

Readings

Scripture

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ 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 for them a city. ...

³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.
- Hebrews 11:13-16, 39-40 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

Salvation is social. It concerns the whole people of God. We can experience it only as part of the whole people of God. As long as the believers in Old Testament times were without those who are in Christ, it was impossible for them to experience the fullness of salvation. Furthermore, it is what Christ has done that opens the way into the very presence of God for them as for us. Only the work of Christ brings those of Old Testament times and those of the new and living way alike into the presence of God.

- Leon Morris, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* Vol. 12 (p. 132-133)

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

- Hebrews 11:39-40 (*English Standard Version*)

Sermon Outline

The Heart of Faith
Hebrews 11:1-40

Consider Jesus
Brad Anderson

God commends those whose faith has produced beautiful actions... (Hebrews 11:2, 4-5, 39)

Who were those commended to us by God in Hebrews 11?

They were those whose faith celebrated... (Hebrews 11:1-2)

They were those whose faith conquered... (Hebrews 11:3-38)

- These verses form a living museum of faith...
 - The First Gallery: Creation to Noah (Hebrews 11:3-7)
 - The Second Gallery: The Patriarchs (Hebrews 11:8-22)
 - The Third Gallery: Moses to the conquest of Jericho (Hebrews 11:23-31)
 - The Fourth Gallery: A Collage (Hebrews 11:32-39)
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They were those whose faith waited for its reward... (Hebrews 11:39-40)

Reflection Questions

 (*taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- When was the first time you recognized that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"?
- Read Hebrews 11 as a group. Why list these faithful forerunners now? How does Hebrews 11 fit into the overall flow of the book?
- What are the connections between Hebrews 10:35-39 and the themes of chapter 11?
- How does verse 6 illustrate the reality of verse 1?
- Look again at each gallery of the living museum of faith identified in the outline above. How is the definition of faith expressed in each gallery?
- If you were to use your life as a definition of faith, how would faith be defined? What words would you use and why?
- Of the people mentioned in Hebrews 11, with whom do you feel you have the most in common? Why? With whom do you have the least in common? Why? Which situation would have been most difficult for you to face? Why? What does it mean to you that not all these people of faith met with "success"?
- How has your faith affected your neighbors?
- What does it mean to you to be an alien and a stranger on earth? In what ways do you feel like a stranger in this world?