

## **Dr. David A. deSilva, Hebrews, Session 10b, Hebrews 11:1-12:3: Faith in Action (Part 2)**

© 2024 David deSilva and Ted Hildebrandt

The author's example list closes with an impressive accumulation of examples, compressed and abridged, so as to make a vivid and strong impression of the endless parade of those whose examples could be considered in greater depth if time permitted. And so, we read, And why do I still speak? For time would fail me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel, and the prophets, those who through trust conquered kingdoms, worked justice, received promises, closed the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the mouth of the sword, were made powerful from weakness, became strong in war, routed foreign armies. Women received their dead by resurrection.

Others were tortured, refusing to accept release in order to receive a better resurrection. Still, others experienced mocking and beatings and chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning.

They were cut in two. They were slaughtered by the sword. They went about clad in sheepskins and the hides of goats, hungering, afflicted, mistreated people of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in wastelands and mountains and caves and in the crevices of the earth.

And these all, having received attestation through faith, did not receive the promise. God has provided something better for us in order that they should not arrive at the goal apart from us. This accumulation of examples falls cleanly into two parts.

In verses 32 through 35a, the author gives us a list of names and events spanning the book of Judges, potentially all the way through Malachi, at least providing a kind of summary of the achievements of faith through the historical books. In the second part of this segment, verses 35b to 38, the author talks about the fates of the prophets and the martyrs of the Hellenization crisis as well, thus rounding out the canonical history in addition to making reference to several legends about the deaths of martyrs and the great prophets of Israel. In verses 34 to 35a, again, the preacher focuses on figures who, through trust in God, achieved what any person in the world will consider marvelous or miraculous things, showing military prowess and experiencing timely deliverance from death, even involving the resuscitation of corpses.

In the second part, verses 35b to 38, the preacher focuses on those who would be, in the world's eyes, shamed and defeated losers but who, from God's perspective, are every bit as triumphant and honorable as the heroes of verses 32 through 35a. The message conveyed here is that, regardless of the external circumstances, it is the

posture of loyalty to God and trust in God's word that marks a person's worth, a worth that the rest of the world may indeed fail to recognize. Hebrews 11, 33 to 34, provides a very terse collection of achievements of the faithful.

Group one seems to recall mostly examples connected to the monarchy. Those who conquered kingdoms recall the military successes of the judges and David. Establishing or accomplishing justice recalls the characterizations of David's reign in 2 Samuel and also Solomon's reign in 1 Kings 10.

The phrase that they received promises is a broad reference to the reception of specific benefits promised by God to people who trusted him, as, for example, David, who received the promise of an heir to sit on his throne, a throne that God would make great. There's a second group that then follows. The next three achievements in this list focus on deliverance from peril.

Those who shut the mouths of lions would no doubt be recognized by the addressees as a reference to the deliverance of Daniel from the form of execution appointed for him in Daniel chapter 6. Those who quenched the power of fire would call to mind the three companions of Daniel who, after being cast into the fiery furnace, emerged unscathed by the flames, as we read in Daniel chapter 3. These four men were celebrated in Jewish culture for their steadfast loyalty to God, shown in their uncompromising adherence to the first commandment, both the negative aspect of avoiding idolatry and the positive aspect of continuing to offer worship and prayer to God, even in the face of the threat of death. Daniel and the three will stand in sharp contrast with the martyrs to be mentioned later in verses 35b to 36, who are saved not from death but through death. The author's point will be, of course, that whether one's vindication by God comes within this life or in the next life, the person of faith can be certain that it will come and walk accordingly in the face of the hostility of sinners.

Those who escaped the edge of the sword could be true of many prominent Old Testament figures and, again, will contrast sharply with those who met death by the sword in 11:37. A third group focuses on those who made Israel's victories over hostile people groups possible. Those made powerful from weakness might first recall the story of Samson in Judges 16, but it might also call to memory others who achieved mighty acts by trust in and steadfastness toward God, like the heroine Judith, a model of one who is considered weak but is empowered for a great act to bring Israel a great victory over her enemies.

Both figures deliver the Israelites from a foreign power. Those who became strong in battle and those who routed foreign armies are just descriptions that apply to many figures from the Judges to King David and as far forward as the Hasmonean family and their armies in the Maccabean Revolt that was launched around 166 BC. The

Judges routed the military armies or camps of other nations, as did David and the guerrilla army fighting under Judas Maccabeus and his family.

