

Forward Faith

Hebrews 11:13-22

(HEB028)

Intro

Monday was the first day of Fall — and I believe the high was 95 degrees — *not ideal...*

- And though Fall did not start off well — there is still a great deal to look forward to in the Fall...

HS, College and Pro Football, Baseball playoffs, specialty coffees, cooler weather, sweaters and hoodies, holidays with family, *more football...*

*And as we consider all that there is too look forward to with the changing of the season, I'd like to read you something that CS Lewis wrote in his most famous work, **Mere Christianity...***

*“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who **thought most of the next**. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, **precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven**. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. **Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’; aim at earth and you will get neither.**”*

Now, I believe the truth that CS Lewis was sharing ties in beautifully with what the Lord Jesus said in...

Matthew 6:33-34

33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

You see, when you and I **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness** *we are aiming at Heaven — and we will get earth “thrown in”...*

- [expand on ***Forward Faith*** being focused on Eternity — and we can only positively affect eternity if we live seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness ***today — right now — in the present moment...***]

It is this subject of ***Forward Faith*** that we will be exploring this morning as we consider the passage that we will be studying...

If you would, please follow along as I read...

Hebrews 11:13-22

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

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,”

19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

I've divided this passage into two sections...

1) Forward Faith in Heaven

2) Forward Faith of the Patriarchs

Let's move into our first section...

1) Forward Faith in Heaven (vs 13-16)

As we jump in here it is important to recognize that the author is taking a moment to make some general remarks regarding those he has been writing about here in Hebrews 11...

13 These all

The **all** referred to here speaks of the individuals who have been mentioned in this chapter...

- Biblical heroes like Abel, Noah, Abraham & Sarah...[expand]

We are told that...

These all died in faith,

- This is a very interesting phrase — one that we may not be very familiar with...

You see, as believers we have been taught to focus on what it means to **live in faith** or **live by faith**...

Habakkuk 2:4

**“Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith.”**

Romans 1:17

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Hebrews 10:38

Now the just shall live by faith;
But if anyone draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him.”

- [expand on the importance of *living by faith* and *not by sight* — of serving an invisible God in the power that He supernaturally provides...]

With that said, what we have here in Hebrews 11:13 is *the victorious **end** of a life lived by faith — it is a death **died in faith**...*

- **It is a life of faith lived all the way to the end** — and these individuals — Abel, Noah, Abraham & Sarah — died in faith — each continued to exercise faith until the end of our lives...
[expand]

And this should be a driving motivation for every believer — **to die in faith** — to keep the faith through the end of our lives...

- [ex. elementary school track meet — little boy who led the whole race but stopped before the finish line...]

As believers, we are not to stop before the finish line — we are to run *through* the finish line and **die in faith**...[expand]

Moving on in vs 13 we read...

These all died in faith, not having received the promises,

- [ex. Abraham never received the Promised Land, he never saw his descendants as numerous as sand by the seashore...]

And something very similar will be true of us as NT believers — if we die before the Lord Jesus raptures His Church then we too will die **not having received the promises...**

- Because the fact of the matter is that in our present *fallen, sinful, mortal condition* we **cannot** receive the promises...

To prove my point, please turn to...

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

- [expand on this reality of dying or being raptured in order to receive the promises...]

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

**55 “O Death, where is your sting?
O Hades, where is your victory?”**

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

- [expand on how vs 58 calls for ***Forward Faith*** — living today in light of eternity...]

Please turn back to Hebrews 11:13 were we read...

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them,

seen — *refers to an operation of faith, to an inner awareness of what the promises meant...*

- [ex. Similar to Moses being allowed to see the Promised Land but not actually entering himself...]

So, ***by faith*** these OT saints saw glimpses of what God had promised — of what would come to pass in the future — and were **assured** of those promises...

assured — *to be persuaded or convinced...*

Likewise, God desires that we, as believers, have **Forward Faith...**

- That we would see the promises of God afar off and and *be fully assured that they will come to pass...*

*And if we desire to live by **Forward Faith** then we must begin by **reading the Word of God** — because Paul tells us in...*

Romans 10:17

...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

If we find ourselves weak in faith today then it is likely that we have not been in spending enough time in the Word of God...[expand]

- Also, our **Forward Faith** grows as we spend time in prayer — as we grow in relationship with the Lord our faith will be strengthened...[expand]

*Furthermore, **Forward Faith** motivates the believer to join a local church fellowship...*

Hebrews 10:23-25

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Finally, **Forward Faith** believers are called to live a life of **service**...

For a reminder of this truth, please turn to...

Matthew 20:25-28

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.

26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

*As we turn back to Hebrews 11, it seems clear that reading the Bible, praying, being an active member of a local fellowship and living a life of service are fundamental to being an assured believer — to living a **Forward Faith**...*

So, if you find that your faith in the promises of God is faltering — determine which of these 4 pieces is missing from your life and make corrections ASAP...

Continuing on in Hebrews 11:13 we read these words...

but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them

embraced — *to welcome, to receive joyfully...*

- [ex. When you visit a person who doesn't really want you at their house — they make no effort to make you feel welcome...]

When we refuse to **embrace** the Word of God in our lives — when we fail to welcome and joyfully receive what the Word of God says — then we are just like that inhospitable host — we fail to live out **Forward Faith**...[expand]

Moving on in vs 13 we read...

embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Because the biblical heroes embraced the promises of God that were still afar off, they recognized their true position in relation to those promises...

