

Looking for a Homeland

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living by faith in God, even when we are strangers in a foreign land, and trusting in His promise, not in the temporary things of this world.

Duration: 49:45

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Heavenly Citizenship"

Description

This sermon delves into the story of Abraham from Genesis, emphasizing his faith and trust in God as he journeyed as a stranger and pilgrim in the land of promise. It highlights the importance of not putting our hope in worldly kingdoms or possessions but in seeking a heavenly homeland prepared by God. The message challenges believers to live as citizens of heaven, holding onto the promises of God with unwavering faith, just like Abraham did.

Transcript

Let's go to Genesis chapter 12, and I want to share with you some thoughts that I have shared with you on odd occasions and at different times, but probably not in the context and its entirety as I plan to share it with you this morning. Let's read then from Genesis chapter 12, and I'm going to read verses 1 through 9, and then also chapter 13, verses 8 to 13. Genesis chapter 12, verse 1. Now the Lord had said to Abraham, get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.

I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him, and Abraham was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Then Abraham took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abraham passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh, and the Canaanites were there in the land.

Then the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to your descendants, I will give this land. And there he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east.

And there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. So Abraham journeyed, going on still toward the north. And then chapter 13, and from verse 8 through 13.

And so Abraham said to Lot, Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brethren. It is not the whole land before you. Please separate from me.

If you take the left, then I will go to the right, or if you go to the right, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan that was well watered everywhere before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go down toward Zohar.

And then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they separated from each other. Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.

I think that we all know the story of Abraham very well. And normally when we speak about Abraham, we speak of him as the father of the faithful, as the father of all of Israel. And obviously as the father of those who are believers today.

And the thing that is a hallmark of Abraham's life, obviously, is his faith, and his trust in God, and doing what God asked him to do. Doing a very, very difficult thing, and that was leaving his home and going to a country that he would inherit. But then living in that country as a stranger and as a foreigner.

And it's that aspect that I want to share with you this morning. We think often of Abraham as being a primitive man, and living in tents was not a strange thing, would not be a strange thing for him. After all, there are still nomads in the deserts who still live in tents, and who move from place to place.

And so we look at Abraham and we say, well, Abraham was just like that, and so this wasn't a difficult thing for him to do, because he was a primitive man. But in fact, Abraham was not a primitive man. Abraham came, if you read these chapters in entirety, from a city called Ur of the Chaldees.

Ur of the Chaldees has been excavated, and we know a lot about that city today, and it was a very well-developed city. People lived not in tents, but in stone houses, very well-constructed houses with two stories and sometimes three stories. The city had a library.

The city had a gymnasium. They had water-borne sewage, which many parts of the world still don't have today. And so it was a city with a well-developed infrastructure, and so he was a modern man in the same sense in which we are modern people.

He may not have had electricity, and he may not have had internet and television and those things, and that didn't make him bad. It made him maybe probably better than we are because of those things. But he came from a well-established infrastructure and city.

And he, at the age of 75, turns his back on all of that and continues to live the rest of his life living in tents. And we say, well, you know, that's quite a difficult thing to do. But I believe that there is a very important lesson, and that is the gist of what I want to share with you this morning.

God had promised him a country. God had promised him the land of Canaan. And yet the Scripture is explicit that he lives in that land as a stranger.

He never built anything except altars. And it's interesting in the passage that we read this morning, you'll see, that it speaks about the fact that wherever he went, he built an altar. But he never built a house.

Now, we would say, well, you know, if you're going to move to another place, the first thing you need to do is you need to find yourself somewhere to live. Today we would buy a house or rent an apartment, but those days the natural thing would be to build yourself a house. And yet Abraham never built himself a house.

The only thing he built, wherever he went, is the altars that he used to worship God. And then at the same time, there is in this passage a contrast between Abraham and his cousin Lot. And you'll see that when the herds became too many, there were too many sheep and cattle and donkeys and things, for them to graze together.

And so the herds would eat up all of the food that was available. And so they would have to move further and further away with their animals. And so the time came when it was wise for them to separate.

