

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
May 1, 2022

Title: Faith's Reward

Subject: The Patriarchs, Faith, Sanctification, Faith, Death, Faith's Vision, Strangers, Heavenly City, Jesus Christ, the Trinity, The World, the Flesh, Satan, Affections, Salvation, Heaven, Promises of God

Theme Text: Hebrews 11:13-16 (ESV) ¹³ These all died 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. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Theme Illustration: Of all the enemies of our souls, Satan, the Flesh, and the world, modern Christians deem the world as the least of our dangers, worries, and enemies. After all, is it not the things of this world that give our lives pleasure and satisfaction? It is the allures, entrapments, and the siren songs of the world that Satan uses to keep us in bondage in our Egypt. The Lord Jesus warned all of His disciples, past, and present of the dangers of the world, **Mark 8:36 (ESV)** ³⁶ **For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?** This was the Lord's prayer to the Father preceding His crucifixion, **John 17:15-16 (ESV)** ¹⁵ **I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.** ¹⁶ **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** The Apostle John warns believers that the love for the world and love for God mutually exclusive, **1 John 2:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ **Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

Just as Chaldea, the world, was a danger to the souls of the Patriarchs, and Egypt a danger to the soul of Israel, so is the world the antitype of these enemies of God's people. Ever is the attraction of the world to Christians just as Egypt was to Israel. Real faith, the faith of Abraham and our spiritual forefathers, replaces the desire for the world with a stronger desire, that desire is for heaven. Real faith gives us a vision of the promise of God, sets us on the journey in seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and produces in the believer a true evaluation of what brings blessedness, joy, happiness, and ultimate fulfillment. This faith desire for the better is a great impetus for the Christian to stay the course, to persevere, and thus receive the greatest of all rewards, God's approval.

Read: Hebrews 11:13-16

Introduction: The "these" in this text are the Patriarchs whose Faith is being held up as examples for Jewish believers who are in danger of being drawn back into the Judaism from which they have been delivered. This exhortation was designed for them to see their situation as the patriarchs saw theirs.

This exhortation is also aimed at us who by God's action in redemption, regeneration, and sanctification have been chosen out of the world to be the people of God. Just as Esau chose the world, and forfeited his spiritual birthright, just as many in Israel rebelled and desired to go back to Egypt and refused to enter the Promised Land. Christians are beset with this same temptation. The destiny of Esau and the rebellious Israelites was set by their affections and destroyed their souls. Such is our affection for the world a constant danger. Even though Israel was delivered out of Egypt, Egypt never left the hearts of the Israelites. The result was they died in the wilderness.

Many are the professed believers who choose their bowl of stew to the promises of the Kingdom, or desire to go back to the world and its comforts and promises knowing that the world will receive them back with open arms. They do not believe that something greater than what the world offers is

available to the person of faith, **Matthew 6:33 (ESV)** ³³ **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.** The life of faith is a continuous warfare from beginning to end, a life of repentance, confession, seeking the Kingdom for and in us as we are taught to pray, Thy Kingdom come in me.

Transition: I observe three aspects of real faith in our text. First, we see:

1. Faith's Vision: Hebrews 11:13 (ESV) ¹³ **These all died 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.**

The patriarchs all died without receiving the promises God made to them. However, their faith enabled them to see the fulfillment of those promises while yet living as strangers, exiles, or aliens in the land. They accepted God's command to leave for a place that was to be their permanent home on the earth. So God commands us, **Revelation 18:4 (ESV)** ⁴ **Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues;**

Their faith enabled Abraham to see a future city that God linked to the place they were commanded to go, **Hebrews 11:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ **For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.** Emulating our spiritual forefathers, Christians are commanded as per our calling to Christ, to be sanctified, called out from the world to follow Christ. This new life also comes with a vision of a future city, Revelation 21.

This vision so guided them in their journey that when they arrived, they decided that God's promises were far more compelling and glorious than the place they had left. Thus, they remained in Canaan believing God and His promises were more glorious than the world they had left. By remaining, they demonstrated they were content to live a life separated from their former world, even to their deathbeds. On their deathbeds, they believed

God's promises as fulfilled. We must remember that their faith is confirmed by their obedience.

This is a picture or type of the real Christian who does not go back to the world. The real Christian renounces the world. Baptism is a picture of being dead to the world and the old life, born into the promises of God. Therefore, if we are to be faithful Christians, we continue to live world renouncing lives. This renunciation is not a loss of the world's valuables but gaining the reward of heaven.

With the gift of faith through God's grace, the patriarchs' hearts thus their affections were changed. They accepted their separation or sanctification and thus their hearts and wills were cemented into God's will and His promises. Before the world began, God separated for Himself a people for His glory, a particular people. This separation is God's sanctifying grace. We are a people marked out for His glory, **Isaiah 43:6-7 (ESV)** ⁶ **I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth,** ⁷ **everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."** A real Christian is in reality retracing Abraham's journey. He and his progeny were content to be living in tents as strangers. They, in their minds and hearts, were citizens of that visionary city.

