

Theme: The Church is the community of those who are God's people through faith in Christ and are therefore exiles in this world. Consequently, they must persevere through suffering and persecution, knowing God is worth far more than this passing age.

## I. Intro - Foreigner on Mission Trips

- A. I have been to many countries on mission trips
- B. Everything seems so different than in America
- C. But I am the one that is alien to them!
- D. Christians like this in the world: alien exiles on mission
- E. How should we expect the world to respond?

## II. God's Exile People of Faith

- A. We are God's people by faith in Christ  
Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. <sup>2</sup> This is what the ancients were commended for. Hebrews 11:1–2
  - 1. The focus of the chapter is clearly faith!
  - 2. We see that God's people have always been marked out by their faith in Him.
  - 3. It has never been possible to know or please God apart from faith in Him.  
And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6
    - a. Old Testament people were NOT God's people by birth or by works, but rather through faith in God.
    - b. The Gospel has ALWAYS been the same.

4. Look to Christ in faith today!

## B. God's people have always been exiles in this world

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Hebrews 11:9–10

- 1. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were aliens and strangers - even in the land God promised to them!
- 2. Their real home is the eternal City built by God!
- 3. This is true for all of God's people  
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. <sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> 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. Hebrews 11:13–16
  - a. All these people - this is true for all who live by faith
  - b. They are aliens and strangers on earth.
  - c. They long for the true home - the new heavens and new earth!

## C. The Church is the community of those who are God's people through faith in Christ and are therefore exiles in this world.

### III. Persevering Through Suffering and Persecution

#### A. God's exile people suffer a sense of homelessness

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.** <sup>14</sup> **People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.** Hebrews 11:13–14

1. Aliens and strangers don't feel at 'home'
2. God's people always have a sense of 'homelessness' and alienation, for no earthly country is their true home.
3. To be part of God's people of necessity entails a sense of alienation from our culture, and produces a longing that this world can not fulfill.

#### B. God's exile people suffer hostility and persecution

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup> He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. Hebrews 11:24–25

1. When Moses understood his identity and became part of the people of God, it meant he could no longer simply identify as the son of Pharaoh.
2. If we fully embrace our identity as a Christian, it will inevitably mean to deny parts of how our culture defines us.
3. To be part of God's people is to refuse the pleasures of sin and inevitably leads to conflict with the culture - the mistreatment of the people of God.

4. Christians do NOT experience "your best life now"!
5. This is not unusual or exceptional - it is the consistent experience of the people of God through the ages.
  - a. Note that the list begins with Abel - who was murdered because he and his sacrifice pleased God while Cain and his sacrifice were rejected.
  - b. When faced with God's displeasure the culture prefers to persecute rather than repent!
  - c. Throughout the chapter there is a sense of being separate from the surrounding culture.
  - d. The list ends with a powerful litany of persecution.

Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated — <sup>38</sup> the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. Hebrews 11:35–38

    1. A litany of persecution - poverty, imprisonment, torture, and death.
    2. This is listed in generic terms without names to remind us this is often the lot of God's exile people in this wicked world.
    3. The chapter begins and ends on notes of strong persecution - even death.
6. The recipients of the letter are being persecuted for their faith and tempted to deny Christ and return to Judaism to avoid persecution.

- C. The people of God must persevere through suffering  
Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Heb 11:35
1. They refused to be released - they persevere through suffering and persecution, even death.
  2. God's people must not compromise the faith for the sake of peace with the world. When the world turns on believers, they can be at peace with God, or at peace with the world, but they can not be at peace with both.
  3. The secret to perseverance is seeing Christ and our eternal reward.  
He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. Hebrews 11:26–27
    - a. Moses preferred to give up his status, wealth, and power and receive disgrace and persecution.
    - b. He did this because He saw Him Who is invisible - God! It was His vision of God that sustained Him.
    - c. In seeing God he also saw his eternal reward and thus was willing to lose his earthly reward for the sake of the reward that was accruing in heaven.
  4. Only those who draw close to Christ, experiencing His daily Presence and a foretaste of their eternal reward will be empowered to persevere through persecution.
- D. The Church is the community of those who are God's people through faith in Christ and are therefore exiles in this world. Consequently, they must persevere through suffering and persecution, knowing God is worth far more than this passing age.

## IV. Applying the Word

### A. Responding to the reality of persecution

1. Am I praying for the persecuted church?
  - a. Persecution is a reality for millions of Christians!
  - b. Do I remember and pray for them regularly?  
Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. Hebrews 13:3
  - c. Stay informed, pray, petitions, etc.
2. Am I preparing for suffering and persecution by drawing close to Christ daily?
  - a. Only seeing and savoring Christ will sustain me through suffering and persecution!
  - b. The only way to persevere in the face of what is coming is having our identity rooted in Christ, and renewing that identity in Christ each day.
  - c. Do I draw strength from Christ each day in His Word and prayer?
  - d. Do I have the habit of meditating upon God's Word day and night so that my mind, heart, and will are shaped by the truth?
3. Am I drawing strength through fellowship?
  - a. Persecuted Christians have always found strength in fellowship.
  - b. We need to be encouraging one another throughout each week to sustain us through suffering and persecution  
But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Hebrews 3:13

4. Am I drawing strength through regular worship?

- a. Corporate worship instructs our minds, shapes our desires, and fuels our courage.
- b. We need to gather for corporate worship each week to be strengthened and encouraged in the faith

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25

- c. I need to gather in person if at all possible, and if I can't because of COVID then participate online each week.

5. I can no more miss these ways of drawing close to Christ than I would miss drinking water as I headed into a desert.

B. The Lord's Supper - A Foretaste of Our Eternal Reward

- 1. Like Moses, we need to be reminded of our eternal reward to enable us to forego the false treasures of this world.
- 2. The Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.
- 3. Confess the faith, come to the Table, and taste eternity!

May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. <sup>2</sup> May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. <sup>3</sup> May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. <sup>4</sup> May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. Psalm 20:1–4

The Church - The Persecuted Community of Faith

Hebrews 11  
November 8, 2020  
Communion  
Psalm 20:1-4

Teaching keywords: Church; persecuted church; suffering; heavenly citizenship

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. <sup>2</sup> This is what the ancients were commended for. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. <sup>4</sup> By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. <sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. <sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. <sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. <sup>11</sup> By faith Abraham, even though he was past age — and Sarah herself was barren — was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. <sup>12</sup> And so from this one

man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. <sup>20</sup> By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. <sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. <sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. <sup>23</sup> By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup> He chose to be mistreated along with the people of

God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. <sup>26</sup> He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. <sup>28</sup> By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. <sup>29</sup> By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. <sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. <sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, <sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. <sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated — <sup>38</sup> the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts

and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. <sup>39</sup> These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. <sup>40</sup> God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Hebrews 11:1–40