

The Pilgrim Life

#0849

Study given by W.D. Frazee—August 26, 1960

Now, if you will turn with me to Hebrews, the 11th chapter, we'll read our text—Hebrews 11, beginning with the 8th verse:

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles...” Hebrews 11:8-9.

That's just plain tents.

“...with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” Hebrews 11:9-10

You notice, friends, that when Abraham was called to go on pilgrimage, he didn't know all about the route. This says he went out not knowing what?

“...whither he went” Hebrews 11:8.

Why did he go, then? Because God called him. The ninth verse says:

“By faith he sojourned...in a strange country...” Hebrews 11:9.

He was a stranger. He was out of place, in a sense, as far as this world was concerned. And then, it says he dwelt:

“...in tabernacles...” Hebrews 11:9.

Or tents.

“...with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” Hebrews 11:9.

You know, there's only one of the patriarchs of that group of whom we have record that he settled down in a city. You remember his name, don't you—Lot—Lot. We don't like to think of him, but he it was who chose the good things of this life, who abandoned the insecurity and the inconvenience of wandering about, to settle down in a fixed abode and build up secure for himself and his family, only of course, to see all that he owned swept away in the flames, his wife turned to a pillar of salt and his two daughters living in licentiousness.

No, my friends, Abraham's pilgrim life is one that we do well to emulate, avoiding the opposite in the case of Lot.

Now, the 10th verse gives us the key to the whole thing.

"He..." Hebrews 11:10.

Abraham.

"...looked for a city..." Hebrews 11:10.

Not a city like Sodom, built down there in that valley where now roll the waters of the Dead Sea.

"...he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" Hebrews 11:10.

And because he looked for *that* city, he turned away from the cities of this world and became a pilgrim and a stranger. The 13th verse:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" Hebrews 11:13.

What were they on this earth? Strangers and pilgrims—strangers and pilgrims.

"For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country" Hebrews 11:14.

I like the way Twentieth Century New Testament translates that:

"They are seeking their fatherland" Hebrews 11:14
(Twentieth Century New Testament).

That's it. We're going home to Father's house.

"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came..." Hebrews 11:15.

Old Babylon, the land of Ur and Heron, you know, over there in Mesopotamia.

"...they might have had opportunity to have returned"
Hebrews 11:15.

Thank God, it wasn't because they had no way to *get* back. They could have gone back the same way they came. The camel trains were moving both directions, just as the airplanes are moving both directions now.

“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” Hebrews 11:16.

Something better than this world. My dear friends, are you a pilgrim? Are you on a pilgrimage or is your ambition to settle down in this world and make the best of this earth—this life. The pilgrim life—that’s my subject this evening—the pilgrim life—uncertain but not aimless—uncertain but not aimless. Thank God, friends, we’re not hobos, walking along the railroad tracks or along the highways. No.

You know, I think these hobos—we usually think of them as people that are either lazy or unfortunate, and doubtless there are plenty of both, but pilgrims are neither one. They are not wanderers without an aim. They are pilgrims with a destination. They’re traveling but they’re going somewhere and they know where they’re going.

Not aimless, no, indeed, my friends. They have the greatest aim and the highest aim of anybody in this world, and that’s the very reason they’re on a pilgrimage, that’s the very reason you can’t get them to settle down in this world. They’ve seen something better, something grander, something more wonderful.

Abraham did, and he left that great civilization of that Mesopotamian valley and came over to be a wanderer from place to place there—now we see him under the oaks at Mamre, now in the heights of Hebron, now in the valley of Shechem, now down in Beersheba—here and there—even going down into Egypt but back again—back and forth across that land.

And all the while, what was he looking for? Oh, the glorious reward of the hereafter, my friends. Thank God—thank God for the pilgrim life.

Now, although there is a sense of destination and a sense of destiny in the dedicated pilgrim, in the one who has accepted the mission to which God has called him—to leave what is called the security of this world and march to the promised land—yet my dear friends, the pilgrim must understand that he must share the triumphs of the way, the hardships of the journey, the inconveniences of the pilgrim life, and there are some.

