

Godly (Dis)contentment

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[0 : 00] and you can take out your Bible, and we are looking just for Hebrews chapter 11 today. Just Hebrews chapter 11.

And let's pray, and then Corey is going to serve us this morning in the reading of Scripture. Father, we are grateful to be here, and we are humbled by what you have done for us in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is good for us, as we read in the Psalms and as we have just sung together, to give thanks to the Lord. That's good for us to do that.

Would you please grow fresh gratitude in our hearts for all that you have done for us in Christ. Thank you that while we were weak and ungodly, it was then that Christ died for us.

Thank you that it is by his wounds that we are healed. Father, now as we turn our attention to your word, we ask that you would send the Holy Spirit to be with us and among us, even as we know that he is in us.

[1 : 33] We desire to hear those things and to see those things, to understand those things from your word that you have for us today. Father, please remind us of the hope that is ours in our Savior.

Please stir up fresh hope. Please give us more faith so that we honor you with our obedience.

Father, please give us courage to testify of our faith to those around us who do not yet know our Savior, the Lord Jesus.

Help us, we pray, as we continue in this time of worship. It is in the name of the Lord Jesus that we ask all of these things and give you thanks. Amen.

This is Hebrews chapter 11 and verses 13 down through 16. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

[2 : 43] For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a whole land. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

But as it is, they desire a better country that is a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared them a city. I suspect, thank you, Corey.

I suspect that we all know the way it feels to anticipate an event. Do you remember the weeks and the days and the hours leading up to your wedding?

Maybe even the moments before you and your bride or you and your groom saw one another. Maybe you have anticipated and then helped prepare for your parents' 40th anniversary.

Or maybe you've been blessed to have a great grandparent who has lived to be 100 and you have anticipated that birthday party and then participated in celebrating that great grandparent.

[4 : 08] Children, I wonder what the last few days leading up to Christmas are like in your home. Is there anticipation, excitement?

Not just because you get a break from school usually, right? But also because there will be family and friends that will be around, good food to eat, Christmas goodies.

But I'm forgetting about something, right? What am I forgetting, Elam? Yeah, extra hours of napping. What else? What do you really anticipate at Christmas?

Presents. Thank you. Thank you for helping me out. Presents. There is this anticipation that begins to build as you perhaps see a gift or two under the tree and then more and more and so much excitement and anticipation.

And perhaps mom and dad even say, well, you can choose one and you can open one early because we just can't tolerate all of the excitement and anticipation building, right? I wonder if you sleep well the night before you go on vacation.

[5 : 29] One part of that is certainly the anxiety of wondering if you forgot something, right? If you forgot to pack something. But you are also just really excited to go.

And all of that anticipation that you have felt leading up to that moment is just about a reality. This is the essence of faith.

Admitting the absence of what you anticipate. Admitting the absence of what you anticipate.

Think about it. When you finally receive what you have been anticipating, you no longer need to believe that you are going to receive it.

You have it. Your wedding day arrives. Christmas finally comes. You get to go on the vacation. You're backing out of the garage. You shut the garage door and you pull away from your house.

[6 : 36] You don't need to believe. You don't need to have faith that it's finally going to arrive. All of that anticipation has turned into reality. But until you have what has been promised to you, faith admits, I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

This is how the people that we've learned about in Hebrews chapter 11 lived. They gave careful thoughtfulness to God and his promises.

And that careful thoughtfulness nourished their hope and catalyzed their obedience. In today's text, it seems as if the author is clarifying or maybe confirming what ought to be intuitively obvious for even the most casual observer.

And that is, everyone dies. Narrator voice with an asterisk over Enoch. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, they all died.

They all died. Now a cynic or a skeptic might say, if you're going to die without receiving God's promises fully, why not just live your best life now?

[8 : 17] Why not? If you already know that you're going to live and you're going to die without fully receiving God's promises, why not just live it up now?

And the answer to that, of course, is that this is what it means to be a believer in God. It is to anticipate, but not fully receive the promises.

This is why we would refer to one another as believers. You are admitting the absence of what you are anticipating. Otherwise, you wouldn't need to be a believer anymore because you'd already have what you've been looking forward to.