- They understood that they were simply **strangers and pilgrims on the earth**...

strangers — *foreigners...*

pilgrims — *those who come from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives...*

As believers we must continually remind ourselves that **this present world is not our home** — we are **strangers and pilgrims** who who are *in this world but not of this world*...[expand]

- We must remember that we are ***citizens of heaven*** and as such we should actively pursue a ***Forward Faith in Heaven*** — realizing that our promises will be fulfilled in Heaven...

[ex. Forbes Real-Time Billionaires List — Elon Musk is currently worth \$488.3B...]

- Now, I do not know how much of what I have read about Elon is true — but it seems hard to imagine that he is considering himself a **stranger and pilgrim** on the earth...[expand]

And though none of can count ourselves among the super-rich, please remember what the Lord Jesus had to say in...

Matthew 16:24-26

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Moving on in Hebrews 11 to vs...

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

In other words, since the biblical heroes lived as **strangers and pilgrims**, they were clearly displaying that they were seeking a heavenly homeland...

I love the clarity that Paul provides on this subject in...

Colossians 3:1-4 *[please turn there...]*

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Please turn back to Hebrews 11 as we move into vs...

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

This verse is a little tricky to understand but I believe the basic idea is that the biblical heroes were seeking a homeland *but they refused to consider returning to the land from which they had come...*

- In other words, they continued with a **Forward Faith** — seeking the fulfillment of God's promises instead of going back to what they had known before...

VITAL POINT — The life of the believer is always to be lived going forward — it is never about going backwards...[expand]

Luke 9:61-62 *[give context of guy claiming to be a disciple]*

61 And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.”

62 But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Now to the last verse of our first section...

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.

The believers of old refused to consider going back to the old land, to the old way — instead they continued with a ***Forward Faith*** toward their true desire — **a heavenly country...**

- This reminds me of something that I heard Pastor Damian Kyle say years ago, ***“It takes a passion to conquer a passion”***...

In order for us to overcome our passion *for this world* we must foster a greater passion *for Heaven*...[expand]

The Lord Jesus gave this perspective in...

Matthew 6:19-21

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

And John put it this way in...

1 John 2:15-17

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.

16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Continuing on in Hebrews 11:16...

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God,

Because of the faith of the believers, the God of all creation is not ashamed to be called their God...

- God **chose** to be known as their God...

We see this clearly throughout the OT as God refers to Himself as the **God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**...[expand]

- Likewise, in the NT the first Person of the Trinity refers to Himself as the **Father** of all believers — all believers are His children...

1 John 3:1-2

1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Finishing up Hebrews 11:16...

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

In other words, God has proven that He is not ashamed of believers not only by being willing to be **called their God** but also by preparing a heavenly city for them...

To learn more about this city, let's turn to...

Revelation 21:1-4

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

We see clearly from the scriptures that God is willing to be called the God of believers and He is willing to live forever in close proximity to those believers...[expand]

I love what the Lord Jesus said to His disciples on this subject in...

John 14:1-3

1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Let’s turn back to Hebrews 11 as we into our final section...

2) Forward Faith of the Patriarchs (vs 17-22)

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,”

By faith Abraham fully obeyed God and offered up the promised son that God had given to him...[expand]

We read of the account as we turn to...

Genesis 22:9-12

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”

So he said, “Here I am.”

12 And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

Now, Abraham was able to offer up his son because Abraham had ***Forward Faith*** in the promise that God would bring many descendants through the line of Isaac...[expand]

We see this clearly as we turn back to Hebrews 11 and move into vs...

19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

In other words, Abraham believed that if he sacrificed Isaac then God would raise Isaac from the dead — because God had already promised to bring descendants through Isaac...[expand]

- And in a figurative sense God did raise Issac from the dead — God stayed the hand of Abraham and spared Isaac...

[expand on the fact that this whole event foreshadowed God the Father sacrificing His only Son, Jesus Christ...]

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

Though at times Isaac was confused about which blessing belonged to whom 🤔, Isaac was absolutely convinced that the blessings of God were irrefutable...[expand]

- In the end, Isaac had **Forward Faith** that the future blessings of God would come to pass just as God said they would...

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph,

This is a reference to Jacob's faithful blessing of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh...

- With **Forward Faith** Jacob proclaimed that the younger, Ephraim would be greater than the older, Manasseh...[expand]

We also read in vs 21 that Jacob...

worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

It is always good to remind ourselves that those who have **Forward Faith** in God are to worship God...

- [expand on faith not merely being an academic exercise — it is to lead to worship...]

Now to the final verse of our study...

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

Here the author of Hebrews brings out a familiar aspect of **Forward Faith** — **Forward Faith** looks beyond death...[expand]

By faith Joseph gave instructions regarding what would happen in the future — long after his death...

Genesis 50:24-25

24 And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

25 Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”

[expand on this topic...]

We will stop here for today and Lord-willing continue our study of the Gospel of Matthew next week...

Conclusion

And I will close this study by reading one final passage on Forward Faith...

Philippians 3:12-14 (NKJV)

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

May we continue pressing on — in forward faith — until the Lord calls us home...

Let's pray...