

C. H. Spurgeon, commenting on death for the Christian, observed that it's wonderful to "have the tenement gradually taken down, and yet not to feel any trouble about it, but to know that you are in the great Father's hands, and you shall wake up where old age and infirmities will have passed away, and where, in everlasting youth, you shall behold the face of Him you love."

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

Wiersbe says:

The transition in Hebrews 11:35 is important: not all men and women of faith experienced miraculous deliverance. Some were tortured and died! The word translated "others" in verse 36 means "others of a different kind." These "others" had faith, but God did not see fit to deal with them in the same way he dealt with Moses, Gideon, and David.
p. 130

Wiersbe says further:

The writer of Hebrews (11:36-38) records the fact that many unknown men and women of faith *were not delivered* from difficult circumstances; yet God honored their faith. In fact, it takes more faith *to endure* than it does to *escape*. Like the three Hebrew children, we should trust God and obey Him *even if He does not deliver us* (Dan. 3:16-18).
p. 130

Westcott says:

The triple triplet of victorious faith is followed by a single, abrupt clause which presents the highest conquest of faith, 'women received from resurrection their dead.' In this case faith appears under a twofold aspect. There is a silent, waiting, passive faith of love, which works with the active faith. Women, in whom the instinct of natural affection is strongest, cooperated with the prophets through whom the restoration was effected. They received their dead.
pp. 378-9

Kistemkar says:

In the next few verses the author summarizes the physical suffering that the heroes of faith endured. They were martyrs for God's cause. By faith they conquered even though they lost their lives.

p. 353

Thomas says:

Now the thought turns to what faith can endure, the emphasis being on the sufferings of the people. Faith enables as well as equips, and through faith people can suffer and be strong.

p. 153

The "WOMEN [who] RECEIVED [BACK] THEIR DEAD BY RESURRECTION" are:

1. the widow at Zerephath whose son died and Elijah was used by God to restore that child.
2. the woman at Chunam whose little boy died and Elisha was the instrument God used in that resurrection.

"AND OTHERS WERE TORTURED, NOT ACCEPTING THEIR RELEASE"

The PURPOSE behind that:

"IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT OBTAIN A BETTER RESURRECTION."

A. T. Robertson says:

A "better resurrection" than the temporary ones alluded to in this verse by the women.

p. 429

Wuest says:

They did this in order that they might attain to a better resurrection than the one mentioned above, namely, a mere continuation of life on earth. These were looking forward to the resurrection that would be unto glory.
pp. 209-10

Wiersbe, commenting on this phrase, says:

In so doing, they obtained "a better resurrection." Better than what? Better than the resurrection described in the first part of Hebrews 11:35. For, after all, the women received their dead back to life, *and they died again*. But when these martyrs are raised from the dead, they will share the glory of Christ and never suffer or die again!

p. 139

Hughes says:

Now to balance the record, the writer changes the emphasis by showing that faith also provides a different empowerment
--the power to persevere to the end.

p. 151

Westcott says:

The record of the open triumphs of Faith is followed by the record of its inward victories in unconquered and outwardly unrewarded endurance.

p. 379

v.36 And others received mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

Matthew 5:11, 12

"Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Circumstances are the rulers of the weak; they are but the instruments of the wise.

Samuel Lover

Why not go out on a limb? Isn't that where the fruit is?

Frank Scully

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Wiersbe says:

The phrase "still others" (v. 36) reminds us that we can live by faith and appear to be defeated. Not everybody who trusted God was delivered or protected (vv. 36-40). But the important thing is not God's deliverance; it is God's approval (v. 39). Faith in God gives you the ability to endure when others are giving up.

pp. 820-21

v.37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

Let us just reflect for a minute on this CURRICULUM that is a part of what these who are exercising faith endured.

There are 10 THINGS:

1. "WOMEN RECEIVED [BACK] THEIR DEAD BY RESURRECTION,"
2. "OTHERS WERE TORTURED,"
3. "OTHERS RECEIVED MOCKINGS,"
4. "SCOURGINGS,"
5. "CHAINS AND IMPRISONMENT,"
6. "STONED,"
7. "SAWN IN TWO,"
8. "TEMPTED,"
9. "PUT TO DEATH WITH THE SWORD," and
10. "WENT ABOUT IN SHEEPSKINS AND GOATSKINS; BEING DESTITUTE, AFFLICTED, ILL-TREATED."