This is the essence of faith. Believers anticipate receiving. A believer is one who lives and dies without fully receiving God's promises.

The anticipation, then, is a feature and not a bug of faith. Chapter 11, verse 13.

[9 : 35] These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

By faith, Sarah conceived and she and Abraham have a son, but their descendants were not like the stars of heaven. Not when they died.

God promised them the land and they went and lived in the land, but they were little more than happy campers there.

They didn't possess the land. They certainly were not owners of the land that God promised them. And yet, it is that anticipation of God's promises coming true that motivated them to continue trusting in God.

As Mike illustrated for us several weeks back, they put on their faith goggles so that they could see God's promises a long way off and even welcome, greet God's promises as though they were in the present.

[11 : 07] Imagine preparing to host some family or some friends and you are very excited.

You have been looking forward to this time with family and friends and perhaps as you are anticipating their arrival because their GPS helpfully told them what time they were going to get there, you have come out of your home and now you are moving out into the street so that you can look down the street and watch for them to come.

You are seeing them from afar, preparing to welcome them as they continue getting closer and closer.

And when they finally pull into your driveway, you have to hold the children back, right? Because there is this move towards the vehicle to greet them and to welcome them.

This is how these faithful believers responded to God's promises. With their faith goggles on, they saw God's promises from afar and saw them getting nearer and nearer, even welcoming them as though they had come fully true.

[12 : 29] And yet, the author of Hebrews tells us, they died in faith, not having received the things promised.

They didn't die in cynicism. They didn't die in despair. They didn't die in hopelessness. If you're into circling or underlining in your Bible, note that these all died in faith.

Those who die in faith don't pretend that God's promises are fulfilled. If they were fulfilled fully, you wouldn't be dying in faith.

You don't pretend that God's promises are fulfilled because then you'd already have what God has promised. You wouldn't need to be a believer anymore. To die in faith is to admit the absence of what you are anticipating.

And to never, ever lose sight of God's faithfulness. Are you a believer?

[13 : 50] Have you been born again? Children, are you a believer in God? Have you been born again? To be a believer means that you are anticipating a moment when you will die and be with Jesus.

What a moment to anticipate. A moment when Jesus will wipe away every tear from your eyes and purge away every bit of sin's filth from your heart.

A moment when every moment after that is like the very first moment because God has given you eternal life and you have now fully received the promise of God of eternal life.

And you no longer need to be a believer in that sense because you have received what God promised you. Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Is he your savior? Perhaps you wonder, was it awkward and uncomfortable for them to live this way?

[15 : 16] verse 14 explains. For people who speak thus, what does that point to?

Well, just before that, we have this in verse 13. Look in your Bible. They were strangers and exiles on the earth. They acknowledged their status on earth.

They were honest about it. They didn't hide it. They acknowledged their status of being strangers and pilgrims on earth.

And the author of Hebrews tells us people who speak thus, people who are honest about being strangers and pilgrims on earth, they make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

You see that in your Bible? You see how those two verses connect to one another? It is the being honest about our status of being pilgrims and strangers, exiles here, happy campers, if you will.

[16 : 26] It is our honesty about that that leads others to say they are seeking a homeland.

Imagine how our community would respond to a large family with, let's say, 25 tents, just for the sake of giving it a number, and they put up their tents down south of Horace, just outside the city limits of our community, down south of Horace.

Now, granting that it's freezing outside already, how do you think our community would respond to this group of people?

I think they would show up on the whistleblower hotline, you know? Like, who are those people? What's with all of their tents? Why don't they buy a house and settle into one of the communities?

Who do they think they are? Are they better than all of us? Are they worse than all of us? What is their story? Because they seem like weirdos, and it's suspicious to us.

[17 : 53] These men and women of faith did not avoid conversations about their social status. They were happy to acknowledge that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

And this transparency made it abundantly clear to everyone around them, they're seeking a homeland. They're not looking to settle in here.

They have bigger hopes, bigger dreams, bigger expectations. They are seeking a homeland.