Although the addressees are not themselves in a military situation, the witness here to minorities overcoming majorities may be quite relevant and encouraging to them as they are braced to continue against the hostility of a distinctly larger and far more empowered unbelieving world. Hebrews 11.35 serves as a kind of bridge between these triumphant figures in verses 32 to 34 and what the people who are worldly-minded would consider to be abject losers in the second part of verse 35 and following. Women received their dead back by resurrection, but others were tortured.

Refusing to accept release in order to receive a better resurrection. The first half of this verse introduces a new subject, women, thus breaking continuity with what preceded and creating a new beginning. The author speaks here first of women who received back their dead through resuscitation more properly than resurrection.

For example, God's raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath through Elijah, a story told in 1 Kings 17, or the resuscitation of the son of the Shunammite woman through Elisha as told in 2nd Kings chapter 4. Their examples provide yet another affirmation of God's power over death, a theme that has run throughout the encomium thus far. The author presents such people in mild contrast with those who remained loyal to the point of death in order to attain a better resurrection, that is, those who rose to eternal life in the realm of God rather than those who were resuscitated again to the life of this world only to die again. Those who were tortured but who maintained their loyalty to God and trust in his reward of the faithful are the martyrs who suffered under Antiochus IV during the Hellenization crisis of 164 to 160, sorry 167 to 164 BC, whose story is vividly preserved in 2 Maccabees 6:18 through 7, verse 42, and then expanded in 4 Maccabees chapters 5 through 18.

The inclusion of these martyrs is not surprising here since these martyrs had served an important function as examples of commitment to God and God's law in Hellenistic Judaism. Indeed, the exemplary nature of their fidelity to God and his covenant is introduced into the very narrative of their sufferings in 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees. The story of these martyrdoms is set in the wake of the increasing tension in Jerusalem following the refounding of Jerusalem as a Greek city.

Increasing resistance to this Hellenization at the very heart of the land of Israel led to increasingly repressive measures on the part of the Seleucid monarch Antiochus IV and his local Judean officials to the point that it became illegal to follow the traditional Jewish practice of the land. So, we read in 1 Maccabees of women being executed along with their male infants because they had had them circumcised or of elder Jews being executed because they were hiding and protecting copies of the scrolls of the Law of Moses. The authors of 2 Maccabees 6 and 7 and of 4th

Maccabees as a work that is itself derivative of 2 Maccabees tell the very specific story of nine martyrs, an aged priest named Eleazar, a group of seven brothers, and the mother of the seven.

These pious Jews are brought before Antiochus IV, who is willing to let them go if they will simply eat a mouthful of pork from a pig that had been offered to a foreign deity. The meat in question is a double strike against Torah observance, being both unclean in itself and also having been meat sacrificed to an idol. These figures are tortured one at a time, and they bravely refuse to accept release even though it is repeatedly offered to them.

Agree to eat and be released from the tortures. They allow themselves to be tortured most brutally to the point of death rather than abandon faith in God. Particularly in 2 Maccabees 7, it is the hope of the resurrection that they hold before their eyes and scream out with their dying breaths as that for which they are enduring the pains and holding on to their loyalty to God.

These martyrs die amidst the scorn and mockery of their enemies. In the eyes of the world, they die a shameful death. Nevertheless, they endure the pain and the shame.

They had a way out from these extremities, a way back into ease and approval. Like Abraham and the patriarchs, they had the opportunity to abandon the journey that obedience to God required. Nevertheless, with Abraham, Moses, and as we're about to see Jesus, these martyrs fixed their eyes on the reward promised by God, which is described here as a better resurrection.

The remainder of the examples in chapter 11, verses 36 to 38, expand the company of those who endured shame and hostility in this world for the sake of their trust in God's promises, rather than abandon those promises for release from shame or marginalization. The author combines a wide array of images here, each of which contributes to the overall picture of a group that is marginalized in the extreme, having no place in society, and exposed to every form of disgrace at society's hands. Still, others experienced mocking and beatings and chains and imprisonment.

They were put to death by stoning. They were cut in two. They were slaughtered by the sword.

They went about clad in sheepskins in the hides of goats, hungering, afflicted, mistreated, people of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in wastelands and mountains and caves and in the crevices of the earth. Here, the author probably reflects on the traditions of the deaths of the prophets. Jeremiah is particularly known for having been the victim of taunting, beating, and frequently being imprisoned and put in stocks or chains.