Wiersbe says:

Faith enables us to turn from the approval of the world and seek only the approval of God. If God is glorified by delivering His people, He will do it. If He sees fit to be glorified by *not* delivering His people, then He will do that. But we must never conclude that the absence of deliverance means a lack of faith on the part of God's children.

p. 131

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Wiersbe in his book Run With the Winners says:

"God did it for me, and I know He will do it for you!"

Have you ever heard those words from a preacher of another believer bearing witness? Have you ever read them in a book? *They are dangerous words!* They give the impression that God *always* works the same way, in similar or identical situations. "If God healed me," says the enthusiastic witness, "He will also heal you! Now, all you have to do is--" and there follows the sure-fire "formula" for experiencing God's healing.

I received a phone call from a frantic young lady who kept shouting, "It doesn't work! It doesn't work!"

"What doesn't work?" I asked, after she had calmed down.

"I did everything they told me to do at the seminar, I followed all the steps, *and it doesn't work!*" She was so distraught that she threatened to commit suicide.

Doctors warn us that it's dangerous to take medicine that is prescribed for someone else, and that same warning can be applied to the spiritual life. We should beware of comparing our spiritual experiences with those of others. God's principles are always the same for every believer, but His plans and purposes may be different. God always honors faith, but we who believe must permit Him to honor it in His own way.

pp. 137-8

We are plagued in the 20th century church with a strain of theology that is focusing more on:

SELFISH ENTITLEMENT

than it is on:

SACRIFICIAL SERVANTHOOD.

(Living in the Lions' Den Without Being Eaten by William Carr Peel)

A. W. Tozer warned us, "Whoever seeks God as a means toward desired ends will not find God. God will not be used."

p. 28

(Acts of Love: The Power of Encouragement by David Jeremiah)

Some years ago, I was given a book by Florence Bulle which bore this interesting title: God Wants You Rich and Other Enticing Doctrines. In her book she had some choice words for those who seek the easy way to growth and maturity.

The deception in the success-prosperity doctrine is subtle. It sounds so spiritual to assert that we cannot be sick or fail if we trust God, and that He will reward us for faith and giving and being good, by making us rich in material things. But this was not the message of the men and women of faith who throughout history set church and nation aflame with revival.

The more we pursue such poppycock, the more likely we will end up like pampered children. Getting everything we want won't turn us into soldiers for Christ. We may wear a tailored suit with gold buttons and hash marks, but we will be no more soldiers than the six-year-old with his feet shoved in his dad's old combat boots and carrying a wooden gun. Unchecked, the success-prosperity syndrome will not see Christians developing together into a vigorous, stouthearted, indomitable church. Rather, it will reduce the body of Christ to spiritual flabbiness.

This past year I read that Jim Bakker, convicted in 1989 of defrauding PTL partners of millions of dollars, had been convicted once again. This time he'd been convicted by rereading and writing out every word in the Bible which Jesus ever spoke.

I asked all who sat under my ministry to forgive me for preaching a gospel emphasizing earthly prosperity. Many today believe that the evidence of God's blessing on them is a new car or a house, a good job. If that be the case, then gambling casino owners, drug kingpins and movie stars are blessed of God. There is no way, if you take the whole counsel of God's Word that you can equate riches or material things as a sign of God's blessing, or even health. If we equate earthly possessions with God's favor, what do we tell the billions of those living in poverty, or what do you do if depression hits, or what do you say to those who lose a loved one? Many in-name-only Christians would curse God if they lost all of their material possessions and their health. Jesus said, "Don't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth." He wants us to love Him, not the things that He gives us.

pp. 176-8

(Perilous Pursuits by Joseph M. Stowell)

I'm reminded of the story of the big dog who was trotting home one day, a fine steak firmly in his jaws. Happy with his fresh find, he crossed a little foot bridge and stopped to look in the water, where he saw his reflection. He supposed the vision to be another dog with a steak in its mouth. In the distortion of the reflecting pond, the dog assumed that the other dog's steak was better than his. When he opened his mouth to grab it, his steak disappeared into the pond. Just when the dog thought he had more, he ended up with less.

