

Eternity

Hebrews 11:13



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FOCAL Read Together Hebrews 11:13 **These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.**

Over the past few years there have been a number of books that have been published dealing with eternity. Two of these books were written by Christian authors detailing their own personal experiences in heaven and hell. Author **Don Piper** is a Baptist pastor who had a tragic accident in 1989, and was initially pronounced dead. Another pastor, arriving at the scene of the accident, prayed for Piper. Piper revived, and subsequently wrote the book *90 Minutes In Heaven*. Another Christian by the name of **Bill Wiese** claims that he was taken by God to hell one night while he was sleeping. God did this so that he could come back to earth and tell everyone that hell is real and that Jesus is coming soon. His book, by the way, is called *23 Minutes in Hell*.

I'm not doubting either man's veracity - I think they actually experienced something. Based upon what the Scripture says of heaven and hell, I don't believe either man actually saw those places. Jesus talked about a rich man one time who went to hell and stayed there. When the rich man asked Abraham, "**I pray thee, Abraham, send Lazarus to my house to tell my five brothers about this terrible place**", Abraham replied "**They have Moses and the prophets; let the brothers hear them**". The rich man retorted, "**If one went to them from the dead they would listen**". Abraham replied, "**If**

they will not hear Moses and the prophets (the Holy Bible) they will not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:22-31). By His very words our Lord Jesus Christ said that God would *not* send someone back from hell in order to tell others to repent.

Hell is not a place where demons torment humans, nor is it a place you can go to and come back from. Hell is a place that - once you go to it - you stay there. Hell is a place where you are separated from God forever.

Heaven, on the other hand, is a place where you SEE JESUS!

On the basis of what Jesus said I cannot not believe that anyone went to hell and was sent back to tell others that hell was real - which is what Bill Wiese says in his book. Furthermore, when **John the Revelator** went to Heaven what was the first thing he saw? Did he see relatives and friends that had went before him - as Don Piper said? No. *He saw Jesus.* This is the central theme of the **Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto John, to show unto His servants which must shortly come to pass (Revelation 1:1).** If a person went to Heaven and returned to tell us about it *he would tell us about Jesus. He would have seen Jesus!* He would have seen **"the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8).**

Our experiences, our feelings, and our dreams often mislead us. What is real? What God has said. What God has promised is real. God's Word is real. If you are a Christian then you are a stranger and a pilgrim on this

earth. This world is not your home! Our world, our citizenship

Philippians 3:20-21 ... is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: {21} Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

When a Christian is saved by faith in Christ, he focused on *eternity*. He focused on *God's promise*. He focused on what *Jesus has said*. Once saved, the Christian is not transported to Heaven, but continues to live in a fallen world. Our focus, our hope, our desire, our all is placed on the faithfulness of God and His Promises. The Lord has promised His people another land and another life. He has said to **whosoever believeth in Jesus that they will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:15).**

If you have believed in Christ unto salvation then you are called by God to be *eternity minded*. The Old Testament saints were eternity minded. They looked at all things - no matter what happened - through the lens of eternity. Though they did not receive the completed promises of God in this life they *trusted God*.

I remember as a young boy going fishing with my dad and my younger brother. We lived in Raleigh, North Carolina, about 3 hours away from the coast. Dad fixed up the old Ford truck with a cover and a couple of small twin beds. When we were going to go fishing dad would load us - and the fishing rods - into the back of the truck.

When I and my brother crawled into the truck we often went to sleep to make the long journey go faster. You see, we trusted dad to get us where we were going. I didn't need to know how to get to the coast. I didn't need to know how to drive the truck. All I needed to know was that **dad was in control of the truck**. He had gotten us there before, and he's get us there again. Sure enough, three hours later dad would wake us up by opening the tailgate of the truck and crying out, "get up, you sleepyheads! We're there!"

In the same way, as Christians we don't know what tomorrow holds. But the Christian knows this - God controls where we are going. Our home is not here, it is in Heaven. We can **boldly say, I will not fear what man shall do to me - for the Lord is my Helper**. He Who inhabits eternity is my Lord and my God!