While the deaths of the prophets go largely unmentioned in the Old Testament itself, Jewish legends arose to supply the missing details. Thus, Jeremiah was said to have been stoned to death according to the tradition in the book, *The Lives of the Prophets*, book two, as was also Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, known from Second Chronicles 24. Both *The Lives of the Prophets* and the text known as the *Ascension of Isaiah* preserve the tradition that Isaiah was sawn in two.

And the prophet Uriah, known from Jeremiah chapter 26, was slain with the sword. The remaining phrases of these verses outline life lived at the margins of civilization. The images are probably inspired, at least in part, by the accounts of the clothing and the frequent abodes of the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

But the author may have in mind also the apokoresis, the heading for the hills, of those faithful Jews who left Jerusalem to avoid the defilement as well as the persecution during the Hellenizing crisis, that same period of time that gave us the martyrs referred to in Hebrews 11.35. The garments of these individuals clearly place them at the margins of society. Linen garments come from the crafts-persons and the merchants in the markets, but animal skins place the wearers outside of ordered society. These are people who have no place in the social order anymore and who experience significant tension and antagonism with the powers that be.

The addressees of this sermon are able to set their own experience, their loss of place in their society, being pushed into its margins within the context of the larger people of God, who have always moved away from being at home in this world toward being at home with God. They will be explicitly urged to embrace this movement away from at-homeness within society near the end of the sermon in chapter 13, verses 12 through 14. The author interjects an interesting comment into the middle of this passage, of whom the world was not worthy.

This is a striking reversal. The author is basically calling into question who is judging whom when the people of God are pushed out to the margins and treated shabbily. The child of God, the follower of God, is not to be evaluated by the standards of the dominant culture.

Here, specifically, the Greco-Roman culture. Instead, the outside world is evaluated by the way it has treated the faithful in its midst. The addressees may thus be assured in their situation that the censure and abuse that befalls them as a result of their commitment to honor and obey the one God signals not their own disgrace but the disgrace of the unbelievers.

In the final two verses of chapter 11, the author speaks of the limitations experienced by this whole parade of heroes of faith vis-a-vis what the addressees themselves have come to experience. While the pre-Christian faithful had received many promised gifts from God, the author has in view here the promise of an eternal

inheritance for and toward which, in his view, all the people of God have striven together. This heavenly homeland or unshakable kingdom was yet to be revealed, and all the people of faith would receive this together.

In saying that these heroes of faith did not yet attain the promise, the author is not casting any blame or shame on them. God's provision for bringing them many trusting faithful clients to the promised benefit of a heavenly homeland involved the sacrifice of Jesus, which forever perfects those who draw near to God. The patriarchs looked forward to entering the same rest that lies open for the hearers, but this new and living way could not be opened up until, in the fullness of time, God's Son performed his priestly work.

The something better of Hebrews 11:40 is an indirect reference to Jesus, who is at the heart of everything better in this sermon, a better mediator of a better covenant founded on better promises, bringing the hearers to their better possessions in their better country. This concluding sentence lends a special urgency to the exhortation that will follow in chapter 12 1 through 3. The addressees stand closer to the goal than any of the exemplars of faith celebrated in chapter 11, and they have seen the means by which God brings the promise to its ultimate fulfillment. Their gratitude and loyalty should be all the greater and firmer since God has given them a special place in the fulfillment of his promise to all the people of faith.

However, the responsibility is likewise greater. Will they, at the very end of this relay race, drop the baton that has been passed to them in plain sight of the many who have already run the race so well and so honorably? In Hebrews 12:1 through 3, the author arrives at last at the best example of faith in action, namely Jesus, and also exhorts the hearers to take their place in this relay race of faith. With an emphatic, so also, we, therefore, the author moves from praise of the heroes of faith back to exhorting the hearers to continue to live as such people of faith themselves and to take their place in the ranks of those who have dealt with the visible realm and its challenges as people whose eyes were on the invisible and on the future that God is bringing to pass.

Having therefore so great a cloud of spectators surrounding us, let us also run with endurance the race laid out before us, putting off every weight and the sin that easily ensnares, looking away to the pioneer and perfecter of faith, Jesus, who for the sake of the joy set before him endured a cross, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne. Consider him who had endured such hostility against himself from sinners in order that you may not become faint, growing weary in your souls. The author portrays here the athletic image of running a race, even if it feels to the addressees more like they've been running a gauntlet instead because of the abuse and marginalization to which they had been subjected.