In order that we might understand more about it, the Son of God came down to this world and took our humanity, and of Him it is written in John 1:14:

“...the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...”
John 1:14.

As another translation puts it:

“...He tabernacled among us...” John 1:14 [get translation.]

He pitched His tent by the tents of men. He became a pilgrim. And a pilgrim He was, my friends. He had hardly been born into this world in Bethlehem’s manger than it was necessary for his parents to take Him quickly down into Egypt that He might escape the wrath of that cruel King Herod.

Presently, Herod dies and Joseph returns to Judea, but hearing that Archelaus reigns, he turns aside and goes back to Nazareth. And when Jesus begins His ministry at the age of 30, we see Him baptized of John in Jordan, going into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, returning and enlisting some disciples to share His pilgrim life with Him, going up to Galilee, back to Jerusalem, and back and forth.

Through those three and a half years of ministry, going here and there, some places having to flee to escape the wrath of the leaders of the Jews, other times going on special errands of mercy, but going, going, going.

I want you to get this picture of His life—the pilgrim life—in Matthew, the 8th chapter, verses 19 and 20:

“And a certain scribe came, and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head”
Matthew 8:19-20.

His was a pilgrimage of hardship, inconvenience, yes, even privation and want, my friends, and of those who, as pilgrims, journeyed with Him, it is written that:

“They shared His frugal fare, and like Him were sometimes hungry and often weary” *Acts of the Apostles*, page 18.

Get that picture of Him in the fourth of John. See Him sitting there by the well at noontide, wearied with the journey, thirsty but He has no way to get water. He has chosen the limitations of humanity.

And so, as the disciples are in the little town buying food, He sits there waiting. Presently, the woman comes, He asks her for a drink, but ever sensitive to the need of a soul and ever longing to meet the need, He turns from the water of that well to the water of life that He has to bestow.

And before long, she’s going back to share that water of life with others, His own physical thirst unquenched and yet satisfied, for He has found that which is to Him meat and drink—the doing of His Father’s will and the reaching of souls. That’s the pilgrim life, my friends—always in quest of a soul—always in quest of a soul.

See Philip, leaving Jerusalem a few years later and going to Samaria, that very place where Jesus had sowed the seed on this visit, and Philip preaches Christ and hundreds and thousands accept the message.

But one day—oh, one day, friends—there’s another call and God sends Philip down the desert—down toward Gaza—and there, he finds one man riding in a chariot, and before that day is gone the Ethiopian eunuch is baptized and a whole nation, as the result, is sown with the seed of the Gospel. But Philip has found [unintelligible] He goes from city to city, from place to place.

What pilgrims those early disciples were, my friends. Think of Paul, as he goes from city to city, from country to country, up to Antioch, over to Galatia, to Ephesus, across the Aegean Sea into Macedonia and down into Greece, and finally in Rome, where at last he gives his life as a martyr.

Think of Thomas—on foot, my friends—traveling from Judea clear across into India. Isn't that right, brother? That's right. Clear down there in India and over into China with the wonderful message of the Gospel there in the first century. Why, Paul writing in Colossians 1 said that the Gospel had already been:

“...preached to every creature...under heaven...”
Colossians 1:23.

Those men were pilgrims. They didn't study how to settle down and create great beautiful mansions for themselves here in this world. No, friends. They had been commissioned to go to all men with a message, and they confessed, like the patriarchs had before them, that they were pilgrims and strangers.

I wonder if God has any pilgrims today. Has He called any of us to be pilgrims? I trust so, friends. Thank God for the pilgrim life—thank God.

I want to read you something—*Ministry of Healing*, page 478. See if any part of this is your portrait:

“Many are unable to make definite plans for the future. Their life is unsettled. They cannot discern the outcome of affairs, and this often fills them with anxiety and unrest. Let us remember that the life of God's children in this world is a pilgrim life” *Ministry of Healing*, page 478.

Yes, God has some pilgrims today.

