

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

Faith Moves Forward

Hebrews 11:13-16

March 3rd, 2019

Main Point

Our hope is ahead of us. The fulfillment of God's promises will ultimately be out of this world. So, faith set its sights toward the future, not the present or the past. Faith moves forward.

Getting Started

The hymn writer, Henry Francis Lyte captures the essence of faith in God's future grace in F. F. Bruce's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Eerdmans], p. 306):

*It is not for me to be seeking my bliss
And building my hopes in a region like this;
I look for a city which hands have not piled,
I pant for a country by sin undefiled.*

In our day, our emphasis is far too much on the good life here and now, and not enough on the promised joys of heaven. Thus, many who profess Christ as Savior live with their minds on the things on earth, rather than setting their minds on the things above ([Col. 3:1-4](#)). They are motivated more by collecting treasures on earth than by storing up treasures in heaven. Our focus is on what Christ can do for us here and now. Heaven is a nice extra, but it does not govern how we live today. But, it should! The heroes of the faith like Abraham fixed their eyes on the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises in a new city of faith. They received some of what God promised, but the ultimate fulfillment of His promises awaited them. The same is true for us who trust in Christ as Savior and Lord.

Observation

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 11:13-16.

Who does this passage say died in faith? To whom is the writer of Hebrews referring here?

What did they not receive? How can you reconcile this statement with the fact that Abraham and Sarah received the son God promised to them, Isaac?

What does it mean for the heroes of the faith cited in this chapter to live as exiles and strangers in the land? What did that look like for these men and women? Read verses 32-39 to get a glimpse of the kind of lives these men and women lived while here on earth.

So what promises did these exiles greet from afar? How do we await the fulfillment of those same promises?

What better homeland does the writer say these people sought? How does the writer characterize this homeland? How is it different than the one God led them to on earth?

Application

Consider Colossians 3:1-4 in light of today's passage in Hebrews 11:

'If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.'
Colossians 3:1-4

Take time in prayer to ask the Lord how He wants you to apply this passage to your life. What does it mean that God has raised you to new life in Christ? How should that change your affections? Where should you set your affections? How does this passage help us gain an eternal perspective like the hope the heroes of the faith had? They longed for the ultimate fulfillment of heavenly promises. How can we eagerly await the 'things that are above' while living here on earth? Finally, how do view life today through an eternal lens? One day Jesus is coming back, and we will appear with Him in glory. All that God has promised us will become fully realized at that time. Encourage one another with these words!

Prayer

Dear God, the ultimate fulfillment of all your promises awaits us in heaven. Show us how to maintain a heavenly perspective while living here on earth. We cannot deny the reality of pain in this life, but we can rejoice in the fulfillment of all you promise one day. So, help me set my sights on the things of heaven while living in the here and now!

Commentary

11:13 They were faithful even unto death, not having received what was fully promised. Abraham and Sarah especially exemplify this: called to a Promised Land and promised innumerable offspring, and they merely embraced these promises while living nomadically in a land not wholly theirs, where they had just one son together. Strangers and exiles on the earth. This physical reality for the descendants of Abraham was applied spiritually in the Psalms.

11:14-16 The author says that the people he has mentioned were seeking a better, heavenly country, which would be their true homeland. First, if Abraham were looking for an earthly homeland, he could have returned to Haran but he persisted in following

God's leading and focusing on his promise. Second, the Psalms' spiritual application of exile terminology to this whole mortal life indicates the expectation of a life to come. Consider Psalm 39:12, 119:19.

Adapted from www.smallgroup.com and www.bible.org.