Lois and I, it just occurred to me that I failed to ask Lois' permission to share this story. So I'm going to trust that this will be okay and not look at her for a moment.

Lois and I shop at Sam's Club very differently. We both go to Sam's Club with a list.

[19 : 05] We both like operating with a list. And neither of our ways of shopping at Sam's Club are better than the other. Let me just get that out there. It's not that one is better than the other.

But when Lois goes to Sam's Club, despite the fact that she has a list, she is also interested in browsing other things. Shopping.

I think people, some people call that. I am not interested in shopping. I am seeking everything on this list like a heat-seeking missile.

I get my cart to where it is, I put it in the cart, and I move on to the next thing. And when everything on the list is done, we leave. We check out, and we pay.

That is what is happening here. I love you, Lois. That is what is happening here. They are seeking a homeland like that.

[20 : 07] Like a heat-seeking missile. It is driving them forward towards what God promised them.

This is how believers seek their homeland. They see it. They greet it from afar. And then they focus their attention on it.

You might say, then I saw his place. And now I'm a believer and there's not a doubt in my mind.

That's the eyes of faith. That's seeking a homeland. Friends, I wonder, do my friends and family and neighbors and coworkers, do they know that I am a believer?

Is it evident to them by the way that I am very comfortable with my social status of not fitting in very well with all of the things?

[21 : 19] Have I by that made it clear that I am seeking a homeland? That I am not yet home.

Now I suspect that Abraham and Sarah must have on occasion had conversations about going back to earth.

I mean, let's just be honest. They must have on occasion had conversations about going back to earth.

But they did not allow their thoughts to linger for long on what lay behind them. instead, they just kept on admitting the absence of what they were anticipating.

Verse 15. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

[22 : 29] return. When Orpah leaves Naomi and remains in Moab, her thoughts must have been consumed with all that she would have to leave behind.

But Ruth, like these who died in faith, they are unmoved by what they could have returned to.

Ruth and Sarah and Abraham and the rest, they are not shrink backers. It wasn't that they lacked opportunity to return to the land that they left.

They simply anticipated a better country. Verse 16. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

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

[23 : 51] since they anticipated dwelling with God. God is not ashamed to be called their God.

I think this is remarkable. I don't know about you, but I have done some dumb stuff. And maybe like me, you may begin to wonder if God is hanging on to you with the thinnest of threads.

Maybe like holding on to your new sweater by the tag of the sweater. Do you ever feel like you're one sin away from God turning his back on you?

Maybe you have felt, maybe you have experienced shame from a parent or from a spouse or from someone who used to be your spouse, maybe from your boss, maybe from a friend.

My brother, my sister, because of Jesus, you will never experience shame from God.

[25 : 09] Does this cause you to worship? Because I think it should. That God would say, hear this church, that God would say, I am the God of Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Ruth and Jacob and Tim and Russ and Kara and Jenny and Lydia and Sarah.

That God would say that of us? that he is not ashamed to be our God? I think that's remarkable.

Praise him, church, because of your faith in the bloody death and the glorious resurrection of Jesus and not because of what you have failed to do or done.

Because of the righteousness of Christ that is yours by grace alone through faith alone, God is not ashamed to be your God.

Some of us need to hear that today and some of us need to be reminded of this verse frequently. Highlight it, circle it, write it on a note card, put it in your car, meditate on this verse.

- [26 : 47] In a sermon given in the fall of 1939, C.S. Lewis wrote this, there is no question of death or life for any of us, only a question of this death or of that, of a machine gun bullet now or cancer 40 years later.

Russell Moore commenting on this writes, that sort of pessimism can lead you to devilish places of cynicism and inaction.

Well, we're all going to die of something, so let's not worry. Or, well, hatred goes all the way back to Cain and Abel, so let's just ignore our consciences when they show us our part in it.

But instead, as Lewis goes on to argue later in his sermon, the frustration and the feelings of helplessness should lead us somewhere.

They should lead us somewhere else to the right kind of disillusionment. what do we do with a world that is irreparably broken because of sin?

