

A Seeing Faith

Faith

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Bible Text: Hebrews 11:13

Preached on: Tuesday, January 3, 2012

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Please open your Bibles tonight and let's run over to Hebrews 11 and verse 13 and we'll see what our God has for us tonight from his precious word. Once you get there, let's all stand as we give reverence to God's holy word. Of course, we're continuing our sermon series on Hebrews 11 dealing with faith. So, we'll pick up where we left off.

Hebrews 11:13, "These all died in," what? "Faith." The Bible says, "not having received the promises, but," that means we're going in a different direction, "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." The Bible says they all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off. That word "afar off" means "at a distance." I'm going to talk tonight about a seeing faith or seeing from a distance. A seeing faith or seeing from a distance.

Father, I pray for your mighty help tonight. In myself I cannot bring forth the word of God that would help anybody, it will all just be a bunch of words strung together that won't do anything. But, Father, if you help us today, if you guide our speech and you guide our tongue, Father, if you help our ears to be open and to be attentive and to receive your precious word, then something will definitely happen in all of our hearts. I pray, God, that that would take place on this night. I pray, God, that as we hear the word of God, I pray that the Spirit of God would take that word and stir us on the inside. Stir us to action. Not idleness, but stir us to action. I pray, God, we begin to apply the truths of your holy word. I pray, God, by faith we will be increased by your word and for that, God, we'll shout, Hallelujah.

God, before I even stop my requests and my thanks here, I pray that if there is anyone among us tonight who is not sure that if they died at this second, that heaven would be a found destination, Oh Father, what a night it'd be to receive Jesus as Lord, Savior and King and then know for a surety that heaven is their final destination. I pray, God, that you'd help each of us to find that very truth and based upon that truth, act upon that truth that's been revealed to us. I pray, God, that you'd set us on fire for Jesus but if not, I pray, God, just for that birthday that we talked about, that birthday we mentioned a few moments ago, that we were born to the family of God. Well, that's it Lord. We'll thank you and I pray, God, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and for forgiving these sins of my

life that would bring any kind of hindrance tonight. I don't want to be a hindrance but, Father, I do want to be a help. That's it Lord. We love you. It's in your Son's name that we pray.

Also, one thing, Lord, I pray, God, for every request that was mentioned tonight. I pray, God, that you'd put your hand on each one, breath on it. And I pray, God, that each of us would see the results of our petitions not many moments, not many days from this date. That's it now. For it is in your Son's name that we now pray. Not a weak Jesus, but a mighty Jesus. Amen.

You may be seated.

A seeing faith or seeing for a distance. The Bible says in this verse, he says, "These all died." Who was these? He's talking about all the people we read about earlier: about Abraham and we've read about Sarah and others. These all died in faith. They died believing. The Bible says, "They died in faith, not having received the promises." Wait a minute, what kind of message is that? Amen. Wait a minute, I was promised something but I did not receive it but yet the Bible says they still had faith that it was going to take place. My dear friends, that is a seeing faith. That is a faith that we can see from a distance.

How do you know that? Well, it says in the next part of the verse, therefore, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but," the Bible says, "having seen them afar off." They saw them from a distance. There are a lot of things that you and I pray about today but we're not going to see the results of that in our lifetime on this earth. Nonetheless, that request, that petition that we ask of our Father, that he gave us peace about in our hearts would materialize, will definitely take place. I mentioned many times about my wife, Jolene, and my brother-in-law, Steve, how their mother was a praying woman, how she loved God. I mean, this was somebody that Jolene's friends would come to her house and Jolene would open the door thinking they came to see her but they came to see her Momma. "What do you want to see my Momma for?" "I need to talk to your Momma." And they'd come in the house and talk to her Momma. Her Momma would pray for them because they had certain needs and when they felt like they had a need, they'd come to her Momma and ask her Momma to pray for them.

During all this time, Jolene is out in the world. She's out in the world but at the same time, their mother was praying for them but, my dear friends, when Jolene was 19 years old and Steve was in his early 20s, their mother went home to be with the Lord. But when she went home to be with the Lord, neither one of them was in church. But you know what? That prayer has been answered today. My dear friends, they are both in the house of God; they are both serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because a mother prayed a prayer and believed that her God would definitely do what he said he'd do. She saw it from a distance. She saw it from afar.

