

Pilgrim Faith: Faces of Faith, Pt. 1

Hebrews 11:1-16

Introduction

In the late 1600s John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, a story about a man named Christian and his journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City by way of the King's Highway. His journey begins at the Wicket Gate, the only proper way to get on the King's Highway. He has many setbacks and strays off the path at times. But he pushes forward because he knows that the Celestial City is where his journey will end. He is tempted to stop and stay at different towns along the way. But these are not his home. In this little book, Bunyan shows us what the Christian life is, a journey. And it's one we travel, not by sight, but by faith.

Strangers in a Strange Land

All the men mentioned in our *Hebrews* reading this morning were strangers in a strange land, just passing through. God had created men and women to live in Paradise and to have close fellowship with Him. But with the fall, we were banished outside the Garden, to wander in a strange and hostile world. Abel was killed by his brother because his sacrifice was more acceptable than Cain's. Enoch pleased God and was taken up to be with Him. Noah built an ark, so God could "start over" with creation. And Abraham left his home and followed God in a foreign land.

The Promise

All these men lived according to the Promise. The Promise God made in the Garden of Eden that He would one day send a Savior, the Seed of a woman who would finally defeat the devil and restore humanity to what it was meant to be.

The Promise and Faith

The writer of *Hebrews* says they lived by faith because it takes faith to accept and cling to a promise. Martin Luther said: *This promise is surely carried out and fulfilled when faith takes hold of it; and it follows with infallible logic that faith alone justifies, inasmuch as faith alone accepts the promise.* They were made righteous by and lived this life through their faith in the promised Messiah. We are made righteous through our faith in the Messiah who has come and live this life according to the promise of His Second Coming.

Led and Driven

When Christ returns, He will finish His work of restoration. This fallen world will be no more. All will be as it was meant to be. Because of this, we don't have to worry about what happens in this world. Luther said: *And this is the glory of faith, namely, not to know where you are going, what you are doing, what you are suffering, and, after taking everything captive—perception and understanding, strength and will—to follow the bare voice of God and to be led and driven rather than to drive.* Like Abraham, we don't have to know where we are going or even what we are doing. We aren't in charge; we follow God.

Seeking God

As we said a couple weeks ago, in this life we seek God by seeking His kingdom. We seek His kingdom by living a proper life, by believing in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. But what does a life seeking God look like? 3rd Century church father Pachomius said: *Daniel sought God out, and God taught him great mysteries; God saved him from the lion's gullet. The three saints sought God out and found God in the fiery furnace. Job took refuge with God, and God cured him of his sores.*

Faith and Doubt

Of course, this kind of life can lead to some doubts. How can we deal with the doubts? Erasmus Sarcarius said: *Faith cannot coexist with doubt, and that it has to do with things that are future and that which one with one's reason and human wisdom cannot grasp.* Doubts come because of our fallen human reason. This life doesn't make sense; it's not supposed to. Faith disengages reason and listens to the voice of God.

Faith and the Means of Grace

We hear God's voice in His Word. He comes to us in the Sacraments. When we hear the Word and receive the Sacrament of the Altar, we are seeking God and He gives us the faith to follow Him, the **PILGRIM FAITH** that clings to the cross, empty tomb, and the second coming of Christ.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
