



# ~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

[www.chapel-flock.com](http://www.chapel-flock.com)



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## Worship Music

[Go Before The Throne Of God-Go Fish](#)

[All Of My Heart-Go Fish](#)

[Shackles-Go Fish](#)

## Prayer

Lord, I thank You for the tremendous privilege of representing You on this earth. Please forgive me for the times I have overlooked the honor of being a child of God. I am sorry for the moments when I've been negative about myself talked badly about myself and did not acknowledge who You have made me to be in Jesus Christ. Today I am asking the Holy Spirit to help me see and truly perceive that You have made me to be a servant in this world and have given me stewardship of what You want me to take care. Lead me and guide in how You expect me to be a steward of what You have given me to take care. Cause me to remember whatever I have come from You, it is never by my doing. Whatever I do is to be to Your glory and I do it as unto the Lord. I pray I always give You glory, and that Your Kingdom is furthered, and grows and bears fruit, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

## Video's / New Information/ Prayer Requests

Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

### “Overcoming Discouragement”

Charles Stanley

Chapel Flock.....text a prayer..... request telephone number.....

(316) 247-3623

Or----

If you have a prayer request...please e-mail it to us so we can pray for you...or a person.....

[chapel-flock@sbcglobal.net](mailto:chapel-flock@sbcglobal.net)

## Radio Stations

[KWVE ...Calvary Chapel](#)

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## Bible Study Sites

[Chuck Smith Through The Bible](#)

[Bob Coy/Teachings](#)

[Mike MacIntosh](#)

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[Greg Laurie](#)

[Virtue for Women- Cathe Laurie](#)

1 THEN ABIJAH [the little] son of Jeroboam became sick. 2 And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray you, and disguise yourself, that you may not be recognized as Jeroboam's wife, and go to Shiloh. Behold, Ahijah the prophet is there, who told me that I should be king over this people. 3 Take ten loaves, some cakes, and a bottle of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what shall happen to the child. 4 Jeroboam's wife did so. She arose and went [twenty miles] to Shiloh and came to the house of Ahijah. Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age. 5 And the Lord said to Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to ask you concerning her son, for he is sick. Thus and thus shall you say to her. When she came, she pretended to be another woman. 6 But when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet as she came in at the door, he said, Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another? For I am charged with heavy news for you. 7 Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over My people Israel 8 And rent the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you—and yet you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments and followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes, 9 But have done evil above all who were before you; for you have made yourself other gods, molten images, to provoke Me to anger and have cast Me behind your back— 10 Therefore behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from [him] every male, both bond and free, in Israel, and will utterly sweep away the house of Jeroboam as a man sweeps away dung, till it is all gone. 11 Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and any who dies in the field the birds of the heavens shall eat. For the Lord has spoken it. 12 Arise therefore [Ano, Jeroboam's wife], get to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. 13 And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam's family shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something good and pleasing to the Lord, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. 14 Moreover, the Lord will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam this day. From now on 15 The Lord will smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will root up Israel out of this good land which He gave to their fathers and will scatter them beyond the [Euphrates] River, because they have made their Asherim [idolatrous symbols of the goddess Asherah], provoking the Lord to anger. 16 He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam which he has sinned and made Israel to sin. 17 So Jeroboam's wife departed and came to Tirzah. When she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. 18 And all Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord spoken by His servant Ahijah the prophet. 19 The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. 20 Jeroboam reigned for twenty-two years, and he slept with his fathers; and Nadab his son reigned in his stead. 21 And Rehoboam son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the Lord chose out of all the tribes of Israel to put His Name [and the pledge of His presence] there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. 22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, Whom they provoked to jealousy with the sins they committed, above all that their fathers had done. 23 For they also built themselves [idolatrous] high places, pillars, and Asherim [idolatrous symbols of the goddess Asherah] on every high hill and under every green tree. 24 There were also sodomites (male cult prostitutes) in the land. They did all the abominations of the nations whom the Lord cast out before the Israelites. 25 In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt [Jeroboam's brother-in-law] came up against Jerusalem. 26 He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house; he took away all, including all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 27 King Rehoboam made in their stead bronze shields and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard who kept the door of the king's house. 28 And as often as the king went into the house of the Lord, the guards bore them and brought them back into the guardroom. 29 The rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 30 There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. 31 Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. Abijam (Abijah) his son reigned in his stead.