My dear friends, a lot of times, God will give you like a glimpse of something he's about to do and you can see it. You can actually see it in your mind. It hasn't taken place yet

but you can see that it is going to materialize. The Bible says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.” What you see, my dear friends, has a profound effect upon you. Did you know that Abraham saw Jesus before he came? “How do you know that, Preacher?” Turn quickly to John 8:56. The Bible says this and this blew their minds when Jesus spoke this. The Bible says in John 8:56, Jesus said, “Hey, hey, listen up: Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he,” what? “Saw it.” How did he see it? The Bible says that he saw it and was glad. Abraham had been dead for hundreds of years but yet Jesus said that Abraham rejoiced to see his day. By the way, that word “rejoiced” here in this verse means “to jump for joy.” He said that Abraham jumped for joy. The Bible says when he saw his day, he saw it and he was glad.

Do you know what they say in reference to that? “Wait a minute,” because they did not do math back then. The Bible says they said, “Wait a minute, Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” Here comes the knock-out punch. Jesus says this in verse 58, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” When was the first time you heard that? Remember when Moses said, “Who shall I say sent me?” He said, “You tell them I AM THAT I AM. God.” And then Jesus says to them, “Before Abraham was, I am.” Now, look that word up, “I am” in that verse and that word “I am” means “exist” or “deity.” Jesus says, “Before Abraham was even born, even thought about, I existed.”

So, you figure they’d look away, right? Wrong. The Bible says in verse 59, “Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” Do you know why they wanted to stone him? Because they knew what he was saying: he was saying that he was God because he said, “I was here before Abraham was.” They thought, “Wait a minute. Abraham died a whole long time ago and you’re saying that you existed before Abraham? You’re saying that I am?” They knew exactly what he was referring to and, folks, even today Jesus is puzzling the minds of intellectuals when we come out with the fact that the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is also God himself.

For the Bible says in the gospel of John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And it goes on to say how everything was created by this word. He goes on to say “the word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” As the only begotten of the Father, by the way. Referring to who? Jesus. The Bible says, I believe, in Timothy that God was manifested in the flesh, seen of angels and it goes on. Who was that? Who was manifested in the flesh? It’s talking about Jesus.

“What’s your point, Preacher?” Abraham saw Jesus before he even got here. He saw him from a distance because Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he, and he, and he, saw it.” Folks, we need to have also a seeing. “But wait a minute, Preacher, that’s contradictory. You say we walk by faith not by sight.” But we don’t. We don’t go by what we see with the natural eye. We do go by what God’s word has said and God had promised Abraham he would have a great nation. God had promised Abraham the land of Canaan. God gave him all these promises and do you know what? Abraham could see it actually materializing. Some of us, do you know what we see materializing?

Defeat. Gloom. Doom. Darkness. Dungeon. God says, "Wait a minute. You're looking at the wrong thing. You need to start looking in my word."

Look at what the Bible says over here in Hebrews 11. The Bible says here, first of all, these promises persuaded them. The Bible says in verse 13, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them." Of what? The promises. God's promises persuaded or convinced them. Are you and I convinced of God's promises? God said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through," who? "Through Christ which strengthens me." Now, we know the verse but do we believe it? "Well, I can't. I can't handle this. This is too much." Well, then God's lying. "Whoa!" I didn't say it but you said it by your actions. God says, "You can do all things through me and I'll give you the strength."

By the way, in 1 Corinthians 10:13 says this, "There hath no temptation taken you," laid hold on you, "but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you," or allow you, "to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape." That's his promise. No matter what any of us take in our life, my dear friends, God said, "I will make sure that you're able." The devil says, "You'll never make it." Me and Jolene were talking the other day and she said some Christians had heard that she said to me, do you remember that movie Independence Day? They were talking to that alien and they were saying, "We want peace," and what did he say? "No peace."

The enemy will tell you there is no peace. But God says that he is a God of peace. The world will tell you all kinds of stuff but God says, "In me, you can have peace in the midst of a storm." By the way, God just stepped out of a boat and said, "Peace. Be still." But if you will not believe that word, do just like they did, they received it. They received that word. Not only did they receive the word, I like this even moreso, the Bible says they also "embraced them." They embraced the promises. That word "embraced" right here, my dear friends, means what it says, it means "to enfold in the arms." When you enfold something in your arms that means you are holding on to it. He says they embraced the promises. They embraced them; they pulled them in. When are you and I going to start embracing these promises that God has given us?

That's a good Bible study. Look at all the promises that God has given us. By the way, the Bible does teach us that God cannot lie. Cannot lie. So, God cannot lie. I can surely embrace those promises because those promises, my dear friends, will definitely materialize because God's word is true. The Bible says these folks embraced the promises of God. We need to start embracing these promises.