And so Abraham, even though he is the uncle and he is the senior in the partnership, in fact, everything was happening under his authority, if you will. Lot really was just going along with Abraham. Abraham gives him the choice, and Lot chooses the plains.

He chooses the plains for two reasons. The first is because they were fertile. That was where the river would run through, and that is where it was green.

And so he chooses that which looked good to the eye. And you remember that that's, of course, a very significant statement, because that was where sin began with Eve, because she saw that it was good. And so he saw that it was good.

It was profitable. And we heard this morning in Sunday school about the problem of riches and chasing after riches and pleasure. And that was the second thing that was attractive to Lot, the cities.

Now, maybe they were not as attractive for Lot, but they were certainly for his wife, and they certainly seemed to be a part of the equation in making a decision. Remember that the choices here really is a semi-desert area, very much like around here. And remember that while we live in the city here, the city is unnatural in the sense that we have trees, and some people have lawns still, grass still.

But this is not the way that this looks normally. You understand that. And so if you go a few miles away into the desert here, then that's how this area would have been.

And that's very much the same way as the land of Canaan is. It is a Mediterranean country, and it is semi-desert. And so the choices really is between the semi-desert, arid area, and the fertile valleys.

And yet Lot chooses obviously the fertile valleys because he is choosing with the human eye. He is choosing what is natural and human and earthly and materialistic and temporary. Those are the things that he saw.

Abraham didn't get to choose, but Abraham gets left the right portion, and that is the portion that God had in mind for him. And then there is the cities. And obviously the cities are always attractive.

It's an old problem. Goes right back to after the flood. You remember that soon after the flood they built the city of the Tower of Babel, and there was Nimrod.

And we don't have time to get into Nimrod, but one of the things that was the hallmark of Nimrod was that he built the first city. And cities, while they are useful things for us, unfortunately they contain an attraction within themselves. They contain an attraction because they are established.

They offer facilities, entertainment, friendship, all sorts of stuff that the cities, and obviously work, that the cities offer. So right throughout the world you find that there is a mass migration from the rural areas to the cities. And in many countries, most countries in the world, the cities are becoming denuded.

Less and less people living, sorry, the country. Less and less people living in the country. More and more people flooding to the cities.

And with the resultant homeless problem, and squatter camps, and all of those kinds of things, and overpopulation in the cities. And it was the same, it had the same attraction those days. And so Lot is drawn to the city, an established place, with infrastructure, with everything that your heart would desire.

And Abraham is left with a desolate country. But of course at the end of the day we know the end of the story, that Lot ended up losing everything, while Abraham gained everything. And that teaches us about the importance of choosing the way God chooses.

Not to choose according to our own selfish desires, as we heard in Sunday school this morning. That we would choose God's way rather than our way. And so God's way is not the way of man.

It's not the human way of thinking and seeing things. God's ways are higher than our ways. God's ways are superior.

And so already you see this difference. You see Lot going towards the established city. And we read that he pitched his tent closer and closer and closer to Sodom.

And then eventually when we look again, we find him living no longer in a tent, but living within the city of Sodom. And not only living in the city, but becoming part of the fabric of that city. As he becomes a city councillor and sits in the gate of the city, one of the elders of that city.

All the time Abraham is moving from place to place. And one of the things in this passage that we read, that struck me as I read it again this morning, is that it speaks about him moving from one place to the other. He's constantly moving.

Never owns anything. He is simply temporary in the land. And the Scripture specifies the land of promise.

So the land was what God had promised him. And yet he never owned the land. And he comes to the end of his life, and he still does not own a square inch of the land that God had promised him.

When in fact he did own something. What he owned was a hole in the ground in which he buried his wife. He bought a piece of land so that he could bury his wife.

That was all he had. A little piece of land, a cemetery, a burial place. That's all he possessed in the land.

And I'm sure that modern Christians, and especially those who are of the word of faith persuasion, would say, well, you know, Abraham was really a bastard. Abraham had no real faith because Abraham wasn't able to appropriate the promise. Promises were just pie in the sky for Abraham.