#### Chapter 14

So at that time his son Abijah became sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that they won't know you as the wife of Jeroboam; and go to Shiloh: for there is a prophet there whose name is Ahijah, and he is the one that told me that I was going to become the king over these people. Take ten loaves of bread, some cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: and he will tell you what's going to happen to our child. So Jeroboam's wife did so, she arose, went to Shiloh, and she came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age (1Ki 14:1-4).

He was so old that he had gone blind.

But the LORD said to Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to ask something of you for her son; for he is sick: so this is what you're to say, thus and thus shall you say unto her: for it shall be, when she comes in, that she's going to feign herself [or be disguised] so that she'll look like another woman. And so it was, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, she came up to the door, when she knocked on the door, he said, Come on in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why are you feigning yourself to be someone else? [Why have you got this disguise on?] for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings (1Ki 14:5-6).

It is humorous that a person would think that he could disguise the truth about himself with God. And yet so often people find themselves in that position of trying to deceive God. Men are often in a disguise when they come to the house of the Lord. They seek to appear to be something they really aren't. But God can see through each disguise.

We remember in the birth of the church in the New Testament when there was such great fervor and zeal, that people were going out and selling their houses and possessions and bringing the money in and laying it at the apostles' feet. They all were just sharing everything together. There was a certain couple, Ananias and Sapphira, who sold a possession. But they conspired to hold back a part of it for themselves and bring in just a part of what they made which was perfectly all right, except that they were feigning to give everything. They were pretending that they were bringing it all in.

And so Ananias came in first and he laid this money before Peter. And Peter said, "Did you sell your house for so much?"

"Yep."

He said, "Why have you conspired in your heart to lie against God? To lie against the Holy Spirit? You've not lied unto man, you've lied unto God. Now while the house was in your name, wasn't it yours?"

"Yep."

"Did anyone require you to sell it?"

"Nope."

"Did anyone require that you bring everything?"

"Nope." But yet you're putting on this big front. You're trying to deceive God. And Ananias fell over dead and they carried him out. His wife didn't hear about it and she came in pretty soon with her part and laid it there at Peter's feet.

"Is that what you sold your house for?"

"Yep."

"Why is it that you and your husband would conspire together to deceive God? Behold, the feet of those that carried your husband are going to carry you out, too." And she fell over dead.

We can be thankful, I guess, that that same power doesn't exist in the church today. I wonder how many of us would last through a service? We surely wouldn't last through some of the songs that we sing. "Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to Thee. Take my hand, my feet, my moments, my days. Take my silver and my gold. Not a mite would I withhold." Everybody drops over dead.

So it is wrong to think that you can deceive God. Here she comes, all disguised. And while she's knocking on the door, the old blind prophet, prophet's old, blind anyhow. He couldn't see all of this gear that she put on and you know tried to disguise up. He couldn't see it anyhow. He was blind. And yet he says, "Come on in, thou wife of Jeroboam. How come you've put on that weird disguise? I have heavy tidings for you." They were heavy tidings indeed.

Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, And I tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to you: yet you have not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all of his heart, to do that only which was right in my eyes; But you have done evil above all that were before thee: for you've gone and made other gods, molten images, to provoke me to anger, and you have cast me behind thy back: Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off all of the house of Jeroboam (1Ki 14:7-10).

Now the Lord declares that I have given to you all of these things. I've blessed you. I made you the prince and the king over My people. And yet you have given nothing back. You turned your back on Me and cast Me behind your back. And therefore, because of your wickedness, you're to be cut off and all of your house.

