

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
June 29, 2022

Title: God's People

Subject: Faith, Approval, Accepted, Justifications, God's Promises, Perfection, Jesus Christ, Patience, Faithfulness, Perseverance, Saints, Spiritual Vision, Eternal Life, Salvation, Regeneration, Sanctification, Glorification

Theme Text: Hebrews 11:39-40 (ESV) ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Theme Illustration: All who are and will be saved from the beginning of history to the end are objects of God's everlasting, faithful love. God sees them as one people, God's elect, throughout time. The entire number of the elect have God for their Father, Christ for their Savior, and the Holy Spirit for their comforter. Even though, according to their times, the promises were for a later time. All share the benefits of Christ's atoning work and are regenerated by the Holy Spirit's actions. The faith of Abel was as saving then as today's children of God are saved. Abraham was justified in precisely the same manner as Christians are now, **Romans 4:2 (ESV) ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.** They all are and were strangers and pilgrims on the earth as we are, **Psalms 119:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!** These all hoped in the promised eternal pleasures at God's right hand as we do, **Psalms 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.**

Certain theological approaches attempt to divide God's people into two groups. While there is only one type of God's people. There is only one type

of believer, God's sheep, **John 10:16. There may have been different flocks, but there is always been one type of sheep and one Good Shepherd.**

Read: Hebrews 11:39-40 (ESV) ³⁹ **And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,** ⁴⁰ **since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.**

Introduction: We need to understand the relation of this text to Chapter 11 as a whole. The Holy Spirit has beautifully displayed to us the virtue of faith by the fruit that that faith produces. Our text says all these obtained a good report. The all refers to the whole company of names mentioned. Yet, despite the good report which was mentioned in chapter 11, they had not received the promise because God had something better for the new covenant saints. We must remember that the dominant theme of Hebrews is the immeasurable superiority of Christianity and the new covenant over Judaism and the old covenant.

It is appropriate to apply the good report that these Old Testament saints received to the whole company of believers before the coming of Christ who demonstrated true regeneration and faith. The words, these all, necessarily include all of the Old Testament saints of faith. **It is a group picture of the people of God.**

This picture excluded those who had no such faith. Cain lived at the time of Abel but is excluded. Hamm was in the ark with Shem, and Ishmael had the same parents as Isaac. Esau was born with Jacob. Dathan and Abiram came through the Red Sea with Caleb and Joshua. The point is that there were many wicked unbelievers mixed with believers. This illustrates that there was an elect remnant within God's elect people. Theirs was not a good report. They are excluded.

It is the same today. We have wheat and tares. Those who obtained a good report trusted in Christ alone for salvation. Those saints looked forward in

faith to Christ while we look backward and see what He accomplished. The people of faith of that day continued to look forward to a promise yet unfulfilled as we are being equipped by God to overcome the world, patiently endure trials, and love God more than life itself, just as they did. We must be as patient as they were. We shall all experience the fulfillment of the promises of Christ together when Christ returns.

Transition: The three parts of this text, we must break apart. We first observe that God's people are a:

1. A Promised People: Hebrews 11:39-40 (ESV) ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

We notice immediately that the word promise is singular. The promise brings with it promises. The promise is Jesus Christ our Savior, **Acts 13:32-33 (ESV) ³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'** Christ is the promise through which makes all the other promises available. He was the first promise after the fall, **Genesis 3:15. He is the accomplishment of all the promises, 2 Corinthians 1:30.** The great promise of God was His son, born of a woman, to save his people from their sins. **This was the object of faith for all of the Old Testament saints in the Old Testament era.**

God's own testimony about them is found in His word. Their names received this mention. The world treated them as contemptible while God held these in the highest esteem. We can marvel at the grace of God providing for His people from the earliest time.

They saw the promise through types and sacrifices and shadows. Christianity is the fulfillment of what existed in those former times. Even then, the formal covenant which God made with Christ before time to be the Head of

His people forms the basis of all of His dealings with His people in all eras. Remember, the elect names were written in His book before the foundation of the world, Revelation 17:8. Doesn't that demonstrate that those names so written also will receive a good report?