But not only that, I like this one, not only were they persuaded by the promises, embraced the promises, but also they had this impression to make. They said this in verse 13, "and confessed," or acknowledged, "that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Do you know that word "stranger" means "alien"? If you are born-again and blood bought then you are an alien. You're an alien. We don't belong down here. We are strangers on this earth. The Bibles says here they confessed this, they acknowledged that they were

strangers or aliens. By the way, that same word there “strangers” means “aliens” but it also means “guests.” A guest is one what? Visiting. I’ve just come by here but this is not my permanent residence.

Let me show you something real quick. Look at Philippians 3:20. Look at what God’s word says, “For our conversation is,” where? “In heaven.” This word “conversation” in this verse means “community” or “citizenship.” Where are you a citizen of? United States. You’re a citizen of the United States. What country are you a citizen of? United States. What about you? The United States. Where are some places you went to? “Spain, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Germany.” Would you have citizenship there? No. He was visiting all those places but he was a citizen of the United States. The Bible says that our conversation is in heaven. Our citizenship or our community, that word means that in that verse, is in heaven. The Bible says, “from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” I’m a citizen of heaven but I’m visiting as a guest down here. Now, they don’t treat me too kind down here but I am a guest but my hope is in heaven. My dear friends, if you’ve blood bought and born-again, you’re just visiting down here but your citizenship is up in heaven. That’s something to shout about and do a flip. Hallelujah!

But watch this, go back to Hebrews, they “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims,” foreigners, “on,” what? “On the earth.” The Bible goes on to say this: we also confessed this but we pray something else. The Bible says in verse 14, “For they that say such things declare plainly,” openly, “that they seek a country.” I love this. That word “seek” also means “to crave” or “desire.” The Bible says they declared plainly that they craved, they desire a country. That word “country” here isn’t talking about like the country, “this is my country.” No, this word “country” here, my friends, it means “a fatherland” and figuratively it means “a heavenly home.” They craved a heavenly home. They desired a heavenly place. What have we got back there tonight to eat? Pulled pork, macaroni and cheese, green beans, potatoes. Give me some good stuff, some pulled pork. Have you ever had pulled pork? That makes you crave some more and when you crave something you long for it.

The Bible says, my dear friends, that they were longing for heaven. They craved heaven. Have you ever noticed when one of God’s children is laying on his death bed and we’re around that talking with them and they know that their time is near that they’re leaving, they start having a craving to leave and they’ll say, “I’m ready?” I listened to Lee Robinson preach and he’s gone to heaven already but he talked about one of the men of God who was in the hospital and he kept telling the nurse he wanted to go home. He said, “I want to go home.” When Lee Robinson came in there and she said, “He keeps saying he wants to go home but he can’t go home.” Lee asked him and he said it again, “I want to go home. I want to go home.” He said to the nurse, “He’s not talking about the house down the street. He’s telling me he wants to go home. He’s ready to leave here.” He had a longing for another place that was far better.

A place, my dear friends, in which he was a citizen of. When you’re born-again and you’ve got that in your soul and that peace in your heart, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, you do not fear death. Death is just the avenue to get to the

other side. Everybody that came here tonight most likely came down Fairbanks. Most likely. You may have come down that street over there but you came down Fairbanks. Do you know what? Fairbanks gets you here. Fairbanks is not where the church is at, that's the street out there. The church is located in this spot off of Fairbanks. Do you know what? There is a lot of stuff that you've got to go through to get there. When you get there, all you've gone through won't mean a hill of beans. By the way, death is also that street we've got to go through.

I'm going to tell you, my dear friends, if we don't know Christ as our Savior, if we don't know him in our heart, my friends, as Lord and Savior and King, then death frightens us. We are scared of death but once you know Christ as your Savior, you get that peace in your soul and you can embrace it. One guy says, "I'm going to stick him up and put a gun to his head and say, I'll blow your head off." He said, "Don't threaten me with heaven." The guy looked at him and he wasn't afraid. What did he do? He walked away. How do you threaten a guy that isn't afraid of something? "Death? Go ahead, shoot away. I'm heading out of here. Don't know about you."

When Stephen was being stoned, the Bible says as he was being stoned, he was praying to God and saying, "Don't hold this against them. Don't lay this charge against them," because he knew where he was headed. By the way, Paul was standing there holding the coats while he was praying that prayer and I believe he was seeing some of that mercy that Stephen was praying and asking God to give to those who were around there and he was a recipient of that. "What are you saying, Preacher?" That to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We don't have the fear of death.

