

Hebrews 11:13(b)-16
July 3, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What is the furthest place you've ever traveled from your home? [Let people chime in]

Q: One of the benefits of traveling is seeing the world and different cultures. In your own travels, what has been the most significant cultural difference you have ever observed? [Reynosa, Mexico – very poverty stricken; Poland in the Zakopane mountains – very behind the times. No cars, but horses and buggies. No traffic issues, no hurry to work, nap times mid-day, etc.]

Q: How did you feel being in a culture that was so different from your own? [Exhilarated? Cautious?]

Most of us can enjoy immersing ourselves in a different culture knowing full well we get to come back home. We look forward to being home, to what is familiar, and to sleep in our own beds.

Transition: But what if we weren't ever coming back home? What if our life journey had us going through multiple cultures without having a home base per se? That was Abraham's reality. We continue our study of the inductees of the Hall of Faith by picking up where we left off. **All of us can improve living by faith by following the EXAMPLES of those whom God commended.** Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Hebrews 11:13-22]

V.13:

- All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.

V.14:

- People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.

V.15:

- If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.

V.16:

- Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

LOOK:

Q: What is your takeaway today that helps you increase your living by faith?

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 318-319). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The patriarchs—faith waiting (vv. 8–22). The emphasis in this section is on the promise of God and His plans for the nation of Israel (Heb. 11:9, 11, 13, 17). The nation began with the call of Abraham. God promised Abraham and Sarah a son, but they had to wait twenty-five years for the fulfillment of the promise. Their son Isaac became the father of Jacob and Esau, and it was Jacob who really built the nation through the birth of his twelve sons. Joseph saved the nation *in* the land of Egypt, and Moses would later deliver them *from* Egypt.

Waiting is, for me, one of the most difficult disciplines of life. Yet true faith is able to wait for the fulfillment of God's purposes *in God's time*. But, while we are waiting, we must also be obeying. "By faith Abraham ... obeyed" (Heb. 11:8). He obeyed when *he did not know where he was going* (Heb. 11:8–10). He lived in tents because he was a stranger and pilgrim in the world and had to be ready to move whenever God spoke. Christians today are also strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11). Abraham had his eyes on the heavenly city and lived "in the future tense."

He also obeyed when *he did not know how God's will would be accomplished* (Heb. 11:11–12). Both Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children. Yet they both believed that God would do the miracle (Rom. 4:13–25). Unbelief asks, "How *can* this be?" (Luke 1:18–20) Faith asks, "How *shall* this be?" (Luke 1:34–37)

Abraham believed and obeyed God when *he did not know when God would fulfill His promises* (Heb. 11:13–16). None of the patriarchs saw the complete fulfillment of God's promises, but they saw from "afar off" what God was doing. Dr. George Morrison, a great Scottish preacher, once said, "The important thing is not what we live in, but what we look for." These men and women of faith lived in tents, but they knew a heavenly city awaited them. God always fulfills His promises to His believing people, either immediately or ultimately.

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). *Daniel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 808). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

11:13–16. In an impressive summary of his discussion thus far, the writer pointed out that people can be **still living by faith** when they die, even if by that time they do **not receive the things promised**. By faith the old saints saw the promised realities **from a distance** and persisted in their pilgrim character, **looking for a country of their own** and refusing to **return** to the land they had left. So too the readers should renounce the **opportunity** to go back to any form of their ancestral religion and should persist in **longing for a better country—a heavenly one**. If they did so they, like the patriarchs, would be people with whom **God** would **not be ashamed** to be associated.