“Let us remember that the life of God's children in this world is a pilgrim life. We have not wisdom to plan our own lives. It is not for us to shape our future. ‘By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went’...

“Too many, in planning for a brilliant future, make an utter failure. Let God plan for you. As a little child, trust to the guidance of Him who will ‘keep the feet of His saints’...God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him” *Ibid.*, pages 478-479.

Bunyan in his allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, puts this little song in the lips of one of the pilgrims on the way from the city of destruction to the celestial city:

Blessed be the day that I began a pilgrim for to be,

And blessed also be the man that thereto moveth me,
'Tis true, was long ere I began to seek to live forever,
But now I run fast as I can, 'tis better late than never.

Isn't that nice, friends? Yes—running the way of God's commandments. You know, Paul in Hebrews 6 says that Jesus is our what? Forerunner. He's run before us. Let's run, friends, to keep up with Him and arrive where He has arrived at the Father's house. What do you say, friends?

I am but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home,
Earth is a desert drear.

Why seek to settle down here and build up some great thing in this world when it's soon to be destroyed in the flames. Ah, my friends, thank God for the bright vision of something that is to last forever through the eternal ages.

Perhaps, I should tell you this little secret, though. Do you know that living the pilgrim life is the best way to go through this world? You only have to go back to the story of Abraham and Lot to see it. Abraham saw the city to come; Lot saw Sodom. But as you come to the close of their lives, which would you rather be? Even if this world were *all* that was ever to be, which would you rather be, friends? Why, you know—you know.

And so, paradox as it may seem, the man who lives for this world usually misses this one and certainly the next. The man who lives for the next world gains the next world and he finds in this life more of the true joy. Do you know why? Because he's linked in fellowship with God—because he has the association of Jesus and holy angels.

Do you know one of the reasons that God causes us to live this pilgrim life? Let me read it to you. It's very interesting, friends. I'll tell you why it is. We need it—we need it—we need the pilgrim life.

Gospel Workers, page 270:

“When He was preparing Elijah for translation, God moved him from place to place...” *Gospel Workers*, page 270.

Are you getting ready for translation? Well, God might move you around a little, even if it's only from one room to another, friends. He might do it.

“When He was preparing Elijah for translation, God moved him from place to place, that the prophet might not settle down at ease, and thus fail of gaining spiritual power...Let those who are not permitted to rest in quietude, but who must be continually on the move, pitching their tent tonight in one place and tomorrow night in another place, remember that the Lord is leading them and that this is His way of helping them to form perfect characters” *Gospel Workers*, page 270.

Now, some of us may have to read in this the fact—and face it—that we need a lot of help in forming perfect characters, but that’s all right, my friends—that’s all right. However many times the pancake has to be turned until it’s done, I say, let’s be willing to be turned. What do you say?

Do you remember what the Bible says about Ephraim? He was a cake what? Not turned.

“In all the changes that they are required to make, God is to be recognized as their companion, their guide, their dependence” *Ibid.*

So, my dear friends, if we’re called upon to pitch our tent one night here, another night there, let us rejoice that God has counted us worthy to live with Him the pilgrim life—what do you say—and not murmur, not complain.

You know, there’s something about the pilgrim life—there’s nothing guaranteed about all these modern conveniences all along the way. Do you remember that dream that the Lord’s messenger had in the early days of this movement? Do you remember the company from Battle Creek that started out with what? Loaded wagons. But as they advanced, they finally came to a place in the road where what? The wagons couldn’t go any farther—the road was too narrow.

So, what did they do? Why, they unhitched the horses and loaded what they could of the baggage onto the horses and went forward. But ah, let me ask you, friends. Could they take—watch this point—could they take on the horses *all* that they’d had on the wagons? Oh, no. Much of the luggage had to be left behind, and I imagine that there were some things there that the people wanted.

And do you know, we’re told some stayed with the wagon, but some went forward with the horses, but as the way grew narrower, then what? Ah, part of that luggage had to be cut off because the way was getting so narrow that unless they cut off the luggage the horses might tumble over the precipice, so they had to cut it off, and some stayed right there. They said, No, this is going too far.