And those that die from your family in the city the dogs are going to eat; and those that die in the field the vultures will eat: Now go on home: and when your feet enter into the city, your child is going to die. And all Israel will mourn for him, and bury him: but he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day. For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of the good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made groves, provoking the LORD to anger (1Ki 14:11-15).

And so already at the beginning of the history of the nation of Israel, God is already predicting the judgment that is going to fall some four hundred and fifty years later upon the nation. Because they turned against God, because they began to worship these other gods, they're going to be scattered. They're going to be driven out of the land that God has given to them.

And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin. So his wife arose, and when she came to the threshold of her house, her child died; And they buried him; and all Israel mourned according to the word of the LORD, which he had spoken by Ahijah the prophet. Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel (1Ki 14:16-19).

Now we do have the chronicles of the kings of Judah. They are known in the Old Testament as First and Second Chronicles. However, we do not have the chronicles of the kings of Israel. So First and Second Chronicles really deal with the chronicles of the—they are actually sort of court records of the kings of Judah. The kings of Israel are mentioned in Chronicles only in passing as they are co-reigning about the same time as the kings of Judah. But basically, First and Second Chronicles deal with the kings of Judah. These chronicles of the kings of Israel are other books that we do not have at the present time.

Jeroboam reigned then over Israel for twenty-two years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead. And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. He was forty-one years old when he began to reign, he reigned for seventeen years in Jerusalem (1Ki 14:20-21),

So now we're going to start bouncing back and forth from the Northern Kingdom to the Southern Kingdom. So you're going to have to watch and I'll try to bring the changes for you so that you know when you're in the north and you know when you're in the south. So meanwhile, back in the ranch. In Judah, in Jerusalem, the descendant of Solomon, Rehoboam, in the Southern Kingdom, he was forty-one years old. He reigned for seventeen years.

And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they began to build high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, under every green tree. And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all of the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel (1Ki 14:22-24).

Now there are those today that are trying to have us accept homosexuality as, you know, just as a common thing. Tremendous pressure, that they might be accepted and be totally accepted in our society. That there not be any laws that would restrain them from any kind of position that they might want to hold. If they want to teach your children in the public school, they should have every right in the world to teach your children in the public school though they have a perverted lifestyle and all. And there's tremendous pressure to accept them.

In fact, they have probably one of the strongest and most well-organized and financed lobbying groups in the country today. And it's a rare politician that really doesn't bow unto them because of the tremendous political power that they are able to wield. They also, of course, have created their own churches. And they try to make what they are doing as biblically acceptable and scripturally acceptable. That it is just another way of life and another form of living, that as Christians, we should love everybody and love everything and we should accept them and all.

There was a church in San Francisco, an Orthodox Presbyterian church who had hired an organist who, when he was found to be a homosexual, the church fired him. And he turned around and sued the church for a hundred thousand dollars because of the laws in San Francisco that do not allow any discrimination for a man's sexual preferences. Fortunately, the courts dismissed his suit for which we praise the Lord.

Actually, Calvary Chapel had sent some money to the Presbyterian church in order that they might defend themselves in this suit. And we are glad for the outcome of the suit this last week when the judge dismissed the suit and granted the church the immunity from that particular law on the basic constitutional rights of the freedom of religion. But if this was such an accepted thing and God would have us to accept it, then surely God would not make reference to it as one of the evils that was existing in the land, the fact that they had allowed these people, and no doubt, to practice openly. And this is one of the evils that is mentioned in the land and later on in a spiritual reform. We find that king Asa got rid of all of the sodomites out of the land. That was listed as a part of the reform in the land.

When the morals of a nation sink so low that the people have such bravado in their sin that they begin to publicly flaunt their perversion and sin, that nation is ripening for judgment, even as was Sodom and Gomorrah. I fear for our nation and we need to pray. I do feel that we as a church should not hate these people who have chosen this lifestyle. But as a church we cannot accept them either. We pray for them that they might have a true conversion and be born again and turn from that wickedness and follow and serve the Lord. But we surely can have no real fellowship with them lest we be partakers of their unrighteous deeds.

