

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Maintaining The Sojourner Spirit

(Jerry Fite)

The preacher thought he was being helpfully distinctive when he exhorted the congregation to not only read about heaven, but also, meditate, sing, and talk about our future eternal home. An elderly lady elbowed her dozing husband in the side while silently pushing back on the preacher’s well-meaning exhortation. “I have been reading about Hawaii, meditating upon going there, talking of its glory, and singing of its beauty. But dear preacher, you and I both know that until I get my tight-fisted husband to buy us airline tickets, or passes upon a cruise ship, we aren’t going to make it to the wonderful “Aloha State.”

Like thinking of tropical Hawaii, not everyone talking about Heaven will enter Paradise. It demands more distinctive steps than merely talking it up.

First, we must always maintain the spirit of the sojourner. A sojourner is one who knows his home is elsewhere while he pilgrims through a strange land. Heaven is where the Christian’s citizenship is while he or she travels upon this terrestrial ball, awaiting the Lord’s return to lead us home (*Philippians 3:20*). The great examples of faith in the past

“confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own” (Hebrews 11:13-14). Following their example, the Christian understands that Heaven is one’s “own country,” not this earth.

It is said, “Home is where the heart is.” Paul’s heart was longing for his home with the Lord when he wrote, “...whilst we are home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are of good courage, I say and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord” (*2 Corinthians 5:6-8*). The moment we feel at home in this world, we will have lost the spirit of the sojourner. The longing for Heaven has been corrupted, and the compromise with this world has begun.

Maintaining a sojourner spirit must be coupled with action, Peter exhorts us, “Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (*1 Peter 2:12*). Practicing the works of the flesh will keep us from our inheritance in the kingdom of God (*Galatians 5:21*).

The practices that include widespread actions of envious thoughts, illicit sexual affairs, fits of anger, divisive maneuverings, and drunken parties must be cut out of our sojourning life. “Abstain” from them, God’s apostle decrees, not “dabble” in them.

The sojourner must never forget that before arriving at home in Heaven, one must pass before his judge, God. “*And if you call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning with fear” (1 Peter 1:17).* Reverential fear for God is a healthy mental exercise for your sojourn on earth. Knowing I will be judged according to my works is sobering mental tension. Knowing God is not swayed by whom I claim to be when judging what I have actually done, should elevate my mental pulse to reverential fear of the One who will be my judge.

Not everyone wishing, talking, and singing about Heaven will go there. All who desire to enter the glories of Heaven must maintain the sojourning spirit. Such action will help what we are talking about become a reality!