

When We Shall Be Like Him

By Joe R Wheeler

Introduction: In Hebrews 11:13-16, there is a wonderful description given of how we are to occupy our time on this earth.

The faithful are there described as being "strangers" and "pilgrims". The text goes on and further says that such as these are "in search of a country". It says that the country they seek is a "better and heavenly" one. Although they could have occasion to return to the country from whence they came, they earnestly desire the one that is now unseen. Because of their faithfulness, we are told that God has also prepared there a "city" in which they will dwell. Chapter 11 goes on to name some of the individuals and to remind us of the ways that they faithfully lived out their time on this earth, always looking ahead to that which was promised. They are further mentioned as having endured terrible hardships by faith that something better was coming. It says that they wandered from place to place, dwelling in deserts, and in mountains, in dens and caves. They lived as outcast's and were cruelly treated. Although they suffered greatly, they willingly SUBJECTED themselves to these conditions. They were people who looked ahead. They relied on God, not themselves.

This passage describes those who were waiting for God to provide something He had promised to give. There are two promises here that I want to focus on. One promise has been fulfilled. One has yet to be...but yet, by faith we know it too will come to pass.

One promise was for salvation to come from God. That promise was fulfilled by Jesus. He came in the flesh and died to give us life. Those who obey His gospel are added to the church, and He will come again to claim them. That is the second promise.

This promise of a return and a reward is what this lesson is about. Like those in Hebrews 11, we to are living out our lives in anticipation. We also wait for a promise to be fulfilled. These following passages grant Christians many wonderful insights into that promise.

1 John 3:1-3 *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

I. Now We See Through A Glass Darkly—

The Church is living in a state of eager anticipation. We have received the promise of salvation, and now wait for the second promise to be fulfilled. We have a guarantee and a hope. This is why we endure suffering. It is also why we don't chase after the riches of this world, by faith we know that OUR riches are with God. We are strangers on this earth and the world recognizes us as different.

1 John 3:1-2a *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be:*

Also: We must be in the church to be recipients of the promise. Although the purpose of this lesson is to encourage Christians, we should briefly mention that salvation is only for those who OBEY the gospel.

Mark 16:15-16 *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

John 3:36 *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

John 5:24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

John 6:47 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

-The Church is the partial fulfillment of the eternal promise.

II. Then We Shall See Face to Face—

The church is waiting for Jesus to come for it. We are His and are to conform to His will. As a body is made up of many parts, so is the church made up of many members. The promises are for the church as a whole, and also for us as individuals.

1 John 3:2b *but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

A. One Thing We Cannot See Clearly

Romans 8:18-19 *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

B. Three Things We Can See Clearly

1. We know that He will appear

Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

2. We know that we shall be like Him

Matthew 13:43 *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Romans 8:29 *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Philippians 3:20-21 *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I show 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

3. We know we shall see Him as He is

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

III. God's People Must Live Faithfully—

1 John 3:3 *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

Also:

1 John 2:6 *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

1 John 2:28 *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

Conclusion:

We have joined the "roll call of the faithful" mentioned in Hebrews 11. Our names are now recorded in the Book of Life. We have received the down payment by being made a part of the body of Christ, the church of Christ. We have to remember to look ahead of us; not with our physical eyes, but with the eyes of faith.

Hebrews 10:35-39 *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. 36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37 For yet, a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

1 Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*