Another complication to our madness for more is a unique brand of heresy that's touted every day over the religious airwaves and in massive conferences across the country. It may just be the most malicious appeal of all to a Christian's compulsion for more. It is the brazenly proclaimed teaching that says if you just have enough faith, God will give you health, wealth, and happiness. He has to, say the false prophets of more. He's bound by His promises to prosper you. All you have to do is claim your inheritance--after, of course, you have sent these false teachers your "seed gift" to guarantee your return from God.

This teaching is detestable because it allows us to cover our greed with a cloak of faith, giving us permission to demand from God those things that He may want to give us, but has never promised to. Ironically, the teaching often comes from those who are driven by their own madness for more. Furthermore, it distorts faith and God's work of grace in a person who has learned to be content.
pp. 68-69

The pursuit of pleasure distorts and dulls our prayer life. James went on to say, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (4:3). While this is true in terms of much of what we ask for, it is especially true of the heretical "health, wealth, and happiness" gospel we talked about earlier. Prayer is not a manipulative weapon to force God to grant us pleasure. It is a means by which we worship Him, finding peace in the midst of pain and grace and mercy to help in the time of need.
p. 121

Death and sorrow will be the companions of our journey; hardship our garment; constancy and valor our only shield. We must be united, we must be undaunted, we must be inflexible.

--Sir Winston Churchill, 1940

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

Backward Christian soldiers,
 fleeing from the fight,
 With the cross of Jesus clearly out of sight:
 Christ our rightful Master standing against the foe,
 But forward into battle we are chicken to go.

Like a mighty tortoise moves the church of God;
 Brothers we are treading where we've often trod,
 We are much divided, many bodies we,
 Having different doctrines, not much charity.

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,
 But the Church of Jesus hidden does remain;
 Gates of hell should never 'gainst that Church prevail,
 We have Christ's own promise, but think that it will fail.

Sit here, then, ye people, join our useless throng;
 Blend with ours your voices in a feeble song.
 Blessings, ease, and comfort, ask from Christ the King.
 With our modern thinking, we won't do a thing.

--George Verwer, *Come! Live! Die!*, p. 91-92.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

v.38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out the fact that:

. . . a lovely touch [is placed here], the writer commented that **the world was not worthy** of those whom it banished.

p. 809

Westcott says:

They were men worth more than the whole world, and they lacked all.

p. 381

Hughes says:

The calculated irony here is that the world has rejected such people, and yet the world does not deserve to have them even if it were to accept them.

So much for the prosperity gospel! Here are saints who are so holy and so full of faith that the world is not worthy to contain them, and yet they are called to persevere in persecution, deprivation, and death. Not only that, but the reason they are able to persevere *is* their great faith!

p. 153

Wuest says:

Expositor's quotes Davidson: "The world drove them out, thinking them unworthy to live in it, while in truth it was unworthy to have them living in it."

p. 211

Kistemaker quotes:

Man may trouble and distress me,
 'Twill but drive me to Thy breast;
 Life with trials hard may press me,
 Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.

p. 357

Pink says:

This parenthetic clause is brought in here for the purpose of removing an objection: many might suppose that these despised wanderers were only receiving their just due, as not being fit to live in decent society. To remove this scandal the apostle put the blame where it rightly belonged, affirming that it was society which was unworthy of having the saints of God in their midst.

pp. 385-6

Delitzsch says:

The world despised them, and thought them not worthy of its regards or society; but the reverse was the truth: the world was not worthy of them, and therefore God withdrew them from it. The world, in persecuting and driving them into the desert, witnessed against and punished itself.

p. 289

MacArthur says:

The world is **not worthy** of having such people in its midst, just as these people did not deserve the sufferings they received. For its inflicting the suffering, the world will be judged and punished; for their enduring the suffering the faithful saints will be resurrected and rewarded. They knew with Paul that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18), and they looked forward with Peter to "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven"

(1 Pet. 1:4).

p. 368

Phillips says:

