

## HEBREWS 11:13-39

“THESE ALL DIED...”, v.13-16, These all died (except Enoch!) in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland

If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. (b.)Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Again the writer (Mike Depew would say it was Paul!) refers back to our definition of faith in vs. 1,2, “... assurance of things hoped for... conviction of things not seen...”, when he speaks of “not having received the things promised...”. Here also is v. 6, “...must believe ...He rewards those who seek him...”.

The Living Bible, 13, “...but they saw it all (the things promised) awaiting them on ahead and were glad”.

What an important point the writer makes in v.13b! They recognized “they were strangers & exiles on the earth.” Have you ever wondered why the world seems so “out of step” with the way you see things as a believer? HERE IT IS!

*“This world is not my home. I’m just a passin’ through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from Heaven’s golden shore, & I can’t be at home in this world anymore.”*

FRIENDS, as people of this kind of “**faith**”, we “make it clear that (‘we’) are seeking a homeland” ,v.14. The writer here in vs. 14-16, defines v.10, where Abraham was “looking forward to the city, that has foundations, whose designer & builder is God.”.

I am reminded of Lot’s wife when I read v.15... she (lot’s wife) “looked back” to where she had come from. Pastor Reggie commented on 10:39, “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith...”

Notice 16b (above).... Could God say this of us today? **AND**, He has indeed “prepared for (us) a city”! In fact Jesus said so in Jn. 14:1-3.

“**BY FAITH ABRAHAM**, v.17-19, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son,

of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

v.19, “He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.”

We’ve seen Abraham in vs.8-10, “looking forward to a city”. But now.... God seems to be taking away the heir He had promised. Here (& with other characters in scripture) God is “testing” the faith of Abraham. Again we come to one of those times when God may “hurt” one of His children—but never with the intention to “harm” us. How could these instructions from God fit into God’s promise of v.18 “...through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”? Abraham did not know.... but he trusted & obeyed God.

Notice v.19.

**BY FAITH ISAAC, v20, invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.”**

Referring back to Gen. 27:1-45, the ESV foot note says, “These predictive future blessings demonstrate Isaac’s hope for the future.”

You may remember this was no normal run-of-the-mill blessing! This was the occasion when Rebekah conspired with Jacob to have Isaac bless Jacob instead of Esau. It was time for the first-born son to receive his blessing... & that should have gone to Esau. Jacob sneaked in ahead of his brother & pretended to be Esau. Their dad, Isaac, being old & blind, gave the blessing to Jacob.

**BY FAITH JACOB, v.21, when dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph.”** In a similar way, Jacob the father is giving his blessings to his children, & grandchildren through Joseph. Like Isaac, Jacob’s blessings were based (by faith!) on the future hope they both had.... that God would fulfill His promise to Abraham, to make of him a great nation... & that the nations of the world would be blessed, Gen. 12:3.

Interestingly enough, this blessing also had a twist to it. When Joseph brought Ephraim & Manasseh to be blessed, he placed them before his father with Manasseh in a position to receive Jacob’s right hand, & the blessing to the first-born. However, Jacob crossed his hands to put his right hand on Ephraim.

With both Isaac & Jacob, we see how God works His sovereign will, even though it may seem to go against the “tradition” of the eldest son receiving the greater blessing!

**By faith Joseph, v. 22, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.”**

Referring to Gen.50:24, 25, Joseph spoke of the day when God would deliver Israel from Egypt. According to v. 24, Joseph believed God would return the people of Israel to the homeland He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. “By faith” in that promise, he asked his children to “carry up” his bones, back to their homeland.

**By faith Moses**, v. 23-28, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict

**By faith Moses**, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward

**By faith** he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible

**By faith** he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them."

Actually, v. 23 speaks of the faith of Moses' parents. Ex.2, tells us that after 3 months his mother placed Moses in a basket... & the rest is history! **By faith** they went against "the king's edict", v23 of our text, believing God had something special in store for Moses.

Moses' "faith story" is spoken of in vs. 24-28. Reading that he "chose" God's people rather than the "fleeting pleasure of sin", reminds me of Joshua's challenge to Israel, "Choose you this day whom you will serve, but for me & my house...", Josh.24.

When the writer speaks in v.26 of the "reproaches of Christ", he is speaking of Moses suffering on behalf of the people of Israel in a similar way that Christ suffered on behalf of the people of God.

v.27, "By faith he was hidden... by faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter... by faith he left Egypt,... v.28, "By faith he kept the Passover (the original one). As with all these "heroes of the faith" in chapter 11, Moses "walked by faith, & not by sight", 2 Cor.5:7.