So still now in Judah, Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

In the fifth year of his reign, Shishak who was the king of Egypt invaded the land. And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house (1Ki 14:25-26);

So all of this tremendous loot that Solomon had brought together was now ripped off by the king of Egypt. That's one of the tough things about having a lot is that there's always someone out to rip you off. I have a friend who is involved with the Mafia and he was sharing with me how that there is sort of a big roll of money that just moves around the circles. He said we all know where it is. He said every once in a while, I get a hold of it. And he said when I have it, he says, "Man, I just you know just loathe it". And he says, "But whenever I have it, all of the guys out there are figuring some scam or some way to get it away from me." And he said ultimately I fall for one of their scams and they rip it off. And then they have it for awhile and then we're all figuring out some scam to rip it off from them. And he said this big wad of money just keeps moving around in a circle and we each get to hold it every once in a while. But he said it's just all of us ripping off each other constantly that we might hold this money for a time.

And while I was talking to him it happened to be the time that he had it. And he opened his safe and showed me this tremendous amount of money. And he said, "But I won't have it for long." He said sooner or later they're going to get to me with some scam and he said they'll take it from me.

Now here was all of this treasure that Solomon amasses. So all of the greedy kings around him, "Wow," you know, you become the prime target. And so he gets ripped off and they take it down to Egypt. So then everybody knows it's in Egypt, so they're going to start you know ripping off the Egyptians then.

So Rehoboam made brass shields (1Ki 14:27), Remember Solomon made these gold shields, three pounds of gold per shield. But he replaced them, Rehoboam replaced the shields with brass shields. Now brass is always a symbol of judgment. And it really is the beginning of God's judgment because of their turning away from the Lord. And so it came to pass when the king went into the house of the LORD, that the guard bare them, and brought them back to the guard's chamber. And the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, all that he did, are written in the chronicles of [the kings of Israel] (1Ki 14:28-29).  
So we'll get those when we get to Chronicles.

Or the kings of Judah [rather] (1Ki 14:29).

And we do have the chronicles of the kings of Judah.

Now there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. Rehoboam slept with his fathers, he was buried in the city of David. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead (1Ki 14:30-31).

Now it is interesting that both men named their sons the same thing. However, Abijah or Abijah and Abijam, they're close to the same thing, they mean the same. He's called Abijah later on. But the king of Jeroboam died. The king of Rehoboam, Abijah or Abijam became the king in his father's stead. And he reigned for three years in Jerusalem.

(Through The Bible Series C-2000; Chuck Smith; 1979-1986; Commentaries Through The Bible)

 A.W. Tozer; Jesus, Author of Our Faith; AND OTHER ESSAYS ON FAITH; COMPILED AND EDITED BY GERALD B. SMITH  
Aiden Wilson Tozer (April 21, 1897 - May 12, 1963) was an American Protestant pastor, preacher, author, magazine editor, Bible conference speaker, and spiritual mentor. For his work, he received two honorary doctorates. Among the more than forty books that he authored, at least two are regarded as Christian classics: *The Pursuit of God* and *The Knowledge of the Holy*. His books impress on the reader the possibility and necessity for a deeper relationship with God. Living a simple and non-materialistic lifestyle, he and his wife, Ada Cecelia Pfautz, never owned a car, preferring bus and train travel. Even after becoming a well-known Christian author, Tozer signed away much of his royalties to those who were in need. Prayer was of vital personal importance for Tozer. "His preaching as well as his writings were but extensions of his prayer life", comments his biographer, James L. Snyder in the book, *In Pursuit of God: The Life Of A.W. Tozer*. "He had the ability to make his listeners face themselves in the light of what God was saying to them", writes Snyder.