Abraham lived as a pauper in the sense that he didn't own anything. Now remember that Abraham was a very wealthy man. He had many flocks.

He had a small army that was able to take on four tribal chiefs or kings at that time. So he was very powerful in that sense. But remember that for those people, as it is for many people today, possession of land, owning land, was very, very important.

That identified them as being something, of being someone of substance, not just someone who's living or squatting on someone else's land, not just a nomad who's moving around, but somebody who owns real property. And so Abraham dies without owning real estate, without owning anything. And we look at that and we say, well, you know, what was the use of all of Abraham's faith? What was the use of all of his obedience? He comes to the end and he still does not realize the promises.

And yet it is exactly in this that God commends Abraham. It is exactly for his faithfulness to the Word of God and his willingness to turn aside from establishing his own city and his own kingdom and waiting for the city and the kingdom of God that the Word commends him as one of the greatest men of all time. Now, Abraham's natural inclination would obviously be to build himself a city, to establish a name for himself.

Because in the city, for them it wouldn't just be a place to stay, but it would be a legacy that they would leave behind and they would be able to say that was the city that Abraham built. And right through history we find that men still have done the same thing. Right now in our own history here in America there are politicians who are embarking on all sorts of great building projects in the hope of leaving some kind of legacy to say this is the high-speed rail that Jerry Brown built, or this was the bridge that this man built, or this was the dam that that man built.

And we look back at the great building works that came at the end of the Great Depression and we look at the names that are attached to those. And so men build for themselves and leave for themselves a name in their building works. And remember if you go back to the Scriptures you find Herod the Great.

And you'll know because we've spoken about him before that he wasn't called Herod the Great because he was great. He was not great at all. There was nothing great about Herod.

But he was called Herod the Great because of the great building projects that he had tackled. He had built for himself a number of palaces. He had built this great fort within Jerusalem and of course he had rebuilt, virtually demolished the old temple and rebuilt the temple so that it became known as Herod's Temple.

And so he is known for his building works. And when you go to Rome today you still see the results of the great Caesars, or the Caesars, we shouldn't say that they were great, but the Caesars 2,000 years ago. When you go to England, one of the things that fascinates me every time I go is to see parts of Roman walls that the Romans built 2,000 years ago, to see forts and churches that were built 2,000 years ago by the Romans and by the emperors.

And these are legacies. And we look at those things and we say, this is amazing. You go into churches there that are 1,000 years old and you say, well, you know, this is an amazing record of the ingenuity and the intelligence and the power and the wealth of those people of that time.

You go to Egypt and you see the pyramids. And so the list goes on and on as men leave for themselves a legacy in real estate and in things that they built. And yet Abraham leaves behind nothing of material substance.

Not a single house. Not a single city. Not a country.

Nothing except faith. And yet this is what God commends him for. And so if we go to the book of Hebrews chapter 11, of course, we find that he is commended and Abraham's life is analyzed in some detail in Hebrews chapter 11.

And so let's go to verse 8. And I'm going to go through this. Having given you the background now, I want to now look at the application as far as Abraham is concerned and then at the application as far as we are concerned. So Hebrews 11 verse 8. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.

And he went out not knowing where he was going. That's the first thing that stands out about Abraham. He went out not knowing where he was going.

And we would say, well, you know, what kind of planner is that? What kind of mind is that? That he doesn't know where he's going. Now I know many people today look that way. They start their days not having a clue what they're going to do and where they're going.

And so they have no plan for the day. They have no plan for the year or for their lives. And while we want to and must heed the warning from James that came to us this morning that we can't say that tomorrow we're going to go here and there and do this and do that.

But if the Lord wills we will do those things. Now notice that James does not say you must not plan. But it says that you need to bring God into your planning.

And so we have a plan. We're going to go here and there. We're going to buy and sell.

And if the Lord wills we will do those things. And so Abraham seems to be without a plan. But no, Abraham is following the Lord.

Abraham has found this amazing quality which is sadly lacking in Christians today. And that is the ability to find his strength and his stability and his surety not in a bank balance or in a house or in a city or in a country but to find these things in the Lord Himself. Now unfortunately the thing that gives us stability, that gives us substance, that gives us assurance about things in this life is material things.