- [28 : 17] It must be made new, brothers and sisters. What do we do with this world that is irreparably broken because of sin? Well, we don't normalize sin.

We don't deny the awfulness of sin. We don't minimize the consequences for sin. And we don't ignore those who suffer as a result of sin.

Instead, we move towards them. We allow the undeniable reality that something is wrong here to disillusion us, to remove the illusions we once had of living our best lives now.

We allow this helpless feeling of a world that is irreparably broken to give us godly discontentment.

It is only then that we will desire a better country. Do you believe that? It is only then when we have this kind of godly discontentment that we will desire a better country.

- [29 : 35] It is only when our illusions of finding contentment in this world die that we will seek to become the kind of person who seeks a different kingdom and we make it clear to those around us, I am not home yet.

it is only when you stop expecting this world to quench the thirstiness in your soul that you will live and you will die with your faith anchored firmly in God's promises to you in Christ and that means living and dying admitting the absence of what you are anticipating.

I still haven't found what I'm looking for. Lewis again if we looked for something that would turn the present world from a place of pilgrimage into a permanent city satisfying the soul of man we are hear this disillusioned and not a moment too soon.

Consider the first readers of these four verses from Hebrews 11. Instead of anticipating God's promises to them in Christ they are leaning in the other direction.

They are being tempted to return to Judaism. Perhaps the law keeping and the sacrifice bringing felt more comfortable because it's what you've been used to.

- [31 : 38] Maybe it's because Judaism was legal in the Roman Empire and Christianity will get you killed. perhaps it is the tangible offering of repeated sacrifices that has somehow misled them into some ironic proof that they have received God's forgiveness.

Whatever their reason they are being tempted to go back. They're leaning away away from God's promises.

promises. You can hear the argument following Jesus is hard. Following Jesus is hard.

Admitting the absence of what we are anticipating that is uncomfortable being strangers and exiles in this world that just feels awkward. Let's return to the faith of our fathers.

faith. And the author of Hebrews exhorts them as he exhorts us that anticipation is a feature not a bug of faith.

[32 : 59] The faith of our fathers is a forward looking faith. faith. These all died in faith.

Not receiving but seeing and greeting God's promises from afar. These all died in faith acknowledging that they were strangers and exiles seeking a homeland.

These all died in faith by grace stubbornly refusing to be shrink backers. These all died in faith desiring a better heavenly country.

A city prepared by God. So it is that Paul writes in Philippians chapter 3. Our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

We admit the absence of the one who we anticipate. And so Paul writes in Colossians chapter 3.

[34 : 20] Set your minds on things that are above not on things that are on the earth. This is godly discontentment.

This is what it means to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the essence of faith. Admitting the absence of what you anticipate.

Let's pray together. Father we are so grateful to have your word. We are humbled that we can believe together that you have answered our prayer.

That the Holy Spirit did come and that he has done work in our hearts. Father thank you for this text.

Would you please Holy Spirit do business now in our hearts as we prepare to receive the Lord's Supper and as we take time to pause and remember the bloody death and the glorious resurrection of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ we want to pause and examine our hearts we don't take this flippantly father we want to take this seriously and so we would ask that you would do work in our hearts and where we need our faith stirred you would stir faith that we would confess to you our doubt and you would give us fresh faith that we would confess to you our hesitance to be honest with our friends and neighbors and co-workers and instead you would give us fresh courage to be clear about our status that we are not home yet father that you would give us fresh faith in anticipating our savior the

[36 : 34] Lord Jesus Christ we believe that he is going to gloriously return forgive us holy father for getting so caught up with this world holy spirit would you please work in our hearts as we take a few moments and prepare now to receive the Lord's Supper Lord Jesus thank you for the beautiful words that we read in first Peter that he himself bore our sin in his body on the tree!

thank you for bearing away our sin thank you for fresh forgiveness fresh mercy we so desperately need thank you for grace and the privilege that we have as your children to get back up when we have failed and fallen sinned and to again pursue after you wholeheartedly by faith thank you for the sweetness of your sufficient grace please help us as we continue to worship now in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup it is in the name of the Lord Jesus that we pray amen