If, the writer of Hebrews argues, men and women could bear such things for the faith in the old days when they lived in the shadowlands of faith, how much more should Christian believers, dwelling in the full blaze of light brought to men by Christ, be willing to dare all for Him! So then, whether delivered from their foes or delivered to their foes, they should be willing to remain true to Christ.

p. 187

The Pilgrims

Dramatic and significant is the story of the Pilgrims. On December 21, 1620, the voyaging *Mayflower* dropped anchor in Plymouth Bay, with Captain Christopher Jones at her helm. It had been a grueling voyage, taking the one-hundred-twenty-ton-capacity ship sixty-six days to make the perilous crossing. There had been disease, anxiety, and childbirth among the 102 courageous passengers. Furthermore, they arrived on the black New England shore during a hard winter which ultimately claimed half of their number. However, when spring came and the captain of the *Mayflower* offered free passage to anyone desiring to return, not a single person accepted.

The fidelity of the forty-one men, who while still aboard the *Mayflower* had signed the famous Compact beginning with the words, "In ye name of God Amen," was taking on visible meaning, these chivalrous souls had dedicated themselves to the total causes of freedom. They had come to a wilderness to carve out a better way of life. Faith prompted the voyage; faith sustained the Pilgrims and their religious convictions constrained them to raise their voices in praise. Their hardship, sacrifice, devotion, concept of government, and vigorous religion all remind us of those who sought a country.

--1000 Illustrations For Preaching and Teaching.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

(Lambs Among Wolves by Bob Briner)

Bill says that too many Christians are cut away from the culture and cannot speak to it, or they just simply are too scared: “Someone has said that silence is golden; but more often than not, silence is yellow.” In typical Texas fashion, Bill says it is time for believers to “walk into the night and start kicking cockroaches in the butt.” The key is walking *into* the night, not standing on the perimeter.

pp. 34-35

(Broken in the Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

When we are externally oriented, we want our circumstances to change more than we are willing to change our hearts and our characters to match our circumstances. When we are broken, we pray for strength to match the situation. As one commentator noted, Paul was chained but not contained. The result of a broken attitude is an inability to be controlled by external circumstances, whether they be people, health, finances, or others. When we pray for strength to match the challenge instead of a different challenge, we become the miracle.

Life upheavals can occur in sudden, traumatic turn-arounds, such as a job loss, heart attack, financial disaster, and the like. Someone said, trouble always happens at the same time, when you need it least. Often the shock of the event itself adds to the impact. Other problems occur with a gradual decay of circumstances. Perhaps it is a stalled dream, a business that deteriorates, a relationship malaise, or a worsening health condition. Sometimes the gravity of the process is just the day-to-day awareness that life is not getting better, and you are not sure how to change it. Both types of processes remind us that we ultimately are not in control. They show us our limited power to run our lives.

pp. 55-56

(The Complete Book of Zingers by Croft M. Pentz)

Don't tell me about your labor pains--show me the baby.
p. 91

v.39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

Verses 39 and 40 are THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

Hebrews 11:13

All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

In a concluding summary the writer pointed out that the great heroes of faith he had spoken of had not yet realized their eschatological hopes. This fact shows that **God had planned something better for them and us**. It is indeed "better for us" that the future hopes they strove toward be delayed, since only thus could believers enjoy the present experience of becoming companions of the Messiah who leads them to glory.
p. 809

As a result, the perfecting (cf. 10:14; 12:23) of the Old Testament worthies-- that is, the realization of their hopes --awaits that of all believers.
p. 809

Westcott says:

The faith by which they welcomed the divine promises became the power through which the fellowship of God with them was made evident.
p. 382

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Bruce says:

From righteous Abel to those whose faith was so nobly manifested on the very eve of the coming of Christ, they all "won their record for faith" (Moffatt). Some of them, as we were told in v. 33, "obtained promises," but none of them received *the* promise in the sense of witnessing its fulfilment. They lived and died in prospect of a fulfilment which none of them experienced on earth; yet so real was that fulfilment to them that it gave them power to press upstream, against the current of the environment, and to live on earth as citizens of that commonwealth whose foundations are firmly laid in the unseen and eternal order.