But Abraham while he had some of those things he had no enduring habitation here because his confidence was in the Lord. And so at the end of verse 8 he went out not knowing where he was going. And by faith, verse 9, he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob as with him of the same promise.

He dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob. And here's where I want to begin to bring an application for us in our modern situation today. You see Abraham had something that we do not have.

Abraham had a promise that the country in which he was living as a stranger would belong to him and to his descendants. Now just think about that for a moment. Do we have as Christians the same promise concerning America or for those who come from Germany of Germany? Does the Scripture promise that America is the place that God has for us? No, there is no such promise.

America, and that's the point, is fading away as is every other country in the world because these things are temporary. So Abraham is living in a situation which is semi-permanent in the sense that it has God's promise to him. And yet at the same time we don't have that.

We don't have a promise that we have an enduring city here in this world. And so Abraham lives as a stranger, dwells in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents. And notice the emphasis again in dwelling in tents.

And the thing about a tent is that it is incredibly flimsy and temporary. There is no such thing as a tent that is permanent. A house is semi-permanent, and even then it has a limited lifespan.

But a tent is by its very definition something that is here today and is gone tomorrow. So he lives in tents, and he dwells as in a foreign country. Notice, as in a foreign country.

It's not a foreign country in the sense that it's ultimately his country. God had promised it to him, but at that point it belonged to the Philistines and the people who occupied the land, and obviously only 400 years later or 500 years later would the land become theirs, would God actually give it to them. But he lives as a stranger and a foreigner.

And that is really the core of the message that I want to share with you this morning. If Abraham lived as a stranger and a foreigner in the land of promise, how much more should we not live as strangers and foreigners in a land that has no promise? And I'm not running down America. This would be true, and I would preach this in England or in South Africa or in Australia or anywhere else in the world.

This is true of every nation in the world, because we know the end of the conversation. In the book of Daniel you remember that God shows a vision, and the vision is of this great statue with a head of gold and shoulders of silver and then going down to brass and then iron and feet of iron and clay. And God gives the interpretation, and he says that these are representatives of the kingdoms of this world.

And you remember what happens at the end of that picture, and sometimes we get caught up in the details of Babylon and Medo-Persia and Greece and Rome and the meaning of the centaurs and Europe and Brexit and all of these things, but we forget the real punchline of that story. The punchline is that a little stone comes out of the mountain and it smashes that statue, thereby destroying those kingdoms. And the little stone becomes big, and that is the Lord Jesus and His kingdom.

And so what God is showing to Daniel thousands of years ago is that He will ultimately destroy all of the kingdoms of this world and He will establish His own kingdom. And that's the kingdom that we're looking for. And as much as Abraham was looking for a kingdom and for a city and for a country, we're looking for a kingdom and a city and a country.

But what we're looking for is not in America or in England or in any other country in this world. What we're looking for is exactly what Abraham was looking for, and that was a heavenly city, a heavenly city. And so where we find ourselves today is in a temporary situation.

In fact, this is something that takes a real change of mind because we see these things as so permanent. We see these things as so eternal that these things will always be. America will always be there.

This world will always be there. No, it's not always going to be there. The Scripture says that He will consume it all with fervent heat.

It will all be destroyed. And He's going to establish the new Jerusalem and the new heavens and a new earth. And so we put our trust and our confidence in this world.

That's where our hope is. But in fact it's in a foolish place because it is temporary and it's going to fade away. The Scripture speaks about it as being folded up as an old garment and being put away.

But we're looking for something which is more permanent, something which is more eternal. Now if Abraham lived as a stranger and a pilgrim, how should you and I live? We should live as strangers and pilgrims. How does a stranger and a pilgrim live? Well, they don't put down roots to use our modern language.

Today we would speak of living out of a suitcase. It's a very uncomfortable place to be and I know a little bit about that because of the travels. Living out of a suitcase is the most uncomfortable thing you can ever do because you know I'm going to sleep here tonight but I don't know where I'm going to sleep tomorrow.

