

(Hebrews - Part 36): Long Range Faith

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the importance of long-range faith, encouraging believers to trust in God's promises while recognizing their identity as strangers and pilgrims in this world.

Duration: 26:34

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 11:13-14, Hebrews 11:16, Hebrews 11:35, Hebrews 11:39

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a long-range view as a Christian. He contrasts the worldly pursuits of money, pleasure, career, and fame with the eternal promises of God. The preacher urges believers to wait on God and be on the right side when Jesus returns to gather the nations and separate the righteous from the wicked. He encourages Christians to embrace their identity as strangers and pilgrims on earth, living with a heavenly perspective and trusting in God's long-range plan for their lives.

Transcript

Now, in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, beginning with verse 13, it says, These all, he'd been talking about Noah and Abel and Enoch and Abraham. He says, Now, these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. That is, not having received the fulfillment of the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. Now, I want you to notice that in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, there are three prepositions having to do with faith, by and through and in. And Paul adds to that in Romans 4, the one of.

So these four prepositions touch faith, or have to do with faith, or channel faith, show how it operates. It's by faith and through faith and in faith and of faith. But I notice it's never on faith.

Nobody is ever said to live on faith. Nobody is ever said to go anywhere on faith. We do things by faith and we do things through faith.

And if we have faith, we're doing them in faith. And salvation is of faith. But the word on never occurs.

It's never on faith. The world has the philosophy that they operate on faith. The preachers who used to in the Alliance, I think maybe some of them do now, they used to have an envelope and you gave right to the pastor.

That was the way his salary was met, by direct gift. And he was supposed to be living by faith. And some of them said he was living on faith.

And some of the pastors declared that that preposition was the one that church people knew. They thought because the pastor was living by faith, they could live on faith. But you're not supposed to live on faith, never.

Because if I rest on faith, then I am misunderstanding faith entirely, because the purpose of faith is to get me to rest on God. It is by faith that I rest on God. It is through faith I trust the promises of God.

It is in faith I live my life on God. And the whole of salvation is of faith, but the never on faith, because we would be stopping one little bit short of the one upon whom we should trust. We trust on God and in God, but it is by faith and through faith.

Now, that little Bible lesson may not be too important, but I think that it is vastly important, too, because you see, the world has their own philosophy about this. The world says that we're to live on faith and go on faith. Never say die, the world says, and then they die.

You can if you will, says the world. And he can who thinks he can. I've always wondered about that.

He can who thinks he can. You know, I don't mind telling you something, that I don't like hymns that are exhorting me to get up and bare my breast to the elements and flex my biceps to the world and tell the world off. I don't like that, because that puts the confidence in the wrong place.

If I believe in myself, I can't at the same time believe in God. I must believe on God and have no confidence in my flesh. Then I'm in the right relation to God and things are as they should be.

So I don't want somebody telling me, rise, O man of God, and go out and face the world and all that. I would rather go to the prayer chamber and meet God and then let God face the world for me, because if I stick my chin out and inflate my chest and go out, it will be like rubbing red breast. They inflate their chest and hop over the lawn.

But they wouldn't make a very good showing against an army, and neither would the biggest and finest and best and wisest and strongest Christian living today make a good showing against the mighty powers of the world. But if we do as Luther did, he said, when the devil knocks at the door, he doesn't even answer. He says, Lord, answer the door.

And he has the Lord answer the door instead of his answering it. I believe in that. So we go by faith, we go through faith, we live in faith, and salvation is of faith, but nobody rests on faith, because we rest on God instead.

Now, there are two kinds of faith mentioned here. One we might call briefly and pass on, the microscopic faith, that is, short-range faith. That's the faith of the beginner.

The man who begins his life in Christ knows little of what faith is in its telescopic or long-range aspect. So everything has to happen now. He believes in Christ for justifying faith, and that is right.

He believes in Christ for forgiveness of sins, and that is right. These are all valid and real and good and pleasing to God, but they're not the best. The best kind of faith is the faith that goes on from there.

That's what we call telescopic or long-range faith. The one who has this long-range faith identifies himself with Christ forever and says, in effect, I take thy cause, O Christ, as my cause, and I take thy place as my place and thy future for my future and thy life for my life. I take thy path as my path.