How many Christians today have their feet in the church in their hearts back in Chaldea, Egypt, or the world? They never truly embraced the heavenly vision that divine grace has given them. In reality, when Abraham left his land, he in a sense, by faith, died. This is evidenced by his refusal to return to Chaldea. They were strangers and pilgrims not only by God's command but also by their own consent. You see, God makes grace in our hearts unto separation, having been born again we consent to our status as strangers and pilgrims in this world. Their hearts as well as their bodies were not in Chaldea but the promised land.

Those who are effectually called by God out of darkness into His heavenly light, do at conversion, surrender their whole being renouncing the flesh, the

world, and the devil. And thus, we now by His grace wage continual warfare against those three enemies.

Transition: Our text now moves us from faith vision to:

2. Faith's Journey: Hebrews 11:14-15 (ESV) ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

Those early believers, when grasping the truth, saw that this world is not nor cannot be the promised land. This is the journey of sanctification. That previous vision was so compelling that their continual separation is evidence that they are indeed seeking that for which Christ called them and us, **Matthew 7:7 (ESV) ⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.** Real faith compels real believers to continue to seek.

I want you to notice what occupied the minds and hearts of those with faith. Their minds were not preoccupied with the people, lands, and provision of the land they left behind. People of faith are a people that are not left behind, but people who have moved on, whose minds are on the promises of God. That promise is a home for God's people exclusively.

If in their minds, they would be pining for what they left, they might have returned. This text serves as a solemn reminder of what every professing Christian must take to heart. A pining for the world will lead you to the world.

Our lives, parents, wives, children, houses, possessions, and our country are all the proper, lawful objects of our natural affections. Hear me, they are proper. But when any of them stand in the way of God's commands, if any, are hindrances to the doing or suffering anything according to His will, faith places God's will, far above these things and leads us to obey.

The patriarchs kept their eye on the goal. They knew that in heaven they had a better and permanent supply that the world cannot replicate. Divine grace had taught us that those things that we eagerly sought before were cisterns that hold no water, **Jeremiah 2:13 (ESV)** ¹³ **for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.** The Lord's rebuke of Israel also stands true to professing Christians today. Many choose the broken cisterns of the world over the living water of the Lord Jesus Christ. What the world promises to satisfy cannot quench.

Grace has taught us that it is sin to make material things the chief objects of life. We are not to renounce our comforts given through God's grace, but we are to renounce our carnal affections for them. We cannot leave the world before our time. But we must get the world out of us. This is the journey of sanctification.

Transition: This faith grants to the believer by God's grace the capacity to make:

3. Faith's Evaluation: Hebrews 11:16 (ESV) ¹⁶ **But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.**

To the professing Christian a proper evaluation of the world. In contrast, the kingdom comes by faith and the word of God. It is not enough to renounce the world, but we must have our hearts gravitate to better things. We must believe in and seek heaven itself.

The sanctified Christian, while passing through the world, makes a sanctified use of the world and has affections set upon things above. The person of faith expects a future blessedness to come through the promises of God. We see a country in the future, and we make it our aim to avoid every hindrance, every obstacle, and press on the narrow way. This better country promises a new body to be free of sin and to be taken to be with the Lord

forever. Thus, our daily walk makes it plain that we don't belong to this world but are citizens of heaven.

The ultimate reward is God Himself. God is not ashamed to be called their God. In Exodus 3:6, God identified Himself to Moses as the God of the patriarchs. The Scriptures firmly declare that God will honor those who honor Him, 1 Samuel 2:30. Because the patriarchs were willing to live as a separated people and renounce all worldly enticements to follow God and obedience for the sake of the promised inheritance, God identified with them.

Imagine, God, introducing Himself to a person calling them to faith, saying, "I am the God of" put your name there. It is these people. God acknowledges us as His servants, objects of His grace.

Conclusion: What incredible grace of the divine Trinity to call Himself to be the God of such a miserable creature or creatures. If God is our God, how content we should be. We exclaim **Psalm 16:5-6 (ESV)** ⁵ **The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.** ⁶ **The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.** Perhaps we can truly say **Psalm 23:1 (ESV)** ¹ **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.** Oh how joyful we should be, **Psalm 63:3 (ESV)** ³ **Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.** Are we here today able to claim this?

We were called to Christ and to embrace our separation just as the patriarchs and those of faith in the past. These are those who exclaimed, **Psalm 16:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ **You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

Take heart all persons of faith! How do we overcome the world's trap? **1 John 5:4 (ESV)** ⁴ **For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.**