I have to pack everything up in my suitcase and move on to the next place again. I have nothing that I can call my own when I'm on the road except my suitcase. But he's saying that that's how we ought to be living.

And yet we put down roots in this world. We put our trust and our confidence and our hope in this world. But he lives as a stranger and a pilgrim.

And then verse 10, For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. See, and here's really the heart of the matter. He waited.

And I was very blessed as Brother Henry went through the various scriptures this morning as it just confirmed things that were in my own heart. Remember that Henry spoke about the fact that the farmer waits until the harvest. It requires patience.

And Abraham waited. How long did he wait? The rest of his life he waited. And this is the powerful lesson for me.

Abraham could have lost patience. And he could have said, I don't see where God's city is. Now, where was God's city? How far was it in the future? Well, it's 5,000 years in the future.

Of course, you know the city, and I'm not saying you turn to the book of Revelation. But if you turn to the last chapters in the book of Revelation, you'll see that there's the city that Abraham was waiting for. One of the things about the New Jerusalem is that it has foundations.

And who built the New Jerusalem? God built the New Jerusalem. Remember Jesus says in John chapter 14, I'm going to go away, I'm going to prepare a place for you. And when I've prepared that place, I'm going to come back to receive you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

And so, the New Jerusalem is the only city in the world, the only city in all of eternity that conforms to Abraham's expectations. It has foundations. And the builder and maker is God.

Now, we say, well, every other city in the world has foundations. Yes, every city in the world does have foundations. And I told you earlier about parts of England and other parts of Europe that are thousands of years old.

But the fact is that those foundations are crumbling. And many times they have to be shored up and they have to be helped mechanically and with engineering and chemically to be able to stand. But the city that God builds has a foundation that will last forever.

It will never fade away, it will never crumble, it will never fall. And of course, God is the builder of that city. And so Abraham is looking for the New Jerusalem, which is only revealed to us in the book of Revelation.

And yet 5,000 years ago, now you say, how did he get to 5,000 years? Well, it's very simple. Abraham lived 2,000 years before Christ, just in round numbers. And then we're 2,000 years past Christ, after Christ.

So we're already 4,000 years on. I believe that the Lord is coming soon. And that when He comes, He's going to establish His kingdom.

And I'm not getting into all the little details in between. But He's going to establish His kingdom, which is going to last for another 1,000 years. So we have 2,000 years from Abraham to Christ, 2,000 years from Christ's first coming to His second coming, and then we have another 1,000 years to the end of the millennium.

And only then does the New Jerusalem appear. And so Abraham looks and he sees a promise. But the promise isn't a week away.

And so we lose heart when we don't get the promises that we have for ourselves or that someone may have given us. When things don't happen yesterday, when it takes a day and a week and a month and a year. There are certain promises in my own life that I've waited for for many, many, many years.

And I'm still waiting for those promises to be fulfilled. And yet Abraham's promise is 5,000 years in the future, and he says, that's what my hope is on. Now if Abraham was anything like me, and anything like most of us, Abraham would have said, well, I better get on with this because God's not fulfilling His promise.

Let me build my own city. Let me conquer for myself some land. And Abraham could have done that because, remember, he went against the four kings that had captured his cousin Lot, and he won against those four kings.

So he could have taken those cities. He could have taken all of that land, and he could have established his own nation and his own kingdom. But he says, I'm not going to do that because I'm trusting God.

I'm looking for His city, not my city. Now, folks, here's the problem. That unfortunately each one of us are building our own little empire, that be in whichever form and shape it may take.

And as we build those empires, we're saying, well, I'm not trusting God for His country, for His kingdom. I need to do it for me. I need to do it for myself.

But Abraham lives as a stranger, and he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Now, if we go, and I need to skip over, otherwise we run out of time, but verse 13. Now, verse 13, and I'm going to go quickly through 13 through 18.