As a matter of fact, desire of that heavenly home, crave that heavenly home because, you know, that's where we're going to spend eternity. But if you don't know Christ as your Savior, then the Bible says that hell is the place that was not prepared for us but for the devil. But that's the place that we'll wind up going, folks, because we will not receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord, Savior and King. When you receive Jesus Christ, he gets you new reservations. All of a sudden, my dear friends, he moves your reservations from hell to heaven but you have to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. Believe in the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus. Believe in his death with the love to pay for the guilt of our sins that we could not pay for.

You say, "I'm gonna work my way in. I'm gonna do it." How do you know that, Preacher? Go to Ephesians 2:8. You're going to work and work is good but the Bible says here, though, "For by grace," undeserved favor, a gift, "are ye saved through," what? "Faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." There it is. There it is. Boom! "Not of works, lest any man should boast." You can't boast about salvation. "Well, I tithe. I came. I was helping folks. A little old lady, let me help you." Those are good things to do but they won't get you into heaven. Works can't get you into heaven. Jesus Christ is the ticket that gets you in.

The Bible goes on in Hebrews and we see that they confess they're craving another country but also what was their minds on? The Bible says in verse 15 and this is going to

hit some of us, I'm losing friends here, "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out." Now we aren't talking about heaven. He says, "they might have had opportunity to have returned." Now watch what he says, that word "mindful" means "to make mention" or "to rehearse" or "remember." He says here that if they had been mindful or if they had rehearsed in their minds that country from which they came out, they may have had opportunity and these words here means "to hold, wish" for an opportunity to have turned back. In other words it's saying this: if they had rehearsed that in their minds about that place that they came out of, do you know what they would have been desiring? To go back. And some of us have been there, especially when the devil starts riding your back. You say, "Man, I thought when I got saved it was going to be good. I thought I wouldn't have no more problems." And that devil starts riding you and going, "Giddy up. Giddy up."

Nonetheless, when that devil starts riding your back, then you start thinking about where you came from and you start thinking back not about the bad stuff but you start to think about this stuff, "We used to hang out over there. We used to hang over here. Remember so-and-so, remember that spot over there. Yeah! Remember all those places like that. 101 Club and all that stuff." They didn't close at 12 midnight, they closed at 10 the next morning. But you forget about why you were there. You forget about fighting up in the club. You forgot about somebody pulling a gun out on you. You forgot about the folks that got shot. You've forgotten all that mess, throwing up and all. We don't think about that stuff. Do you see what I'm saying? We block all that out. We just remember that other stuff, hanging out and stuff like that.

Sometimes I think about some of my friends, my cousins, and how we used to cut up. I mean, we could laugh and cut up and talk about each other and just have a great old time talking about each other but it was just a good time. But guess what we were doing while we doing all that stuff? Drinking, cussing, fornicating. All kind of stuff like that. See, I didn't think about that stuff but when your mind starts embracing all that stuff from that other country because your flesh likes that stuff. My flesh likes rib tips, pork. Don't give me any beef. Pork ribs. But I've got high blood pressure and it isn't always good. If I had rib tips every day, you'd have to say, "What happened to the preacher?" next Sunday because he got committed to the hospital. He ribbed to death. I'm going to tell you what, my dear friends, my flesh craves that. I like it. Especially the rib tips with some hot barbeque sauce on it. Not that mild stuff, give me some of that hot stuff. It has to be soaking on there. When you pick it up your hands are all greasy and you lose all dignity. I like that. But give me some broccoli? "Oh yeah, I'm craving some broccoli." Put some cheese on there.

"What are you saying, Preacher?" The Bible says right here in this verse that they said, "Listen, our minds were not rehearsing about that country from which we came out. If we had, we may have wished to go back, to return, to turn back." But the Bible says this instead, "But now they desire," I like it, "a better country." Then he clarifies that, "that is, an heavenly." He goes on to say, "wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared," made ready, "for them a city." Did not Jesus say, "I'm going to prepare a place for you?" Let's look that up real quick.

Look over there at John 14:1, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” He says, “Hey! There you go again. Believe also in me.” He says, “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” I’m coming back for you. I like that. We’re leaving earth one of two ways: by the grave which, of course, my soul will go into because the Bible says “absent from the body is present with the Lord,” or when he comes back to take the church back with him. Now, I know everybody that’s what they’re all hoping for. I don’t want to die, I just want the Lord to come back and be – zoom – gone. Some of us are like, “I’m not sure yet, though. I don’t want to be ‘left behind.’” But once you know Christ, you just say, “You don’t have to worry about that.” The Holy Ghost gives you peace in your soul. “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

Folks, he’s preparing a place and he’s preparing a place and you know it’s going to be awesome. You think ACT has something going on, it hasn’t got anything going on compared to what God’s doing. What was that guy’s name. Aaron Spelling? That house he had? How much did they sell the house for? 150 million dollars and how much property was it? 56,500 sq. feet. That’s not including the land and that place was like – one of you teenagers give me a word – sick. Nothing wrong with it. It was sick, that means, “Man, that thing’s hooked up. That place is sick.” You know God has a sick place for you, amen. It’s going to blow your mind and the Bible says they longed for it.

