

Every True Christian Is A Pilgrim

You claim to be a Christian and attend a church fellowship every week.

You have been working hard and are able to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle and can see nothing wrong with this.

It may then surprise you but if you feel “*at home*” with such a lifestyle, you are in spiritual trouble!

The spiritual life equation reads like this: The greater your contentment with your daily circumstances in this world, the greater is your defection from God’s people, who all are en-route to a future as yet unseen city.

Hebrews 11:8-10 [King James] *“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”*

This city is referred to in the vision that Jesus Christ gave to the apostle John, [**Revelation 21:1-4**].

Hebrews 11:13-16 [King James] *“These all died in faith, not having received 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 whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”*

Any true Christian **cannot** accept the contemporary scene as our permanent home, to be satisfied to be natives and citizens of this world’s society.

A true Christian is a sojourner, [Greek “*parōikēō*” meaning a stranger or residing as a foreigner] or pilgrim [Greek “*parēpidēmōs*” an alien or foreign resident].

If we feel that we have put down our “roots” in this present world, have a true sense of belonging, then we have much to understand about true faith and our relationship with our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:20-21 [NIV] *“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour 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.”*

Our citizenship, that is, we are a member of a sovereign state, the Kingdom of God, whose King is at present in heaven, [**Hebrews 1:1-3; Romans 8:33-34**].

These are words of truth and hope for Christians as aliens and strangers, walking by faith in this world’s society, who know that their true citizenship is as yet in heaven.

In **Hebrews 11** there are three prepositions used with the word “*faith*”. Each has to do with our Christian pilgrimage.

How did these God’s heroes live?

How did they meet suffering and temptations?

How did they eventually die?

Everything was “*by faith*,” “*through faith*” or “*in faith*.”

Throughout the ages, this has been the pattern of how God dealt with His faithful men and women.

Examples of this pilgrimage of God’s people: **Genesis 47:9; Exodus 6:4; 1 Chronicles 29:15; Psalms 39:12; Psalms 119:19; Hebrews 13:14; 1 Peter 2:11; Genesis 12:10; Genesis 20:1, 21:34, 47:4; Ruth 1:1**].

As Christians we do certain things **by** faith.

As Christians we accomplish certain things **through** faith.

Some things Christians do **in** faith, trusting and believing the Creator God, even in the dark times.

As a bi-vocational minister in a non-denominational church, with **no** salary or fixed remuneration, for some twenty-six years I lived **by** faith, that God would provide all needed for my family and I.

I believe in all of God’s promises **through** faith in God’s character, [**Titus 1:2**].

I now live **in** faith that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit I can live a life that is pleasing to my Creator God, [**Hebrews 11:6**].

The human psychology of this world is self-achieving in all things.

If our confidence, faith and belief are in ourselves we **cannot** at the same time have a faith that is resting in the Creator God.

This is the way victory comes, because our victory is first God’s victory.

This faith in God is the only way we overcome the evil in the world.

Revelation 12:11 [King James] “*And they [Christians – verse 10] overcame him [Satan and his evil influence – verse 9] by the blood of the Lamb [faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ] and by the word of their testimony, [Matthew 5:13-16] and they loved not their lives unto death.*”

The first move in this victory over the evil influence of Satan in this world is faith in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, then an active life of faith in our Saviour and Creator God.

The word translated “*testimony*” is “*marturia*” meaning record evidence given and witness, which comes from the root word “*martus*” meaning martyr.

Many of the people of faith listed in **Hebrews 11** were martyrs.

Revelation 6:9-11 [NIV] “*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow-servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.*”

The human spirits [**Job 32:8; Ecclesiastes 12:6-7**] reserved in the safe hands of God [**Acts 7:59**] until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the first resurrection, [**1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**].

Note that this act of martyrdom will continue right up to the return of Jesus Christ.

Our faith in God could be tested in this way as are many Christians in many countries today.

There are two kinds of faith in these verses found in Hebrews' eleventh chapter that apply to all Christians as pilgrims in this world.

A long-range faith – unchanging faith in God's Person and in His plan for all humanity **no** matter how long it takes to come to fruition. This takes long-range faith.

It is the quality of being able to trust the Creator God far into the future.

A short-range faith – this is the faith of new “*born again*” Christians who have sensed the joy of being forgiven for their sins.

They are more likely to be focussed on today's provision, today's blessings and today's expectations. As yet, they know little of persecution, the wiles of Satan, temptations of this world and the loneliness of the minority.

So far, they have **not** yet heard of the heroes of faith who believed, persevered, suffered, clung to God's promises and died in faith **not** having seen the fulfilment of God's great plan for humanity.

The words “*pilgrim*” and “*stranger*” are synonymous yet they are not identical.

A pilgrim is generally a religious traveller who is determined to reach a certain goal and is willing to suffer hardships along the way. They are still pilgrims even if they have **not** yet arrived at the place to which they are going, but they are still making progress.

A stranger is a person who has found a place of residence but **cannot** truly consider themselves as part of the surrounding culture, for it is different from that which they have known.

If we are committed Christians, walking in life by faith, we are continually confessing that we are pilgrims and strangers by the way we live.

As Christian pilgrims and strangers, we are never borne along by force or compulsion for Jesus Christ has chosen us, and we follow Him gladly and freely, [**John 15:13-17**].

Not everyone who starts on this Christian pilgrimage completes the journey.

Luke 18:18-24 [NIV] *“A certain ruler asked him, ‘Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No-one is good, except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and mother.’” ‘All these I have kept since I was a boy,’ he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!’”*

This young man was offered a new life of a disciple of Jesus Christ and a pilgrim by following Jesus Christ.

But although the desire was within him, [**Mark 10:17**], he walked away, turning his back on Jesus Christ, for he loved his present comfortable lifestyle.

Demas inspite of being in the company of the apostles, [**Philemon 24; Colossians 4:11**] deserted Paul because he loved the world and its short-lived pleasures, [**2 Timothy 4:10**].

There is **no** further record of Demas in the Christian Bible.

We will never have a complete record in this life, of pilgrims who became weary and discouraged and decided to turn back to their old life in this world, being only “*borderline Christians*.”

Or those who fall to the temptation of money, memories of their previous pleasures and friends and give up their pilgrimage.

2 Timothy 1:11-12 [NIV] *“And 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.”*

Paul, the pilgrim, knew that Jesus Christ held firmly the future he wanted with his Saviour.

Where will this human pilgrimage end?

Revelation 19:5-9 [NIV] *“Then a voice came from the throne, saying: ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!’ Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”’ And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’”*

As we on this Christian pilgrimage centre our lives on Jesus Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to prepare us for this event, we will be preparing ourselves for eternity and an intimate life with our Saviour, Lord and husband, Jesus Christ, [**John 17:3**].

Working with Jesus Christ as priests [teachers] and rulers under Him, [**Revelation 1:4-6; Revelation 5:9-10; 1 Peter 2:9-12**].

Revelation 20:4-6 [NIV] *“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”*

Here is the first opportunity for Christian pilgrims to live and work with Christ.

Revelation 20:11-13 [NIV] *“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”*

Here is a **massive** teaching opportunity for the same “*firstborn*” pilgrims.

Then what?

I leave you with two scriptures to meditate on.

Isaiah 9:6-7 [King James] *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. **Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.** The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”*

No end to increase of the Kingdom of God and Christ’s rulership.

Isaiah 51:16 [King James] *“And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, **that I may plant the heavens**, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”*

“Plant the heavens”!!