I look far ahead and see the triumph, thy triumph, and I'm satisfied, says the man who has long-range faith, I'm satisfied in the meantime to resign myself for the sake of Christ and be misunderstood, of course, and to be on the minority side. The people of God are always on the minority side. Talk about minority groups.

Christianity has been the minority group all down the years. That is, the true Christians have been in the minority. We labor to get in the majority, but we Christians might as well give up because it's written that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the day of the coming of the Son of Man.

And there were eight saved in the day of Noah, and there will be a relatively small number saved when our Lord returns. Now, that doesn't mean there will only be eight saved because the population of the earth now is many hundreds of times greater than it was in the days of Noah. But I believe that the proportion will be, if not as small, almost as small, so that when our Lord comes, he says, will the Son of Man find faith on the earth? We may expect to be in the minority always, we may, because there's going to be ten people, there's going to be a hundred people who see the way the world sees, to one who sees with the eyes of God and follows along behind the Lamb.

So you may be satisfied and prepared to be on the minority side because we know we can't lose. Communists form their little cells, despised by the people around about them because they have gotten a hold of their philosophy. It is that someday Communism will take over the world and so they're not in too big a hurry and they can go underground and they can wait around because they confidently believe the day will be when the doctrines of Marx and Lenin will triumph and the whole world will be Communist.

And if laws are passed against them or they're persecuted and it may be difficult for them, they quietly go underground and wait because they say we can afford to wait, it's inevitable, it's the wave of the future. They're wrong, tragically, frightfully wrong and their faith is placed where it never ought to be, in man instead of in God. They have stolen the ways of the Christian and they have filched from the Christian his very philosophy for in the early days the Christian said I can afford to wait.

I'll be in the minority and I'll be despised and I'll be looked upon as being a queer person, speckled bird in the midst of all the white birds. But I can afford to wait and when I'm persecuted I can quietly withdraw for a moment until the heat is off and the troubles are over and go back at it again because I can't lose, the Christian has always said down the years, I can't lose. And the Christian knows he's right because he's resting upon God and upon Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and upon the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

For the Communist rests only upon mortal flesh and he's got to die with the mortal flesh and be eaten by the worms. A man with a long-range faith says, I can afford to and I expect to grieve and suffer and work and wait and endure and possibly even die without vindication. Samuel Rutherford was exiled by the Church in his day because of his stand.

They drove him out of his pastorate and never let him go back. In his letters he wrote so plaintively to his friends about those letters, about that pastorate that he wanted to go back to, and those sheep that he wanted to go back and serve. Always he hoped that he might, but he never did.

When they finally summoned him to appear before Parliament and answer to the terrible charge of refusing to bow to the state church, he was dying. He sent back word to Parliament, I have received your summons, but I have received a higher summons which will be served before yours. When my day comes to appear before you, I will be yonder where few kings and great men come.

I always thought that was a victorious letter. I can imagine those red-faced men who read that, wishing they could kill him, but God had already taken him home. Now to this long-range faith that can afford to wait and can die in faith, not having received the fulfillment of the promise, but looking ahead and knowing, he says here, knowing and confessing themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and declaring plainly that they are seeking another country.

This long-range faith is found in Hebrews. The other kinds mention that the long-range faith is what is illustrated here. It says about the promises, now mostly we mean provision for present blessings when we say the promises, but God said in effect, I have a long-range plan for you, forsake all for me, transfer your allegiance to me, trust me and come along with me, and when I triumph, you will triumph with me.

When I come into my glory, you will come into your glory. Scripture says they saw and were persuaded and they embraced and they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Now a Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim if he's acting like a Christian at all.

If he knows what it is to be a Christian, he's a pilgrim and he's a stranger. The two are synonymous, but they're not identical. A pilgrim is a religious traveler going to some holy place, as a rule.

He went to Jerusalem or somewhere and the Holy Ghost saw this and so he said a Christian is that, he's a pilgrim. He's traveling from where he was to where he expects to be. He's very different from a man traveling for a gain.

A man who travels for a gain has a different purpose. He's a traveler, but he's not a pilgrim. A pilgrim is not traveling for a gain.