p. 330

DeHaan says:

If these Old Testament heroes with the limited light and opportunities were able to overcome, then what excuse can we give with all the added light which we possess, when we meet Jesus? For we have much more promised than they. The chapter closes with a reminder of this.

p. 161

Hession points out:

One thing is said of them all--indeed, it is put both at the beginning and the end of the chapter--"by it the elders had witness borne to them" (11:2) and "these all had witness borne to them through their faith . . ." (11:39). And the witness God gave of them was that they pleased Him. Whatever might have been lacking in their personal characters, the fact that they believed God and acted on His promises was enough to enable Him to express His pleasure with regard to them. God counted their faith a righteousness they did not otherwise possess. That is certainly said of Noah (11:7), and one can assume it goes for the rest of them.

p. 186

They had faith to believe that Jehovah was standing with them, that there was "a better resurrection" and "a great recompence of reward" hereafter, and they had a determination that at all costs they were not going to miss that.

It can be understood what tremendous bearing this would have on Paul's message to his readers that they should, whatever it might cost them, endure to the end. If it was by faith that the elders did so, this must be the way for them too. This was the great crowd of witnesses, men who had gone this way before, and whose faith was to inspire theirs to see it through.
p. 187

Barclay says:

In the end he says a great thing. All these died before the final unfolding of God's promise, before the coming of God's Messiah into the world. It was as if God had so arranged things, that the full blaze of His glory and revelation should not be revealed until we and they can enjoy it together. The writer to the Hebrews is saying: "See! The glory of God has come. But see what it cost to enable it to come! That is the faith which gave you your faith. What can you do but be true to a heritage and a tradition like that?"
p. 194

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

Our author has now made an imposing sweep of biblical history from its earliest beginnings to the latest events recorded in his Greek bible. He has painted an inspiring picture of faith and endurance and obedience. The whole point of the chapter is now summed up. All these have won testimony because of their faith. The witness of their faith is in the scriptures.
p. 212

“The quality of a man’s life is in direct proportion to his commitment to excellence, regardless of his chosen field or endeavor. . . . I firmly believe that any man’s finest hour—his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear—is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle, victorious.”

--Vince Lombardi

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God’s Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

God does not look for powerful instruments but for instruments that can be wielded by his power.

p. 83

(The Living Body: The Church Christ Is Building by Dr. Richard Halverson)

God's schedule often involves waiting. The Bible is full of stories about people who waited. Sarah waited for ninety years to give birth to her much-desired son, Isaac. The grieving Jacob waited for years in protracted mourning before learning his son, Joseph, was still alive. Joseph waited for years in prison before being elevated to the second-most important post in Pharaoh's government. Moses waited forty years in the wilderness to be prepared to lead Israel. Israel waited with the Red Sea in front of them and the Egyptian army in hot pursuit behind them until God miraculously opened the waters for them to pass through.

Waiting may be difficult, but it can be very good. "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him," says the psalmist (Psalm 37:7). Isaiah promises, "Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31, NRSV).

p. 78

(Broken in the Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

In his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge shares a tragic story which illustrates the fight many of us go through in the brokenness process.

Some years ago, while on an early spring canoe trip in Maine, we had come to a small dam, and put in to shore to portage around the obstacle. A second group arrived, and a young man who had been drinking decided to take his rubber raft over the dam. When the raft overturned after going over the dam, he was dumped into the freezing water. Unable to reach him, we watched in horror as he struggled desperately to swim downstream against the backwash at the base of the dam. His struggle lasted only a few minutes; then he died of hypothermia. Immediately, his limp body was sucked down into the swirling water. Seconds later, it popped up, ten yards downstream, free of the maelstrom at the base of the dam. Ironically, it was his very struggle against the forces at the base of the dam that killed him. He didn't know that the only way out was counterintuitive. If he hadn't tried to keep his head above water, but instead dived down to where the current flowed downstream, he would have survived. What he had tried in vain to achieve in the last moments of his life, the currents accomplished for him within seconds after his death.

p. 86

(Christian Disciplines by Oswald Chambers)

We need to remind ourselves of the stern, heroic stuff Jesus Christ always spoke when He talked about discipleship. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Few of us do it though plenty of us talk about it. It means an impaired life. "A sword will pierce through your own soul also."

pp. 101

(The Hidden Price of Greatness by Ray Beeson & Ranelda Mack Hunsicker)

Augustine's motto may prove helpful in this struggle: "To my God, a heart of flame; to my fellow men, a heart of love; to myself, a heart of steel."
p. 27

(Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God by David McCasland)

"There will come one day a personal and direct touch
from God when every tear and perplexity,
every oppression and distress, every suffering and pain,
and wrong and injustice will have a complete and
ample and overwhelming explanation."