1. Is Your Faith An Overcoming Faith?

FOCAL Hebrews 11:13 **These all died in faith, not having received the promises**

When the Bible talks about great believers, they all have one thing in common. **They have faith in God, not in their circumstances.**

We read in Hebrews "**These all**". Who are "**these all**"? Look at your context. In **verse 4** we read about **Abel**, in **verse 5** about **Enoch**, **verse 7** we read of **Noah**, and in **verses 8 and 11** about **Abraham and Sarah**. What is

common about each of these people? **They all died in faith, not having received the promises**. Their circumstances were not optimal.

CONTEXT Hebrews 11:4 **By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous ...**

What did Abel do that God was pleased with? *Abel believed in God*. He was wholeheartedly sold out to God. God told Abel to *sacrifice an animal* - that "**without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin**" (**Hebrews 9:22**). Did Abel understand what this meant? Probably not. But **Abel's faith was not in his understanding of what the Blood of the Lamb signified**. Abel's faith was in God. He did what God told him to do. How did **Enoch** please God? The Bible says:

CONTEXT Hebrews 11:5 **By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.**

What is **Enoch** famous for in the Scripture? He was famous for *disappearing and never coming back*. God took him to heaven without Enoch ever seeing physical death. What did **Enoch** do to deserve such a blessing? **Enoch - before he was translated - pleased God**. He believed what God said, and walked with God - day by day - regardless of the circumstances.

CONTEXT Hebrews 11:7 **By faith Noah, being**

warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

What about Noah? What did Noah do to please God? God came to Noah and said, "Noah, build a boat, cause I'm going to flood this old world by rain!" Today's Christian wouldn't have moved until God explained what "rain" was, for up until that point there *was no rain*. The Bible tells us that "there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground" (Genesis 2:6). God watered the earth by fog and mist up until the time of Noah. When God came to Noah and said, "Build a boat, for I'm going to flood the earth with water and destroy all flesh" (Genesis 6:13-17) Noah didn't debate God. Noah believed God - not the circumstances - and "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith". And what of Abraham and Sarah? We read:

CONTEXT Hebrews 11:8 **By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.**

Abraham went out when he was called. He heard God, and believed in God, and went without God drawing him a road map! Abraham didn't believe in the circumstances. He didn't just "have faith" in anything. Abraham had faith in God! The Bible says of Sarah:

Hebrews 11:11 **Through faith also Sarah herself**

received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Sarah considered God faithful. God promised, and she believed in God.

Dear friends, a **halfway faith will only bless you half of the time**. Jesus commanded us to ...

Mark 11:22 ... **Have faith in God.**

"Have faith in God". Look to God. Look to His Promises. Look what He has said, and believe in Him. The faith that pleases God looks beyond the circumstances. It looks beyond what is happening all about. The faith that pleases God - and that God wants His people to have - is a faith that **trusts God no matter what might come**.

In our day too many people have a halfway faith. We have *half of our faith in God, and half in the bank*. We have *half of our faith in God, and half on the doctor*. We have *half of our faith in God, and half on other people*. Yet Jesus told His disciples:

Matthew 6:24 **No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other ...**

God calls His people to *fully trust Him* no matter what the circumstances look like. If Noah had begun arguing with God or questioning God about rain *all of humanity*

would now be dead. If God says its going to rain, then its going to rain. If God says He loves us, He loves us. If God says you must be saved by believing in Christ, then you must believe in Christ!

2. Overcoming Faith Understands That Heaven Is Home

FOCAL Hebrews 11:13 These all **died in faith, not having received the promises**

ILLUSTRATE A little boy was in Church for the first time. When the preacher called for the ushers, he watched as three men went forward and began to pass offering plates around the Church. When the plate got to his daddy he whispered, "Don't pay for me, daddy. I'm under 5!"

Everything that the Christian does - whether it be giving, living, loving, or dying - should be focused on our eternity, not on our now.

This was the attitude of the Old Testament saint. Our text says "**these all DIED in faith**". Each and every one of these people mentioned in the context were great people of faith, but they were also **great people who died**. Further than that, they **died NOT HAVING RECEIVED THE PROMISES**. Think about that for a moment. So many evangelists today talk about how all we need to do is "claim the victory" and we'll have it. But these people died - and died without having received

the promises.

