNOW that this is the path God has chosen for you, that THIS is His plan for your life, what are you willing to abandon to walk that path? Did not Jesus say that He came to bring a sword and not peace? To turn son against father and mother against daughter? (Matthew 10:34-37)
- In all things, God must come first...and then trust Him for the rest. In Abraham’s case, the preacher of Hebrews suggests that Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead and return the boy to him. It seemed like insanity, but in every life, when faced with a choice that on the face of it seems crazy and a defeat, we are to trust and obey and accept as God’s truth what common sense cannot understand. And we must ALWAYS remember that in everything God asks of us, the source of that request comes from the deepest part of God’s love for us...and this is why we can trust Him.