Even though the Mosaic and Christian economies were widely different in incidental details, God's government never changed. God's government was always, according to the fundamental principles of grace, righteousness, mercy, justice, truth, and faithfulness in each era equally.

The distinction between regenerated believers and the unregenerate in Old Testament times was as real as this distinction is today. There have been empty professors of faith in each era. These were such as the Pharisees who were only interested in the externals of Judaism. Even in the old covenant era, there was always a remnant who were Jews inwardly, **Romans 2:29 (ESV)**²⁹ **But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.**

The spiritual portion of those Old Testament saints was identically the same as Christians have now. They were recipients of free grace in Christ as we are, **Genesis 6:8 (ESV)**⁸ **But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.**

Transition: That, God's people then and now are:

2. A Patient People: Hebrews 11:39-40 (ESV)³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, **did not receive what was promised,**⁴⁰ **since God had provided something better for us,** that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Just think about how patient in faith the Old Testament saints were! The coming of Christ awaited a future date. Remember, God has appointed times for everything under heaven, Ecclesiastes 3:1. We also must remain patiently in faith, awaiting the assembly and perfection of all of God's people together at His coming.

Even though the coming of Christ was delayed for the Old Testament saints, they of faith enjoyed all the essential spiritual blessings that Christians now enjoy. So, we must know what are the better things that God was reserving for new covenant believers.

Our better things are that even though we see through the glass, darkly, 1 Corinthians 13:12, **we do see with greater clarity than they.** We have greater clarity of Christ. **They saw Him through types and shadows.** **Whereas we see Him through the fulfillment of them.** They look for Christ who would put away their sins while we look at Christ, who has come and put away our sins. There is also a wider outpouring of God's grace in that it is no longer confined to an elect remnant in one nation. It now reaches out to His people scattered among the nations.

Transition: By combining all the people of faith into one flock there remains a finishing work to be done. At the proper time, the whole of the people of God together will be:

3. A Perfected People: Hebrews 11:39-40 (ESV) ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, **that apart from us they should not be made perfect.**

Remember that in previous expositions we learned what the Holy Spirit means by being made perfect, **Hebrews 7:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ **(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.** Perfection is to see the finished work. Therefore, there is no more refining or shaping to be done. The work is finished and perfected. Perfection is illustrated in **1 Corinthians 15:22-24 (ESV)** ²² **For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.** ²³ **But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.** ²⁴ **Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every**

authority and power. Christ will deliver the kingdom to the Father as a finished or perfected work.

Yes, we all experience in our Christian life an individual perfecting. But the reference here is to the whole family of God presented to the Father perfected in eternal glory. This is so precious and grand to our minds which fail to grasp this picture. The clearest picture we find is in **Revelation 7:9-10 (ESV)** ⁹ **After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,** ¹⁰ **and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”**

What is left to perfect? Sin has been taken away and by faith, we have received the robe of righteousness by which we appear before God. We have already received the power to walk in the path of righteousness by the enabling of the Holy Spirit by subduing the power of indwelling sin. By the power of the Spirit, we have been given the ability to stand against all of the assaults against us and persevere in spiritual growth. Upon death, God will receive our souls as He always has for all of God’s people. Lastly, the resurrection of the body will occur at His coming. In this, the whole family of faithful of all eras will experience together our perfection.

Conclusion: We all will then be together forever with the Lord. Remember what Jesus has preserved for us, **Matthew 8:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ **I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.** Imagine, fellowshipping with inductees to the faith Hall of Fame. Did not Jesus tell us that there is going to be one flock together, John 10? Won’t we all hear His voice together? God deferred the resurrection of the Old Testament saints until the new covenant saints were gathered into one body. And who are all these people? They are those whom the Father has given Him, those whom He purchased with His blood, **John 17:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ **Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory**

that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Then will this verse be fulfilled, **Ephesians 4:13 (ESV)** ¹³ **until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...** Rejoice, be patient in faith and walk; our perfection approaches!