Dear friends, we all live in a fallen world. It was a perfect world when Adam and Eve walked on it, and there will come a day when it will be perfect again. There will be a day when

Isaiah 11:6-9 The **wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. {7} And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. {8} And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. {9} They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.**

During the future Kingdom of Christ on this earth there will be a thousand years where there will be no hurting or pain. When we get to Heaven the Bible tells us that:

Revelation 21:4-5 **And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. {5} And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.**

Neither environment will be brought about by man. Dear

friends, the false prophet says "peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14).

There is no peace in this life. We live in a fallen world. No matter where you go, you are in danger.

Not too long ago a gunman burst into a local Church and killed the pastor before killing himself. As the prophet said, "man is born unto trouble, as sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Jesus said, "in this world you WILL have tribulation, but take courage, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD" (John 16:33). I was laying in the bed sleeping the other day when something crawled in with me, and had a little "buffaloe wings" as a late night snack.

We all have good days and bad days. Last week there was a day so pretty - the temperature and wind was just right - that it looked as if I was in paradise. Yet as I sat on the porch watching the beautiful day I heard - in the background - the sound of an ambulance as it rushed to the hospital. The world is a fallen place.

These Old Testament saints were given promises by God, promises that they never fully received in this lifetime. And yet they were never discouraged. They never gave up. They kept going forward, and were blessed of and a blessing to God. Why were they able to do that? Look at what our text says of **Abraham, who...**

CONTEXT Hebrews 11:9-10 **By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country,**

dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: {10} For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham dwelt IN TABERNACLES (σκηνη Pronounced *skay-nay'*) - He stayed in TENTS. Abraham did not put roots down where he was but he - along with **Isaac and Jacob** - stayed in tents.

ILLUSTRATE I was getting ready to mow my grass the other day with my riding mower. I fueled it up, got on it, and took off - about two feet before I came to a dead stop. I wondered what was wrong. Then I remembered. Because people steal riding mowers (and do steal them in Chesterfield) I chained it to the corner of my garage. I couldn't go forward and do what I needed to do until I backed up and unchained the mower. You can't mow the yard chained to the house - and you can't live victoriously for God chained to this earth!

People of faith are called to follow God, and to always remember that this world is not our home.

Abraham's home, Isaac's home, and Jacob's home is with God. **Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God.** He knew that every promise God had ever made to him would be fulfilled when he got to Heaven.

C.S. Lewis once remarked that - if you aimed at the earth, you would never hit heaven, but if you aim at

heaven then you will get both. This is so true! We cannot find our happiness in this life. We find *pools* of happiness, *moments* where we are joyous, and at peace, but then the night comes once more.

This world is a fallen place, filled with fallen people who need a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. What does the Bible tell us about this world? It says that **there was a time when - even the Christian - walked according to the directives of Satan (Ephesians 2:1-7)**. The Bible says that **"the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain because of sin" (Romans 8:19-22)**, but there is coming a day when God shall make all things new. John the Revelator wrote:

Revelation 21:1-3 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. {2} And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. {3} And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

What a wonderful day that will be - but that day is not now. At this present time we - like the Old Testament saints - are strangers in a strange land. Or home is not here - it is there, with God. While we are in this world we will have moments of suffering. But Beloved, this is not all of life. This is not home - home is where our Lord has prepared a place for us.

FOCAL Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

How did the Old Testament saint survive? He **embraced the promises of God, remembering always that here we are *strangers and pilgrims*.**

Look at those two words, **strangers** (**ξενος** pronounced *xen'-os*) and **pilgrims** (**παρεπιδημος** pronounced *par-ep-id'-ay-mos*). The word **stranger** means **a foreigner**. The Christian is a foreigner on this earth. Our citizenship is in Heaven, our king is in Heaven, our lives are in Heaven, and we are directed by Heaven. The word **foreigner** means **those who are traveling in a strange place, sightseers, ambassadors, travelers together away from home**. This world is not our home. Jesus emphasized this before He went to Heaven. He told His disciples:

John 16:1-3 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. {2} They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. {3} And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

Those who do not know Jesus are at home in this world. They are satisfied *here* because they have no *hereafter*. Those who know Jesus as Lord and Savior are not

satisfied *now* because he knows that this world is not his home. Where do we who are Christians find peace? Only in Jesus. Only in the certainty that God has promised us a better place.

3. Overcoming Faith Is Focused On Christ

ILLUSTRATE In his book *Eternity* author **Joseph M. Stowell** tells the reader about the Willis family. **Duane (Scott) Willis** is a bi-vocational Pastor and a school teacher. His wife, **Janet**, spent her time homeschooling their nine children. Three of the children are grown and building families of their own, and six of the children were still at home.