By helping the hearers think about discipleship in terms of an athletic event, he holds before them the prospect of an honorable victory at the end of this journey. Disgrace is avoided not by caving into their neighbor's pressures but by persevering to the finish line in the face of their neighbor's pressures. And he urges them to persevere, considering who sits in the stands.

Here, the cloud of witnesses might well be taken as a cloud of spectators. They are not merely witnesses to the virtue of faith but witnesses of how the addressees of this sermon will now run the race. And those stands are not filled with flabby sports fans, but with past medal winners, every one of them.

The court of reputation, whose approval matters and whose own past success would condemn failure on the part of the competitors, is made up of this group of heroes of faith throughout all time, from creation to the present. These spectators have demonstrated in their own lives that perseverance is indeed within the grasp of every man and woman among the addressees. So, the author encourages them to run with endurance, appealing thus to the larger topic of courage, the determination to remain constant in one's aims in the face of difficulty and hardship.

Courage was all often conceptualized in the ancient world in regard to the exercise of war. The battlefield was a place of horror, pain, and the most terrible things, yet the honorable person must face and endure those hardships in order to be true to his duty to the city-state. To choose not to endure those hardships would be a dereliction of duty and a violation of sacred obligations and trust.

So also, the author here urges courage upon his heroes as they engage this somewhat brutal contest in the face of their neighbor's onslaught to endure the horror, the pain, and the terror that could be brought upon them rather than to be found derelict in their duty toward God. The image of the contest orients the heroes to the opposition of their pagan neighbors in such a way that perseverance and Christian commitment and witness in the face of censure and abuse becomes the noble and courageous path while yielding to the shaming techniques of the outside world becomes the ignoble and cowardly path. This is an astounding coup since the author is turning the continued endurance of censure into an honorable course of action.

The preacher knows that running a race effectively requires running unencumbered. Thus, he urges the addressees to lay aside every weight, everything that entangles them and gets in the way of running forward well. In the hero's past situation, their reputation became a weight that might have made them stumble if they tried to keep it intact, to keep carrying it as it were.

Instead, they threw it aside for the sake of running to Christ. Their physical being became a weight, which, again, if they had been inclined to keep their bodies free

from harm, might have caused them to stop running altogether. Again, they threw off that weight and kept running forward.

Their property became a weight when they were caught between keeping it and keeping Christ. Again, they chose the better part and laid the weight aside. And of course, prior to these weights, there were the sins that filled their lives, sins revealed to them by the enlightenment that came with the Holy Spirit and the gospel, but which were just a way of life before, for example, participation in idolatry.

All those weights they cast aside. If now some are wavering or have already drawn back from open fellowship with a Christian group, it is clear that they are becoming encumbered afresh, in their case, by a renewed concern over their reputation or their new economic situation and the like. The author's call to such believers is to keep laying aside everything that threatens forward progress in this race.

The course set before us is the one that Jesus ran ahead of us, and this connection leads the author then to introduce Jesus in Hebrews 12 verse 2 as the prime example of how to run. The way in which Jesus encountered opposition on the way to the goal provides the many children with a model for successful perseverance in the race, and thus, the author will urge the hearers to run their race looking off to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Note that I am translating this, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, not the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, as do many English translations.

There is simply no basis in the Greek for the possessive pronoun our, and such translations obscure the fact that Jesus is the author's climactic example of faith in action in this encomium on faith that started with chapter 11, verse 1. Jesus is the pioneer of faith in that he runs ahead of the believers. One might compare the author's discussion of Jesus as our forerunner in chapter 6, verse 20. Jesus also, quote, leads the host of the many sons and daughters to glory, as the author put it in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 10, the other place in this sermon where Jesus is called a pioneer.

As a pioneer, Jesus blazed the path through hardship and shame for the sake of the joy that stood before him, the joy that still stands before the many sons and daughters who follow in his path. His exaltation by God to a place of unparalleled honor in the cosmos proved his attitude toward the world's opinion to be the correct one. The end of his story is proof that walking as he walked will lead the many sons and daughters also to glory.

As a perfecter of faith, Jesus has displayed trust or faith in its most complete and perfect form, and the placement of Jesus at the very end of this list of examples would support such a reading. He has gone first and he has gone farther than anyone else in terms of embodying what faith looks like. The example of Jesus is framed



succinctly and powerfully in Hebrews 12 verse 2. Jesus, quote, endured a cross, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne.