A pilgrim is going from an old city that's cursed and under threat of judgment to the celestial city where dwells Emmanuel. And he's a pilgrim then. Wherever you see a pilgrim, he's not where he's going.

If you're a pilgrim Christian here today, remember one thing about you. Whatever else may be said about you, you're not home. You're not where you're going, that's as sure as you live.

Then what's a stranger? A stranger is one who for some reason isn't a part of that place where he finds himself. He may be of another race. I sometimes walk down the street and I see people walking about of other races and I know they don't speak English and I know they don't know anybody much.

You rather feel for them because they're of another race and they speak another language. And when they try to speak your language, they don't do it too well as you wouldn't theirs if you were over there. They have a different culture, a different way of looking at things.

And they're from a different country altogether. So a stranger is somebody who isn't where he was born and he isn't where he's going. And Christians are strangers.

One of the greatest indictments against the Church today is that Christians accept the contemporary scene as being theirs. They've become a part of it. And they're natives and not strangers.

If you feel you're a native anywhere on earth, God has a lot to tell you about being a Christian yet. For Paul tells us that our citizenship is in heaven from whence also we wait for a Savior, even Jesus Christ the Lord, who shall change these vile bodies and make them over again like unto his glorious body. Those are the words we recite at the graveside.

But it's true not only of those who have died, but all those pilgrims and strangers who walk the earth now. Our citizenship is in heaven. You have a secondary citizenship.

Canadians, or in my case, Americans, we have a secondary citizenship. But our main and eternal citizenship is with God the Father Almighty. Heaven is our ultimate home, our own country.

And it's there where we're going. And if we speak with a little accent, it may be the accent of heaven. I wish that the people of God could be known for what they are.

Down in the States, when I'm talking to a good-looking, intelligent chap who speaks good, crisp English, and I don't know where he comes from, and then he says, I was about to go, I know he's a Canadian. I know where he belongs because that's approximately the way a Canadian says about. But we smile and laugh about it, and they say, You got me there, John, you got me on the word about.

All right, we know he's a Canadian, and you hear somebody say, Come in and set us bare. You know he's an American from way down below the Dixieland. So we have little characteristics that are secondary characteristics.

They belong to our earthly scene, but earth isn't our final dwelling place. It isn't the end of things for us. It isn't where we're going.

It isn't why we were ever born in the first place. Heaven is the home of the saints. We mustn't accept the contemporary scene as final.

We must remember that we are not natives, but we're strangers in the world. Our old bodies are native here. But the new thing that is in us, that new deposit, the new man in Christ, Jesus, was born from above, except he'd be born again.

And all the translators say the same thing. It ought to be a new earth from above. Christians are those who are born from above.

And they're at home, these poor Christians now. Not on a pilgrim journey, but at home. They accept the world as their home, tragic and terrible.

But these pilgrims we read about here in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, they witnessed and testified that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth. He says here that if they had wanted to go back, truly they might have returned. Abraham could have gone back if he'd wanted to, after he had started down into the land of Canaan.

He could have turned around and given it up and said, I'm going back. Lot's wife did look back, intensively and plaintively. She looked back, and she died.

The rich ruler who came to Jesus turned his back and walked away. We never hear that the Lord ever found him again. Demas forsook Paul and fled, and we never learned that Demas came back.

You can go back if you want to. And if I should be speaking to any borderline Christians, I want to ask you, will ye also go back? And if you do go back, I ask you what you'll go back to. What is there to go back to, I want to ask you.

Where are you going to find that treasure we're looking for? Where are you going to find it, and what secret place is it buried? Where are you going to buy it? Where is it? Paul knew where it was. He said, I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. He knew the Lord had it.

The Lord keeps my treasure. He has your treasure, he's holding it for you. If you go back, what do you go back to? You can't go back to yesterday, because it's all gone and crumbled behind you like the crumbling path.

You say, I'll go back to money. What will money do in the day when the doctor says, I'm sorry to tell you, you have cancer? What will money do for you then? You say, you'll go back to pleasure. We're going to have a good time and we're going to let the world know we're having a good time, say a certain person.