Why did they long for it? What is the bottom line? Why did they long for all that? Because, my dear friends, they had a seeing faith. The Bible shows us that they saw it from a distance. They didn’t receive it here but they saw it from a distance. They had a seeing faith. God gives us seeing faith. How do you know that they had it? They had it.

I’m going to ask two questions and then we’re done. The first one is this: do you believe the promises in God’s word? Do you believe the promises in God’s word? Secondly, can you see them? You say, “Yeah, I believe them.” But can you see them? Can you actually see it? I mean, there are certain things that God has shown me and I could actually see it. And when you see it, you go, “This is good. It’s done.” I can see it. I’m not talking about that stuff that you make up. I’m not talking about that. When God actually shows you, you can see it.

I remember when God showed me myself preaching one time. Everything you have isn’t from the Lord, but God does use readings from the Bible. It is there. I can’t deny it. I’ll never forget, one thing God showed me was myself and he showed me standing out there in front of a pulpit preaching to a bunch of young people. At the time, I didn’t understand what that was but it always kept coming back to my mind. Then one day I was preaching and I was standing out front of the pulpit and it dawned on me, “That’s what God was showing you.” He didn’t picture me back here, he showed me that I was going to be out here. He was also showing me this: that I was going to be speaking to a lot of young people. When I look around us, my dear friends, we have a lot of young people here

believe it or not. I'm not just talking about just in age, but a lot of young Christians that are here as well as a lot of young people that are here. These are things that God showed me a long time ago and he showed me some other stuff too. You know what? I'm just waiting for it to materialize. I'm just waiting for it because I know what he said. We know what he said, my dear friends, you don't have to back up.

I'll never forget when I was on my job I would tell myself, "I'm not gonna always be here. God has something else he wants me to do." Two years went by and I said, "You keep saying that. You ain't going no where." I said, "I am." I'd be at my job and working and, "Nobody knows the trouble..." But I'm not working like that, really. I'm witnessing while I'm there, though. I actually worked at Rockwell and we made the Hellfire missiles for the Apache helicopter. I had certification and all that kind of stuff. I'd be sitting there and doing all that kind of stuff but I knew that this was not the thing that God had for me. There was something else. There was something else. I knew that. I was confident. I knew that. I didn't know I was going to be up here because actually I went to Chicago but it's cold up there. It's really cold. I was down in Georgia. It's warm. You don't have to wear no big heavy coat. Down there you're telling somebody about the Hulk. What are you talking about, the Hulk? People have the Hulk. What's the Hulk? You step around that corner and the wind go, whoosh. You say, "Man, the Hulk is out today." They have that down there. Down here, everybody walks up to you and says, "Hey, how are you doing? Can I help you?" at the store. You go into a store in Chicago and they say, "Boy, what are you doing here today?" "I've got to do a little shopping to help pay you, that's why I'm here."

But I can see some things and God shows us things, my dear friends. He gives you a seeing faith. And I'm asking not a question but simply a statement: let's ask God to increase our confidence not in us but increase our confidence in his word because when you and I stop believing his word, that's when we won't have that peace that we long to have. God does not lie. What God told them, they believed it. They saw it from a distance. What can you and I see from a distance? Let's ask God to increase our faith.

Father, thank you for your many blessings tonight. I've done my best to share your word with the precious souls that have gathered here on this evening. I just pray and ask God that if there are some of us here tonight that need to have a seeing faith, like these folks here in the word of God. Right there in the pages, it says that they saw it from a distance. Father, I pray that we begin to see those same promises or the promises that you've promised us as your children.

I pray, God, that you would increase our faith and our confidence in you and what you have said. You have said that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." That's a promise. Father, perhaps there is someone here tonight that needs to call upon that precious name, Jesus, and receive Christ as their Lord and their Savior. I pray, God, that that happens tonight.

God, whatever their needs are, for all those who come here tonight, I pray, God, that you'd meet those needs as the folks do this: come. Some need to come to salvation. Some

need to come follow the spiritual spring. Whatever their need is, I pray they do this: come. And God, if there is anything else that needs to take place in any heart, I pray, God, that they respond accordingly and we'll thank you. That's it, Father. It's in your Son's name that we pray in our Savior Jesus. Amen.