13 through 16 doesn't specifically refer to Abraham, but clearly when you read it, you can see that it is referring to Abraham. It's implying Abraham. These all died in faith, not having received, I'm in verse 13 of

Hebrews 11, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Now, let's just look at that very, very quickly. They did not receive the promises. Abraham did not receive the promises, and neither did any of the others receive the promises.

Because remember, all of the promises are in the future, in the future kingdom. But having seen them afar off, they embraced them. Now, you can't embrace something that is not real.

Just think about that. When we talk about embracing something, you speak about holding something. We normally speak about embracing a person.

But you can embrace anything. I can embrace this pulpit. I can hold on to it.

Now, you can't grab hold of something you can't see. I mean, what am I embracing? Just the air. There's nothing there.

But to these men, these promises were so real that they were able to grab hold of them. They were so real that they were able to hold on to them to such an extent that they were able to let go and to release the things of this world. And so they embraced them, and they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. Now, here's the wonderful thing. A confession that we're seeking a homeland.

In other words, this world and this country and this city is not our home. We're looking for a homeland. Now, you probably know that most of the world wants to come to America.

And those who don't want to come to America want to go to England or to Europe. They're looking for a homeland because they believe that if they can just get to Europe or to England or to South Africa, in the case of Africa, most of Africa want to get into South Africa. We can only get there.

All of our hopes and our dreams will be fulfilled. And while that's quite legitimate, and many of us here may be in this country for those reasons, the fact is that we know that those hopes are eventually dashed. Millions of people live in this country and live in other First World countries having gone to those countries hoping for this idyllic situation where there will be no crime, where money will be everywhere, where all the problems will go away, and unfortunately they find out that there is still crime, there is still not enough money to go around, and all the issues and the problems continue.

But he says we are looking for a homeland. Now, folks, here's the question. Are you looking for a homeland? Or are you settled? You're saying, well, I'm here and I live in L.A. and this is my home.

And that's all there is to it. Or are you saying, no, there's more to it than just this. I'm looking for something greater.

Now, one of the things that brought me to this message is obviously as I traveled through South Africa in these last three weeks and as I continue to watch the news here in America is the zeal with which Christians commit to political agendas. And I'm not speaking specifically about any of the candidates for the presidency, but the commitment that people have to this man or this woman, that people have to various governments and to various hopefuls of overthrowing the government. Right now in Zimbabwe

there's a great move going on and there's a great hope that somehow they can get a righteous and a just government.

And Christians are throwing themselves at that. They're committing everything to that. But here's the thing.

In doing so, they are not confessing that they are strangers and pilgrims, but they're confessing that their hope is in this world. In a better government, whether that government be a democratic or a republican government or whatever kind of government, whether in Zimbabwe or in other parts of the world, the moment that becomes the thing that consumes you, you're making a statement. And your statement is, my hope is in this world.

And just one of the things that has become, and you can gather I'm transitioning into the application here, but one of the things that has irritated me to a large extent recently is just looking through Facebook. As you know, I don't like Facebook, but I have a presence on Facebook and I simply use it as a place to minister. But unfortunately as a result of that I have friends.

I can't believe it, but I do have some. And so whatever they post, as you know, comes on the timeline or whatever it is. And so what I'm finding, and everyone who befriends me on Facebook are Christians.

I don't have friends on Facebook who are not Christians. They're all Christians because they come to my site because of the ministry that we do. But you know that 95% of what these Christians are posting is political.

I don't see posts anymore about the goodness of God, about the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, about the joy of serving the Lord, of the thousands and thousands of promises we have in the Word of God. And of course Christians are divided down the middle. Some of them are promoting this candidate and running that one down.

Others are promoting this one and running that one down. And folks, they are making a statement for the world to see that my hope is not in the Lord Jesus Christ. My hope is in this candidate or that candidate.

My hope is for a new government in Zimbabwe. My hope is for a new government in South Africa. And South Africa has the same problems.

But we ought to be citizens of a different country. Now please understand, I'm not saying that we ought not to fulfill our responsibilities as citizens of the United States, for those who are citizens. We have civic duties and we need to fulfill those duties.

One of those duties is to vote. If your conscience requires of you to vote, and again we understand that some feel so strongly about this whole issue that they believe they should not even vote. Well that's up to your conscience.