--Shade of His Hand

p. 273

v.40 because God had provided something better for us, in order that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

That "SOMETHING BETTER" is ACCESS INTO GOD'S VERY PRESENCE.

It is:

the new priesthood,

the new covenant,

the one final sacrifice for sin on the part of our Savior,

the conscience being cleared from all guilt because of Christ's sacrifice.

It is the glory of the future that gave them endurance for the present!

GOD IS NOT ASHAMED OF THEM--verse 16.

THE WORLD IS NOT WORTHY OF THEM--verse 38.

First, we have the REASON why they "did not receive what was promised":

"BECAUSE GOD HAD PROVIDED SOMETHING BETTER FOR US."

He then follows this with the PURPOSE:

"IN ORDER THAT APART FROM US THEY SHOULD NOT BE MADE PERFECT."

Griffith Thomas says:

The chapter closes (vv. 39, 40) with a summary statement about all these worthies whose faith was acknowledged by God, though they did not obtain what God had promised. The reason for this was that God's time had not come. He did not intend them to be placed by themselves. They had to wait for us, and now, through Christ, the Old Testament saints have been put in a better position, and are able to share in the spiritual blessings provided by Christ. The entire Epistle is occupied with this thought of the inferiority of spiritual privileges under the old covenant compared with those which are our portion now. Thus, in the old days, sin was set aside, while now it is sent away; in the old days, sins were constantly remembered, now they are completely removed.

p. 153

A. T. Robertson says:

But this glorious and gracious purpose (foresight) of God is not due to any special merit in us. It is simply the fulness of the time in God's dispensation of grace of which we are the beneficiaries. But all the same and all the more (*noblesse oblige*), we should prove worthy of our heritage and of God's goodness to us and be loyal to Christ.

p. 431

Lane says:

The failure of the exemplars of faith to obtain the promised eternal inheritance can be traced to no fault of their own. It was because of the gracious providence of God who "Provided something better with us in mind" (v 40a).

p. 392

Lane says further:

The privileged status of Christians as those who have shared in the fulfillment of God's promise should motivate them to be more willing and equipped to endure the testing of faith than were their predecessors, all of whom received attestation from God through their faith.

p. 394

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Owen says:

These "better things" provided by God are, without question, the incarnation of the Son of God, the coming of the promised Seed, with His accomplishment of the work of redemption of the Church, and all the privileges of the Church, in light, grace, liberty, spiritual worship, with boldness of access unto God that ensued thereon.

p. 243

Bruce says:

But now the promise has been fulfilled; the age of the new covenant has dawned; the Christ to whose day they looked forward has come and by his self-offering and his high-priestly ministry in the presence of God he has procured perfection for them--and for us. "With us in mind, God had made a better plan, that only in company with us should they reach their perfection" (NEB). They and we together now enjoy unrestricted access to God through Christ, as fellow-citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. The "better plan" which God had made embraces the better hope, the better promises, the better covenant, the better sacrifices, the better and abiding possession, and the better resurrection which is their heritage, and ours.

p. 330

Hession says:

This leads to the truth that the real fulfillment of what God has for us will never be realized in this life, only fully in heaven. Even the most fulfilled Christian life in this world with, say, every hope satisfied and every prayer answered, would be at best but an unfinished symphony. The final movement of the symphony, that which completes the whole, will not sound forth until we stand before the throne of God and of the Lamb in our glorified bodies.

p. 188

Phillips says:

So the great appeal merges into the great application. "God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (Heb 11:40). The Old Testament saints had only the shadows; we have the substance. They had good things; we have better things. Their sphere and horizon was earthly; ours is heavenly. Thus the writer of Hebrews applies the lessons from all the lives he has been considering, applies them with great leverage and tremendous pressure, to the lives of the Hebrew Christians to whom he wrote. "Go on," he says. "Go on. Never go back. Go on."
pp. 187-88

A few hours before Dwight L. Moody died, he caught a glimpse of the glory awaiting him. Awakening from a sleep, he said, "Earth recedes, heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go!" His son who was standing by his bedside said, "No, no father, you are dreaming."