Tozer himself produced the works: *Let My People Go*; *Man : the Dwelling Place of God*; *Paths to Power*; *The Divine Conquest*  
*The Knowledge of the Holy*, (1961) New York: Harper & Row, ISBN 0-06-068412-7; *The Pursuit of God*, (1957) Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, ISBN 0-87509-522-4; *The Root of the Righteous*; There are also many compilations of sermons and other writings which were edited and published by Christian Publications, Inc., after Tozer's death. Although the books were published posthumously, authorship is attributed to A. W. Tozer. [Wikipedia](#)

 YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN. THAT you admit. You go to church nearly every Sunday. "Just ask the minister; he will confirm it."

You have been working and earning, getting and spending, and now you are enjoying the creature comforts known to modern human beings in this land.

You bristle a little and ask, "Is there anything wrong with being comfortable?"

Let me answer in this way: If you are a Christian and you are comfortably "at home" in Chicago or Toronto, in Iowa or Alberta—or any other address on planet earth—the signs are evident that you are in spiritual trouble.

The spiritual equation reads like this: The greater your contentment with your daily circumstances in this world, the greater your defection from the ranks of God's pilgrims en route to a city whose architect and builder is God Himself!

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews centuries ago described the long-range faith of the many victorious pilgrims who could never really feel at home in this world:

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.(Heb 11:13-16)

One of the most telling indictments against many of us who comprise our Christian churches today is the almost complete acceptance of the contemporary scene as our permanent home. We say that we are followers of Christ, but we have already settled down and we are comfortably at home. We are satisfied to be natives and citizens of this world's society—we are no longer "aliens and strangers."

If we can feel that we have put down our roots in this present world, if we have a true sense of belonging, then our Lord still has much to teach us about faith and attachment to our Savior.

Our citizenship is in heaven

The apostle Paul emphasized an important New Testament teaching concerning our true citizenship as believing Christians when he declared:

Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Phi 3:20-21)

Those are not just comforting words to be recited at the graveside. They are words of truth and hope for aliens and strangers, walking by faith on this earth, who know that their true citizenship is in heaven.

We are speaking of genuine, abiding faith in God. And I want to note with you an interesting observation. In Hebrews 11 there are three prepositions used with the word faith. Each has something to do with our Christian pilgrimage.

How did God's heroes live? How did they meet temptations and sufferings? How did they die? Everything was "by faith," "through faith" or "in faith."

Throughout the ages, this has been the pattern of God's methodology for His faithful men and women. We do certain things by faith. We accomplish certain things through faith. Some things we do in faith, trusting and believing even in dark times. I emphasize these prepositions here as a contrast to the philosophies of the worldlings around us—those who tell us that they live and operate "on faith."

All adult my life I have been a minister in The Christian and Missionary Alliance. When I started out, many of the Alliance pastors did not receive a regular weekly salary. Rather, they lived "by faith." Members of their congregations would contribute a part of their weekly tithes and offerings direct to their minister's support. Whatever they gave, that the pastor had as his income. And so these ministers lived "by faith" without a fixed remuneration.

#### Living by faith versus living on faith

Often members of the group would comment that their pastor was "living on faith." Some of the pastors were sure their people knew only the one preposition—living "on" faith. It was reported by one of the early evangelists that an Alliance woman was critical of her pastor for buying a piece of beefsteak "when everyone knows that he is living on faith." Apparently they thought that because the pastor was willing to live by faith he could exist on faith.

A thousand times no! None of us should be living on faith, for if we rest on faith we have a complete misunderstanding of what faith is. The purpose of faith is to get us to rest completely on God—on God Himself!

It is only by faith that we can rest on God. It is through faith that we can trust the promises of God. It is in faith that we can daily live our lives in dependence upon God, His Word and His promises.

These are the Christian contrasts to the worldly philosophy of human activity and presumption on faith. "Just go ahead bravely on faith. Never say die!"—that is the self-courageous attitude of this world.

"Never say die!" But then they die.

"You can if you will—it is all up to you," is the world's refrain. "He who thinks he can, can!"

Since I have been a Christian, I have had a negative reaction to that kind of human psychology. I do not mind saying that my favorite hymns are not those that exhort me to rise up, bare my chest to the elements, flex my biceps and tell the world where to get off. That is not my philosophy because it would put my confidence in the wrong place. If my faith, my belief, my confidence are in myself, then they cannot at the same time be resting in God.