One day Scott and Janet and the six younger children got in the van, and headed off to visit one of their older children. As they continued north on one of the Milwaukee interstates a large piece of metal fell off the truck in front of them, and pierced the gas tank of the van. Flames engulfed the van. On fire, Scott and Janet stumbled out of the van, dragging one burning child with them. After rolling on the grassy knoll to put out the flames that were on them they turned to the van to try and get the other children out. They were too late. Five children died in the flames, and the sixth child would die the next morning in the hospital.

The question that immediately comes to each and every mind is, "Why did this happen?" These were good parents, Christian people, and six of their children are now gone. If God is all powerful, where is He now? If

God loves us, why doesn't He fix this?

If your focus is on this world as being your home you will never be satisfied. You will have satisfying moments - but they are oh too fleeting. Your gaze must be focused beyond the here and now. Jesus told His disciples - and tells us:

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. {2} In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. {3} And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Where is your home? Not here!

Your home is in the Father's House. Your home is a mansion with your name on it in Heaven. Your home is with the Lord Who loved you, and gave Himself for you.

This is the mind that consumed the hearts of the Old Testament saints. We read in our context:

Hebrews 11:15-16 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. {16} But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

These saints **saw Jesus**. They **saw Jesus preparing them a place**. They **saw Heaven**, and when they **saw them, though they were far off**, they were **persuaded** by what they saw, and **embraced** the promises of God. Because they trusted wholeheartedly in God these saints did not hold on to the things of this world, but held on to the Lord Jesus.

Jesus has prepared a place for you, if you would only believe in Him. Your focus must be on Jesus. The Lord told the disciples:

John 14:6 ... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

He is the doorway to eternity. He is the doorway to everlasting life. **He is our peace, our happiness, and our refuge in the storm.**

ILLUSTRATE How did **Scott and Janet Willis** handle their unspeakable tragedy? As they watched their minivan burn Janet cried out, No! No! No! Scott touched her shoulder with his blistered hand, and whispered, **"Janet, this is what we've been prepared for. It was quick, and they are with the Lord."** In a front page story the Chicago Tribune reported **"Burned, bandaged, and still in physical pain in a Milwaukee area hospital, the couple displayed extraordinary grace and courage Wednesday as they calmly presided over a news conference to tell of how their unquestioned belief sustained them through the loss of six of their nine children. ... Scott said, 'I know God has**

purposes and God has reasons God has demonstrated His love to us and our family. There is no question in our mind that God is good, and we praise Him in all things.' "

This type of faith cannot come to the heart half focused on the world.

A house divided against itself will not stand. Our faith must be wholly in Christ. We must believe in Him for salvation, and trust His Word for our lives.

Luke 17:20-21 ... The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: {21} Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

Who is ruling in your hearts? If Christ rules, you will have a faith that overcomes this world. If the Kingdom within you is ruled by you or by this world, then your spirit will be blown about by the whims of this life.

I remember in school I had one teacher that would tell us "there will be a test". Dear friends, there will be a test. Life will test you. People will test you. Death will test you. Are you focused on Jesus Christ and His eternity, or is your heart chained to this earth. How your answer will effect your eternity.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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Philippians 3:20-21

1 Is Your Faith An _____
Faith?

FOCAL Hebrews 11:13 **THESE ALL** died in faith, not having received the promises

Hebrews 11:4; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 11:5;
Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 2:6; Genesis 6:13-17; Hebrews
11:8; Hebrews 11:11; Mark 11:22; Matthew 6:24

2 Overcoming Faith Understands That _____

FOCAL Hebrews 11:13 These all **DIED IN FAITH,**
NOT HAVING RECEIVED the promises

- Everything that the Christian does - whether it be giving, living, loving, or dying - should be focused on

Isaiah 11:6-9; Revelation 21:4-5; Jeremiah 6:14; Job 5:7; John 16:33; Hebrews 11:9-10; Revelation 21:1-3; Hebrews 11:13; John 16:1-3 _____

- How did the Old Testament saint survive? He

3 Overcoming Faith _____

John 14:1-3; Hebrews 11:15-16; John 14:6; Luke 17:20-21 _____