Crucifixion was the ultimately low point in terms of degradation and shame, and quite intentionally so. To crucify someone was to hold them up to public disgrace and, in effect, make a human billboard of them to all passers-by to say, don't be like this person. Therefore, despising shame is essential to perseverance in faith toward God in the midst of this world.

This is at the heart of what Jesus had to do and is also a recurring theme throughout chapter 11. We found aspects of despising shame in the walk of faith of Abraham, Moses, and the martyrs. It is also central to the congregation's own past example in chapter 10, verses 32 to 34.

Here, the author is probably thinking about not just despising the experience of being shamed but despising shame itself, taking shame here in the sense of sensitivity to the outsider's evaluation of what is noble or shameful. The outsider's ignorance of the path to honor before God and the just demands of God distorts their very ability to recognize what is honorable or not. Similar points are made in philosophical discourse throughout this period.

Plato, Seneca, and Epictetus would all teach their readers or their pupils that concern for the opinion of the uninitiated, the non-philosopher, is at best a distraction and at worst a derailment for the person who is desirous of living a generally virtuous life. Jesus' example is extremely relevant for the hearers at this point. They, too, are being called to continue to despise shame.

They are not to allow themselves to be swayed to the left or to the right in their race by any sensitivity to the praise or the censure of non-Christians. It is only the approval of God, Christ, and the community of faith across the ages that should determine their choices and actions. In the words of the fifth-century church father John Chrysostom, Jesus died disgracefully, for no other reason than to teach us to count as nothing the opinion of human beings.

Jesus' death on the cross is a death suffered for them and thus one that must, with every mention of it, arouse their gratitude and their respect rather than their contempt and disgust. Calling attention yet again to the sufferings or hardships endured by a patron, a mediator like Jesus, should arouse similar feelings of loyalty and thankfulness on the part of those who have benefited. Calling attention to such self-investment on the part of the patron is common in honorific inscriptions in the Greco-Roman world.

It is a sign of the patron's degree of investment in the beneficiaries and, therefore, a cause for even greater gratitude and reciprocal investment and loyalty. Jesus

endured hardship for the sake of arriving at a noble goal or, in the words of the author, for the sake of, in Greek, the preposition is *anti*, the joy set before him. There is some discussion among commentators about how exactly to understand the preposition *anti* here.

Should we understand it as instead of or for the sake of? Was it instead of the joy set before him that Jesus endured a cross, or was it for the sake of the joy set before him that he endured this cross? The balance of evidence, in my opinion, falls strongly in favor of for the sake of. For one thing, the author gives no indication of what joy Jesus was setting aside in remaining obedient to God, but the author is very clear throughout the sermon about the joy that came to Christ as a result of his endurance of the cross, particularly his exaltation, something announced as early as the first four verses of Hebrews and that the author has kept in view throughout his sermon. This particular joy set before him is also referred to here in the immediate context.

After despising shame and enduring a cross, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God. Sitting at the right hand of God would then be synonymous with and rename the joy set before him for the sake of which Jesus endured this pain and disgrace. The same preposition also occurs just a few verses later in chapter 12, verse 16.

The foolish and dishonorable choice of Esau, who, for the sake of, again *ante*, a single meal, sold his inheritance as firstborn, contrasts with Jesus' choice. Jesus chooses temporary hardship for the sake of, again *ante*, eternal honor. Jesus' example also fits Aristotle's paradigm of the courageous person in Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics*, namely, the person who gains praise by submitting to some disgrace or pain for the sake of. Aristotle uses the preposition *ante*, for the sake of some great and noble object.

At 12:3, the author applies Jesus' example to the hearer's situation. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners in order that you may not grow weary, fainting in your souls. The believers face hostility and contradiction from sinners just as Jesus did, though their wrestling match is far less brutal than Jesus endured, as the author will go on to point out in verse 4. In your own wrestling match with sin, you've not yet resisted to the point of spilling blood.

Jesus' endurance of substantially greater hostility, pain, and degradation at the hands of sinners should embolden those on whose behalf he suffered those things not to grow weary in their running of the race themselves. Considerations of reciprocity should enter the hearer's mind at this point. Growing weary would mean breaking faith with the one who endured infinitely more to bring them benefit in the first place than they've endured to hold on to those benefits and to hold on to their benefactor.

They have not yet begun to pour themselves out for Christ, as Christ poured himself out for them. Labeling those who show hostility toward Jesus as sinners also helps to reinforce group boundaries and insulate the believers from the opinion of their neighbors. The non-believers' hostility toward the believers, like the hostility of the people toward Jesus in his passion and death, shows them to be on the wrong side of God's values.