The Bible tells us to believe in God and to put our trust in Him. It warns us against having any confidence in the flesh. So I do not want some voice exhorting me to "Rise up, O man of God, go forth to face the foe"—and all of that. I would rather go to the place of prayer, meet God there and then let Him face the world for me.

To meet the kinds of temptations and enemies confronting us, it is not enough for us to stick out our chins, inflate our chests and mutter the old refrain, "Never say die!" We do not operate on faith; rather, we rest our case completely on God. Then our experiences proceed by faith, through faith and in faith. That is the way victory comes, because our victory must be God's victory first!

#### Two kinds of faith

I see two kinds of faith in these verses from Hebrews 11. The more important, by far, is the long-range, unchanging faith in God's person and in God's plan no matter how long His plan takes. I call this long-range faith. It is the quality of being able to trust God far into the future.

The other kind of faith is short-range. It is the faith of the beginner, the eager new believer who wants everything to happen now! These new creations in Christ Jesus have confessed their faith in Him Christ and have sensed the joy of being forgiven for their sins. They are likely to be taken up with today's blessings, today's provision, today's expectations. As yet, they know little of persecution, temptations, the wiles of the devil, the loneliness of the minority.

So far, their faith in God is short-range, immediate. They have not yet heard of all those heroes of faith who believed, persevered, suffered, clung to all of God's promises and died in faith not having seen the fulfillment of God's great plan.

Generally in our Christian circles when we talk about the promises of God, we refer to God's immediate provision and to blessings for our present needs. But in effect, Christ has said to us, "I have a long-range plan for you! I am asking you to forsake all for Me, transfer every allegiance to Me, trust completely in Me. Then in the day of My triumph and vindication, you will triumph with Me. When I come into My ultimate glory, you will share in that glory!"

**Pilgrims and strangers**

Let me tell you something that is very evident in God's dealings with us. Anyone who truly knows the demands of faith, anyone who is genuinely committed to the Christian life is both a pilgrim and a stranger in this world. (I like that term pilgrim, used in some translations, better than alien, so I will use it.)

The words pilgrim and stranger are synonymous, yet they are not identical. A pilgrim is generally a religious traveler who is determined to visit some holy place. History tells us about people making pilgrimages. Many individuals and many groups endured hardships and sufferings in order to reach the places on earth that they considered sacred.

Pilgrims are never pictured as seeking some commercial gain. They are intent upon a higher motive, and they keep traveling and seeking because they have not yet found that place they can call home.

Simply, pilgrims who are still pilgrims have not arrived at that place to which they are going. They are still moving toward their objective.

What, then, is a stranger? A stranger is one who has found a place of residence but who cannot truly consider himself or herself a part of the new culture. He or she may be of another race and speak a different language. The culture that surrounds him or her is completely different from that which he or she has known.

If we are genuine, committed Christians, intent upon walking by faith with our Lord Jesus Christ, then we are continually confessing that we are pilgrims and that we are strangers!

The Holy Spirit, who is the real author of this Letter to the Hebrews, uses the terms pilgrims and strangers to remind the early Christians that they were not yet at their final home.

The message still reads the same today. Christian pilgrims are journeying by faith from an old city that is cursed and under threat of judgment to a blessed and celestial city where dwells Immanuel!

As Christian pilgrims and strangers, we are never borne along by force or compulsion. We remain free moral agents. We have not been squeezed or coerced into a profession of faith. Christ has chosen us, and we have followed Him gladly and freely.

Why do I speak of that here? Because the writer to the Hebrews has told us that the heroes of faith, the pilgrims and strangers of old, could have turned back to their native city and home.

Abraham could have gone back. If he had found that he was longing for Ur of the Chaldees and that his pilgrimage with God was no longer his soul's desire, he could have turned around and said, "I am going back!"