And so they'll make donkeys of themselves, all they like to do is lay a hair on their ears. And that's supposed to be fun. I'd rather sing a hymn along with a saint any day in the wide world than cavort around over the street being funny.

I'd rather be put back in the crib and reared again, giving back the bottle until they grow up. But the world says, give me pleasure, give me pleasure. Christians say they'd rather follow Jesus Christ than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

So instead of going back, he goes forward. And if any half-hearted Christians decided to give up and go back, I want to ask you, where are you going back? And what are you going back to? Earthly pleasures that don't last. Somebody says, young people say, I want to dance.

I remember one young fellow came to our church in Chicago and he stayed around a while and then he left. And we said, what happened to him? He said, he wanted to go to a church where they danced. So he went to a church where they danced.

But I have news for the boy, one of these days he's going to get arthritis or lined up joints or something wrong and he won't be able to dance anymore. That most terrible thing is going to happen to him. He'll just get so old he doesn't want to.

And when that happens, he's found he's been sold out. Somebody says, a career. I can only have a career.

Yes, a career. What happens to career people? They die like other people. Somebody else wants fame, but there's no place to go.

Peter had it right when he said, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. They might have gone back, says the Holy Ghost, if they had been minded to do it. If they'd wanted to do it, they could go back.

But they desire a better country, that is a heavenly. Wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a country. These believing strangers, these confessing pilgrims, these pilgrims of the night waiting for the morning, these pilgrims of eternity, outlasting the world and outlasting time till time shall be no more, traveling on their way, stripped down to the little as they can to get on in the world, waiting for the trumpet that will call them home.

God says he's not ashamed of them. Do you remember that passage in the Old Testament where the sons of God came in before God and they were all there in display and marching before the throne? And the devil came up, too. I don't know how the devil got there, and I don't know why he was there, but he got there.

And God thumbed him over. He knew where he'd come from, he'd come from the world. And God said, Do you know my servant Job, that he's a good man? He was proud of him.

Don't think he wasn't proud of him. When I talk to somebody and say, Where do you live? And I say, Well, I have a son living in Southern California. You wouldn't know my son.

I'm proud of that big, tall guy. And God's proud of his people. And he's not ashamed to be called their brethren, their father.

Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren, and God's not ashamed to call them children. The Father calls his children children, and he's not ashamed of them. God is not ashamed to be called their God, and he's prepared for them a country.

It's a long-range faith. We're likely to have a Christianity that doesn't see ahead at all, a pragmatic Christianity. You know what pragmatism is? It's the philosophy that was popularized by William James.

And, of course, it got into all the schools and colleges everywhere, and it's influenced the people greatly and influenced Christianity a lot. Pragmatism says, The thing is true if it works. But if it doesn't work, then it isn't necessarily true.

That is true which affects me, in which I can get something out of. And the Church adopts that, and we have a pragmatic Christianity now. A Christianity that says, If it will give us some quick returns, it must be of God.

But the long-range Christian with his eyes on the future says, I don't care about quick returns. I want to know, is what I'm doing going to stand the fire of judgment? I want to know, is God pleased? I want to know, is God satisfied with what I'm doing? And the Church that's cursed with the pragmatic outlook on life says, Let's do something to get a quick return, more people, more money. And then they plan every kind

of thing in order to get more people in and more money.

But the Christian with the long-range view waits on God. He says, One of these days, Jesus Christ, our Brother, is going to break through the blue and he's going to come down to heavens, and his name is going to be called the Word of God. And he's going to gather the nations of the world together and separate them as sheep from the goats.

And I want to be on the right side in that wonderful hour when Jesus returns. I don't want to build a house and settle down here to die on this volcanic island. I want to be a pilgrim traveling through.

Then God won't be ashamed of me. The Old Psalm says, He calls a worm his friend. He calls himself my God.

That was taken from Jacob, I suppose. And fear not, thou worm, Jacob, behold, I will keep thee. God loves a worm if he's a man.

That kind of worm. Humble, lowly, trustful, harmless. With his eyes fixed on heaven above, a pilgrim of eternity.

Pilgrim of the night, waiting for the morning. That's the long-range kind of faith. Let's ask God for it.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2032.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/hebrews-part-36-long-range-faith/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net