

Hebrews 11 begins (v. 2) and ends (v. 39) with the statement that people of old were commended or gained approval from God for their faith. God's approval is so much more important than any we would seek on earth. The special character of that faith and the approval it gains is found in 11:13–16 and summarized in 39–40. Building on the experience of the Patriarchs the author argues that God approves of those who acknowledge their earthly foreignness and trust Him for something better.

**I. *The Patriarchs demonstrated the mind-set for approval by God (11:13).*****1. *Without exception the Patriarchs died believing God.***

They died in a manner consistent with the faith by which they lived. Neither their own death, nor the death of their fathers deterred them from trusting God to keep His promises to Abraham (see Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 22, 24, 26, 28, 46). Those explicitly given to all three, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, include the promise of the land of Canaan, innumerable descendants, and especially that in Abraham's offspring all the nations would be blessed.

**2. *The evidence of their faith is seen in their circumstances as explained in v 13.***

- a. They did not receive the promises, but still believed. (Isaac's faith is seen in blessing Jacob and Esau, v.20; Jacob's faith is seen in blessing his sons, v.21.)
- b. They saw in God's miraculous working a promise of future fulfilment and believed. (There was a foretaste of fulfilment for Abraham in Isaac, vv.11–12, 17–19, cf. John 8:56.)
- c. They recognized their earthly foreignness and heavenly dependence and entrusted themselves to God. (Abraham confessed to be an alien and stranger in Genesis 23:4; Jacob viewed his life and those of his fathers as a sojourning or pilgrimage in Genesis 47:9).

We are called to entrust our lives to God, even unto our death, and to hope in the future He has promised us.

**II. *All who confess to earthly foreignness join the Patriarchs in anticipating a better, a heavenly homeland (11:14–16a).*****1. *Anyone who confesses that they are a foreigner and stranger reveals that they are seeking a homeland.***

Within Hebrews it is clear that others had the same experience (Joseph, Heb 11:22; Joshua and the people, Heb 4:8). King David as well confessed for himself and all Israel to being aliens and strangers (1 Chronicles 29:15; cf. Psalm 39:12). Hebrews, as a pastoral homily, is encouraging the "listeners" to live the same way as the Patriarchs.

**2. *It was clear that the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) were seeking a better homeland.***

They did not consider the land from which they had come (Ur and Haran) as their homeland. Abraham refused to return but sent a servant (Genesis 24). Isaac considered Egypt as a refuge instead (Genesis 26:2). Jacob, though he fled there, did not consider it a homeland (Genesis 30:25).

**3. *What people are seeking is something better than they have here, a heavenly homeland (11:16a).***

The sense of being foreign is good, if it means you are looking for a better homeland, a heavenly homeland. Even "normal" human-level tensions can intensify the desire for a heavenly homeland.

The struggles which you may face are a merciful push from God to desire something better, a heavenly homeland.

**III. *All who by faith confess this hope have God's approval and a better future (11:16b, 39–40).*****1. *God is not ashamed to be called the God of those who trust in His promise of a heavenly home (11:16b; cf. Exodus 3:6; Jeremiah 31:33; Hosea 2:10; Revelation 21:7).*****2. *God demonstrates His attitude in having prepared of a city for them (11:16b; cf. 11:10; John 14:1–3).*****3. *Those who God commends have gained that approval through faith in His promise (11:39a; cf. 11:2). The specific promise of a Redeemer is that which is probably meant.*****4. *They have something better: a heavenly city and perfection or completeness in Christ (11:40). OT saints had to wait for us all to experience the better things: a better Revealer, Priest, hope, covenant, promises, and sacrifice (1:4; 7; 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23), though we all wait for the consummation.***

The stranger and alien on earth, who is looking by faith for a heavenly home through Jesus Christ, is commended by God. Trust that He has better for believers, more than anything on earth. Thank Him for the "foretastes" of glory, like the Holy Spirit, and the reminders to hope in much better for the future.