Not everyone follows through In the New Testament, that man described as a rich young ruler in the national and religious life of Israel came to Jesus to inquire about faith and choice. Jesus said to him, "Leave all; become a pilgrim and follow Me!"

That young man was free to choose, free to believe, free to follow the Son of Man. But he turned back. He walked away. There is nothing in the New Testament record to indicate that Jesus ever came in contact with him again.

Demas was a Christian brother in the company of the apostle Paul. With Luke, he was actually linked as a loyal prison companion of Paul in Rome. Yet when Paul wrote his final letter from prison, he regretfully reported to Timothy, "Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me." That is the last we hear of Demas in the New Testament record.

In this life, we will never have a complete record of pilgrims who became weary and discouraged and decided to turn back.

I am not seeking to raise any theological controversy here. I think there are those who may be described as "borderline Christians." We might well ask them, "Will you also go back? Do you think your treasure is still lying back there in some of your old practices and pleasures?" The truth is that none of us can ever really go back to yesterday. It has crumbled and is gone!

Some, perhaps like Demas, are tempted to turn back for money or business or gain. But what good is money when the doctor announces, "Your cancer is far advanced. You have only a short time to live"?

Others are tempted to turn back by their memories of pleasures and "good times" with worldly and sinful friends. I remember a young man who was with us for a while in our fellowship in Chicago. He was frank about it—he told me that he was not really happy with us. He said he was looking for a church where dancing was offered as a social attraction.

Our Lord Jesus Christ asks us to believe, to trust, to follow. My only judgment of those who turn back, those who no longer are pilgrims in the way, is the sad knowledge that they will find that the enemy of their souls has sold them out, deceived them, embittered them.

Certainly Saul of Tarsus became a pilgrim when he met the Lord on the road to Damascus. Saul the persecutor became Paul the apostle. Later he wrote with confidence concerning the exact location of his life's lasting treasure:

**Of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. (2Ti 1:11-12)**

**Paul, the pilgrim, knew that the Lord had his treasure—and that He would hold it for him. If Paul had gone back, what treasure would he claim throughout eternity?**

**We who are involved in the upward gaze of this long-range faith identify ourselves with Jesus Christ forever! We are satisfied that God is at work. We are satisfied to be misunderstood for Christ's sake. We are willing to be treated as the minority, for the people of God are always in the minority in this earthly context.**

**Our true identity is with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. We have taken His cause as our cause. We have taken His way as our way. We have taken His place as our place. We have taken His future as our future. We have taken His life as our life. We have taken the long look of faith to the day of His triumph, and we know it will be our triumph as well.**

**Let me remind you again of the nature of our earthly pilgrimage in the example set by the saintly Samuel Rutherford. His faith shone brightly in one of Scotland's crisis times.**

**Rutherford had refused to bow to the demands and strictures of the powerful leaders of the time. He was exiled by the state church, driven from his pastorate and the flock of God. His religious and political enemies finally dispatched a summons, setting the date for him to appear before their tribunal and face the charges of opposing and ignoring the state church.**

**Already advanced in years and knowing the illness that was about to claim his mortal life, Rutherford answered the summons with one of the most victorious letters ever written:**

**I have received your summons. However, I have received a higher summons, which will be honored before yours. When the day set for me to appear before you comes, I will already be in yonder land where few kings and great men ever come.**

**Men and women committed to long-range faith can die with blessing and satisfaction even if they have not received the fulfillment of the promises. They have confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Their waiting is blessed because it is a waiting on God.**

**The Bible tells us that one of these days Jesus Christ, our Prince-Leader and Elder Brother, will return to reign on earth. He whose name is the Word of God will appear. The nations of this world will be called into account. The righteous Judge will separate the sheep from the goats.**

**By faith we have the assurance of God's favor and welcome in that wonderful hour when Jesus returns. It will be a glad day for the pilgrims—the pilgrims of eternity—their eyes fixed on heaven above.**

**That is the long-range kind of faith. Let us humbly, confidently ask God for it!**

**( Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 514-517)**

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