So you vote or you don't vote according to your conscience. But fulfill your duty. Fulfill your duty and pay your taxes.

Obey the government. The scriptures are clear on these things. But don't put your hope in this world.

Because you will come short. It will fail. And folks, one of the things that we see, and one of the things as I look at the political scene, not just here but in South Africa and Zimbabwe and in Europe today, in England especially also, as I look at these things, one of the things that grips my heart and that just shouts at me all

the time is that things are going down, and they're going down fast.

There are no better days ahead, unfortunately, and here's the bad news. There are no better days ahead for Europe or for America or for England or for any other country in this world. Things are running down, and they're running down to a climax in which the Lord Jesus will come and establish His kingdom.

Now if you're going to throw your lot in with this world, you're going to be hurt. You're going to be disappointed. But can we then be like Abraham and say we're looking for a homeland? We're looking for a place in which there will be justice, in which there will be righteousness, in which there will be prosperity, in which there will be all of the hopes and dreams and aspirations that we have, and that's where we're going to put our focus.

That's where we're going to put our money. That's where we're going to put our time. That's where we're going to put our hope.

And so verse 16 again of Hebrews 11, Now they desire a better country that is a heavenly country. Now folks, I don't want to be disrespectful to America, but there is a better country than America, and there is a better country than Germany, and there's a better country than England, and a better country than South Africa. They desire a better that is a heavenly country.

Therefore God, notice this, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He's prepared a city for them. God identifies with those who identify their citizenship as being in heaven. God's not ashamed of them.

Now people may be ashamed of them in this world, because they are not citizens of this world. They don't belong in this world. And as you know for myself and for Inna, one of the realities we live with is that we are neither South African nor American.

We don't really fit in here, but we don't really fit in back there anymore. And for me it's become an easy thing, because I realize that I have no hope in South Africa, and I have no history in America. But I'm a citizen of another country.

And so God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He's prepared a city for them. By faith Abraham when he was tested offered up Isaac, when he had received the promises offered up, his only begotten son. And so Abraham was so assured of God's promises that he was even willing to kill his son, which contained the hope of the future.

Isaac was not just his son, in the sense that we love our children, but Isaac was the container of the fulfillment of the promises. Because Isaac would be the one who would inhabit ultimately. Not even Isaac, but his descendants.

Isaac was the container of the promises. And Abraham says, I'm even willing to destroy that, because my hope is not in the container of the promises. My hope is in the one who made those promises.

And so, folks, may God give us grace then that we may live as true strangers, not just in theory or in theology, but in practice and in reality. That as we watch the news, as we engage with one another, as we engage with people around us on political issues, we don't get swallowed up by these things. That we hold them loosely, and we recognize that we are citizens of heaven.

That our hope is in heaven. Our hope is not in November, because many people will be disappointed in November. The next four years, whoever gets to be in power will be a disappointment to many people.

But the kingdom of God will never be a disappointment, because it has a builder, and it has foundations. And that builder is God. And those foundations are sure and steadfast.

And while everything in this world will be shaken, heaven will never be removed. Father, we pray that you'd help us. Lord, help us to have our eyes and our minds fixed upon heaven.

Lord, we know that there is an indictment, in a sense, against those who are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly use. But Lord, help us to have our minds so filled with heaven that we would transform and change the world around us, as Abraham did. And so, Lord, we pray that you'd help us not to become swallowed up in this world, not to have our hope and our confidence in this world, but to have our hope and our confidence in the promises of God, and to live, indeed, as those who are passing through and who are not holding anything here permanently, but whose hope is in that new Jerusalem and in the city of God.

Help us, we pray, Lord, because we so desperately need permanence. We so desperately need something to hold on to and to build on in this life. And Lord, it's so unnatural for us as human beings to live by faith.

But Lord, we pray that you'd help us that we may be men of faith and women of faith as Abraham was. In Jesus' name we pray. We pray that you'd go with us now, Lord, keep us, protect us, bring us together again safely on Thursday.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

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