Sharing in Jesus' experience of hostility from outsiders becomes an occasion for the audience to identify more closely with Jesus, and thus also an opportunity for them to identify with the final outcome of Jesus' sufferings as well as entry into glory. Jesus' own example shows the hearers that even in the midst of reproach and marginalization, they are in a place of great favor with God. Hebrews 11 1 through 12 3 packs a great deal of rhetorical force toward the author's achievement of his pastoral goals for his hearers.

It is a combination of proof from historical examples and appeals to the emotion of emulation, the longing to attain for oneself the success or the fruits of success that one sees another person enjoy. The proof from historical examples demonstrates first that the path of faithful perseverance is feasible, second that it leads indeed to an honorable remembrance, and particularly in the example of Jesus that it leads indeed to honor in God's realm. This encomium on faith is also an appeal to emulation insofar as when people in the Hellenistic and Roman periods hear people praised, they quite naturally desire to attain for themselves the qualities or achievements that brought another person the experience of being honored and praised.

This is somewhat basic to the psychology of people coming from the Mediterranean cultures of the Greco-Roman era. The author crafts a portrait of faith in action that is especially suited to the challenges facing the addressees, and as the author shows these people to have attained honor not only in God's sight but in the sight of the people of faith throughout the centuries, he arouses emulation in the hearers. He begins again to reawaken or at least confirm ambition in their hearts to attain similar honor by similar means.

Like Abraham, the addressees are being called to persevere in their pilgrimage to that unshakable realm and not to look back wistfully to the homeland they left behind socially, if not spatially. Like Abraham, Moses, the many martyrs, and the marginalized people of God throughout history, and like Jesus himself, they are challenged to hold no account the opinion of those who embody the values of society rather than the values of God. They're also challenged to embrace disgrace before unbelievers in order to receive the positive attestation of God and to share in the honorable destiny of God's people.

Of course, this chapter continues to offer particular challenges to the people of faith well beyond the setting of the hearers addressed by the preacher. This chapter reminds us in every generation that faith looks to God, God's promises, God's future, and God's realm as that which is ultimately real and worthy of investment. Hebrews 11 poses to us the fundamental question: what is more real to you as you move through a typical day's activity? Are the agendas imposed by worldly concerns foremost in your thoughts and energy or is it the agenda imposed by God's Holy Spirit as you attend to those other secondary concerns? Are the tangible rewards of your labors—property, home, some measure of luxury, financial security for the future—more real? Or are the intangible rewards of your pursuit of God more real? How we deploy our time, talents, energies, and resources will tell us something about where we fall along this continuum.

The encomium on faith also reminds us that faith orients our ambitions toward pleasing God in all that we think, say, do, and abstain from doing. The heroes of faith pursued this as if their lives and their afterlife depended upon it. Do we? The authors of the New Testament speak to us as well, both of the promises of deliverance, of salvation and the warning of judgments, calling us to respond faithfully, that is, with the trust that orders all of our beings and doing.

In the words of Paul, we are therefore ambitious to please God, for it is necessary for all of us to appear before the judgment seat of Christ in order that each might receive the recompense for the deeds done in the body, whether that recompense be good or evil. Like Abraham and Moses, the person of faith lives as a foreigner in this world rather than as a rooted citizen. We are called to leave our native lands, not necessarily in a geographical sense, but certainly in an ideological sense.

We are challenged to renounce our education in our society's values and priorities and to reshape our desires, ambitions, values, and priorities according to those that God has made known. This takes some conscious, intentional work as we examine how our values, our priorities, and our sense of worth have been shaped by voices that do not look to God's reward but rather only to temporal rewards. As we re-socialize ourselves and one another in the body of Christ, we should incorporate those values and priorities that God praises, even though our neighbors and even our family members might think us foolish.

Like Moses, we have two destinies before us. We are born into one destiny. We are groomed by our upbringing and our secular peers to be dependable members of our society, to enjoy its promised gifts, and to be mirrors of our society's values.

We fulfill this destiny as we live out our primary socialization in the values of the world. Like Moses, however, we are called to recognize that even if such a destiny includes a life of wealth, fame, and power as this world counts it, our ultimate destiny would be regret and remorse when God comes to judge those who have

despised his promises for the sake of temporary goods. By faith, we are born to a new hope and called to invest ourselves fully in pursuit of that prize as our true destiny.