But as they went on, my friends, the trail finally became so narrow that no horse could go any farther. The horses stayed and some people stayed there with them or went on back. But some brave pilgrim souls went on, on foot, and you remember the rest of the story.

The way finally became so narrow and steep and treacherous that they had to take off their shoes and finally their stockings in order that they might have better foothold, and finally there were marks of blood left along the trail.

And then, they came to that great chasm where, on the ropes of faith, they swung across into the green fields beyond, their pilgrimage over. Ah, friends, the pilgrim life is the way for God’s children—the pilgrim life.

And let me repeat, that does not mean wandering about aimlessly. No, no. Everybody that’s wandering is not a pilgrim—not at all. It means to be going with an

aim, a sense of destiny and destination. It means that we see something so much more wonderful than anything about us that that sense of urgency urges us on for Jesus' sake.

I suppose that there are many here, perhaps all—I trust so—that could tell an experience to the glory of God in this pilgrim life. You know, we're told that we should speak often of the precious chapters in our experience, and to the glory of God, tell what He's done.

If my father and mother had not heard and accepted this message, I might have had a settled life. My father might have kept his government job and we could have had a settled home. But hearing and accepting this message put my parents into the pilgrim life, and my earliest recollections are of being from time to time moved from place to place.

My mother became a church school teacher and church school teachers are pilgrims, too, you know. I can remember another time when my father and mother had a little vegetable garden and my brother and I used to sell vegetables to help make the family living.

And from time to time, the Lord moved us about from place to place for various reasons, till finally the Lord moved me to Loma Linda, and there, dear Elder Tindall, that led us in prayer tonight, put his hand on my shoulder and said, Bill, come with me, and that was some more pilgrim life. From city to city, we went in medical evangelism.

And you know, dear friends, it was in this pilgrim life—in this work for God—and right in the work—that I met the girl who became my wife. And not long before we were married, I wrote some little verses that I shared with her. I've never shared them with others before, but they might not come amiss right here. This is what I wrote:

Ah, dear one, what have I to offer thee,
No cottage nestled 'neath the spreading tree,
No stately mansion, nay, not one of these.
A pilgrim and a strange thou wilt be.

We were married in our city mission home for workers in Salt Lake City in the midst of a series of meetings, and we went from campaign to campaign, from city to city, in the quest for souls, and we've had a blessed fellowship in the pilgrim life these 27 years.

And friends, honestly, as we look back at it, we wouldn't have traded it for all the settled security that this world can offer us. And since we've been here at Wildwood, as you know, we moved from place to place in the interest of the work. Our souls are wrapped up in seeking to train others to live this pilgrim life, and I say that not boastfully. It's no credit to us. It's the mercy of God that He has put in our eyes a view of the glory of this pilgrim life.

And all of you who have experienced this—you know what I'm talking about, and if there are any of you that haven't, I invite you into it. I sometimes say the only people I feel sorry for are the ones that feel sorry for us.

Oh, blessed be the day I began a pilgrim for to be,
And blessed also be the man that thereto moveth me.

And I intend, friends, to be a pilgrim till we come to the city of our God. I'm sure of it, dear friends, and I'm sure that the way ahead is a pilgrim way.

You know, my little family and I—we're not singers—you know that—but we're going to sing you a little song tonight—we're going to sing you a little song. And Anita Comstock—she's a pilgrim, too—she's just come back from a pilgrimage clear to Chiapas in Southern Mexico where her father and mother are pilgrims and strangers carrying on a work for God down there. We're going to sing you a little song:

We'll live in tents, until our feet,
Shall reach the land, by sin untrod,
The gate of pearl, the golden street,
Whose Builder and whose Maker God.

Don't worry about the music, get the message, friends—get the message.

And live henceforth the pilgrim life.

Listen for that line in the song.

And live henceforth the pilgrim life.

[Special music—We'll Live In Tents.]