"No," said Mr. Moody, "I am not dreaming. I have been within the gates; I have seen the children's faces." A short time elapsed and then, following what seemed to the family to be the death struggle, he spoke again: "This is my triumph; this my coronation day! It is glorious!"

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

A person is not really ready to live until he is ready to die. It was a dark night in Marshfield, October 24, 1852. Daniel Webster was dying. He was ready. His physician, a very sensitive man named Dr. Jeffries had ministered as much medicine as he could and as was practically possible. He realized that death was near and he chose to be a friend rather than a physician at that moment and he picked up an old rather well worn hymn book that Webster had often sung from and he chose to read the words of one of his favorite hymns:

There is a fountain filled with blood
drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
lose all their guilty stains.

He read every stanza, when he got to the last, Webster's lips were moving, though no sound came:

When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
lies silent in the grave,
then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save.
I'll sing thy power to save,
I'll sing thy power to save.

And he looked at Webster, their eyes met, and Webster uttered 3 final words: Amen, Amen, Amen!

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

(A Gentle Thunder: Hearing God Through the Storm by Max Lucado)

If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If he had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, he'll listen. He can live anywhere in the universe, and he chose your heart. And the Christmas gift he sent you in Bethlehem? Face it, friend. He's crazy about you.

p. 122

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God's Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

As Yogi Berra observed, "There are some people who, if they don't know, you

inhuman conditions one can fathom. The most frequent champion is a woman named Susan Butcher, whose tough-minded fixation on winning has earned her the nickname, Ayatollah Butcher. She holds the record: 11 days, 1 hour, and 53 minutes, but that doesn't satisfy. Her goal is to break the 10-day barrier.

The secret, she will tell you, is her own mindset and the training of those dogs, which gives new meaning to the word "serious." Her 150-dog kennel is a thing to behold. Shortly after each pup's birth, while it is still blind, she holds it in her hands and breathes her breath into its nose. That way, she claims, each one will associate her smell with comfort and encouragement. The rapport begins with that breathing-into-the-nose routine. She personally feeds, trains, massages, and--on a rotation basis--sleeps with each dog. She personally nurses them to health when they are injured. She is infinitely patient with them, talks with them, believes in them, even sings to them (old folk songs by Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, plus a few Irish lullabies). The objective? To bond with them. It pays. They have saved her life on the trail more than once. Back in 1979, she led her dog team to the 20,320-foot summit of Mt. McKinley. It took 44 days.

What a woman! One reporter described her as having "a stiff spine . . . a stubborn mind-set," which is what is needed to endure moose attacks, blizzards so severe that one time for five hours she couldn't see the lead dog, and a sudden plunge into icy water (Granite and Maddie, the mushers, pulled her out). But what is most interesting is that a race you and I would call impossible, she describes as "thrilling . . . especially when you conquer it."

The Christian life isn't an 11-day race. It's a lifetime journey full of more dangers and pitfalls than a hundred Iditarods. So it's foolish to think we can enter it half-heartedly or sustain it easily. More often than not, to borrow from Bunyan, "this miry slough is such a place as cannot be mended." To survive it calls for help from above and toughness from within. If Susan Butcher is willing to give that kind of effort to win a race that is incredible in the eyes of the world, seems to me we should be capable of conquering the marathon from earth to heaven.

A combination of two ingredients is essential: the capacity to accept and the tenacity to endure. It's hard, but what else is new? Sitting around whining and complaining won't cut it. The gutsy apostle didn't, and neither should we. The Christian life is "thrilling . . . especially when you conquer it."

If it's time to vote, I move that we toughen up. All in favor, say "Mush."
pp. 440-42