**By faith the people**, v.29, crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned."

Hearing God's instruction through Moses, Ex.14:15-18, "the people" stepped into the dry bed of the Red Sea... can you imagine the experience! Yes, the ground was dry, but to your left & to your right there is a wall of water!

The Egyptian soldiers "trying to do the same", reminds me of a NT story, Acts 17:14, when God was doing great miracles through Paul. Some "itinerant Jewish exorcists" tried to cast evil spirits from a person, "saying, I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims". The evil spirits answered, "Jesus I know and Paul I recognize but who are you?" The man who had the evil spirits, "leaped on them...and overpowered them, so that they fled". Trying to do the work of God without the Spirit of God will bring similar consequences. Egypt's soldiers died... these exorcists were beaten.

**By faith the walls of Jericho, v.30, “fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.”.**

Again, & again, we see **f-a-i-t-h**, spelled out by *obedience* to the Word of God. Nowhere else in human history do we see such a strategy in combat! “March around your enemy once a day for 7 days, & then on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, do so 7 times & have the priests blow the trumpets.”

I served in the USMC for 4 years in the band, playing a tuba! We were never told of this strategy. Maybe things would have gone better during my last year in Vietnam if we had tried this battle plan!!

**By faith Rahab, v.31, “the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies”.**

Actually “a friendly welcome”, doesn’t fully describe Rahab’s actions. **Josh. 2**, begins the story of the 2 spies being sent into Jericho to gather intelligence about the area to be conquered. The men were led by God to Rahab’s residence.... to a person who “**by faith**” knew (& acted on that knowledge), Jericho was going to fall to Israel. She **did** “welcome” them... & “told” them the fear that gripped the city... “hid them” from the authorities... & “helped them escape”.

We don’t know for sure, but maybe Rahab ran a local inn for travelers. No suggestion is made that there was any wrongful behavior with Rahab. In fact Rahab went on to become one of the mothers in the human lineage of Jesus Christ (because of her faith & obedience)!

**And what more, v.32, “shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of...”**

**Gideon...**, from the “weakest clan of Manasseh, & I am least in my father’s house,” **Judg.6:15**. His testing the waters (pun intended) with a fleece probably spoke of his faith being about the size of a “mustard seed”, **Mt.17:20**.

**Barak...**, whose claim to fame was that he would not go into battle against Israel’s enemies unless Deborah, the prophetess & judge would go with him, **Judg.4:6**. Faith? Yes, but again, “a mustard seed faith”.

**Samson...** **Judg.13:24**

**Jephthah...** **Judg. 11:1**, a Gileadite was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute”. Have you ever known a person with this name? I have-a TN parolee! As a result of his heritage, his family ran him off. **V. 3**, “...worthless fellows collected around Jephthah & went out with him”. **But** when the Ammonites came to fight Gilead, they called him back to lead them in battle!!

**David...** **1 Sam. 16:1**

**Samuel...** **1 Sam.1:20**

**The prophets, vs.33-35a**, ... just average people in Israel, who believed God, & obeyed. The focus in these verses should remain on the **f-a-i-t-h** of these believers, & not on their deeds.

who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions

became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight

Women received back their dead by resurrection.....

**Some were tortured**, v.35b-38 "... refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. 36, Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment, v.37, They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— v.38, of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

I **bold printed** this group name of believers who "**walked by faith & not by sight**", because some folks mistakenly think ... "*if things aren't going well for you, God must be disappointed with you*". That was the lie *Job's friends* believed... & accused him of!

Speaking of v.38a, the ESV footnote says, "*Their presence in the world was itself evidence of God's grace, for their proclamation of the word of God to sinful people was a greater privilege than people deserved.*"

In our Prayer Chapel we have posted a map showing countries where Christians are persecuted. Voice of the Martyrs is one of several organizations who bring awareness of our persecuted brothers.... And we should continually pray for these! (Nov. 3 is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church!)

**And all these**, v.39, 40, "**And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,**

since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

What is so amazing and inspiring about this whole chapter is that "... all these... did not receive what was promised...", but they continued in obedience, "**by faith**".

"**Something better for us**", refers to the ("**better**") new covenant realities of the superior Son of God, with his superior priesthood (ESV). The Message says in v.40, "**God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.**"

As people of f-a-i-t-h, like those in this chapter, we will all partake together of the glorious blessings of the future heaven in the presence of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ!

What a blessed list of "people of faith" we have to follow... Jesus Christ Himself being our Chief

**Example!**