Now, dear friends, I want to give some of you a chance to thank God for the pilgrim life, to thank God for the way He's led you. You know, there's something about the pilgrim life—there's an individual route of travel for every soul. There's a pillar of cloud that's guiding each of us, thank God. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, who's in the cloud, each of us can have a blessed time.

And so, tonight, what would you like to say—you who have found the pilgrim life a sweet experience.

Brother Raishe: I'm thankful for these thoughts tonight. I'm thankful for Abraham's life to be a guide for us, and I'm thankful for the taste I have had of the pilgrim life. I remember the day I started out, but I remember the day before that, when it began to get in my blood and I was longing to start out for it but I was tied down by much of this world's goodness.

I'm thankful that I had a wife who was willing to cut loose with me, and we cut our stakes, got rid of this world's goods—most of it—and we started out on the pilgrim's life.

The greatest joys we ever had was when we had nothing to go on except faith in God, and I can say that all along the pilgrim way, hard it may be at times, that there's a real joy and a real blessing in the pleasant society [unintelligible].

And when we know that God is with us, who can be against us, and when we know that God is leading the way, where shall we fear to go or fear to tread. There *is* no way that God will lead us that He couldn't take care of us, could He, and I never knew and had as much faith in God until I found out through experience that He's much better in taking care of me than I am myself.

It's human nature for us to look for security and want to store it up for ourselves, but I tell you, folks, the security—the best security that we can lay aside by ourselves is as nothing compared to the security of God, and some day He's going to prove it to us. He's going to wipe it all away, and whether we want to or not, we won't have any security of God, and if we don't have that, we won't have anything, folks, and that day isn't far away.

Let's put our treasures and store up our treasures in heaven and let's set out on the pilgrim way in earnest, leave the wagon and the load behind.

Now, you might say, Brother Raishe, it's easy for you to talk. You're living in a nice house. I think of that more than once, but folks, I don't know why I'm living there—not because that was *my* goal—and I'm ready to set out tomorrow if that's God's will, on another pilgrimage.

I'm thankful that even though God did see fit to find me—for some reason or other put us in a nice house, we're not tied to it, and we're willing to leave it tomorrow if that's God's will and take out a little suitcase and go back on the pilgrim's way. I thank God for the experiences of that pilgrim way.

Elder Frazee: Thank the Lord.

[Comments made by Elder Frazee during testimony meeting.]

...the pilgrim life is a life of movement, but mere movement is not the pilgrim life. Mere flitting about, mere jumping around, and the poverty that may result from it, may have nothing in the world to do with the pilgrim life. I'm glad that this has been emphasized in Elder Tindall's remarks.

...tonight, folks, before we have our closing prayer, is there somebody that God has spoken to here tonight, either through the word that we have read or through the testimonies of various ones—your heart has been reached by the spirit, and you say, There's a decision that I need to make. Jesus is calling me. There's a decision that I need to make and I want the prayers of God's people that He will help me with that decision. Would you like to raise your hand that we may pray for you as we close this meeting. Yes, here are several, here are several over here. All right, dear ones.

Now, don't forget what we read here a while ago in *Ministry of Healing*, 478:

“Many are unable to make definite plans for the future. Their life is unsettled. They cannot discern the outcome of affairs, and this often fills them with anxiety and unrest. Let us remember that the life of God's children in this world is a pilgrim life. We have not wisdom to plan our own lives. It is not for us to shape our future...we [should] depend upon

God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will.
As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps”
Ministry of Healing, page 478-479.

Let us stand as we seek God in prayer. Our dear Father in heaven, we bring to Thee in a special way these whose hands have been raised. We pray that Thou wilt give them wisdom in the decisions they are facing and to help them to know what God wants them to do and give them grace to do it.

And Lord, with them, we would bring this entire audience to Thy dear feet—those feet that were pierced for us upon Calvary. Oh, dear Savior, looking up to Thee on that cross, we would count our lives as but a little gift to give Thee. Do take us and use us in Thy service and lead us on this pilgrim life, not as aimless wanderers, but as pilgrims with a mission in the quest for souls. We ask it in Jesus’ name, amen.

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