

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings 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 distinctive when he pointed out to the congregation, in getting to Heaven, we should read about Heaven, meditate upon it, sing about it and talk about it. An elderly lady punched her dozing husband in the side, and thought to herself, “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 can get my tight-fisted husband to buy us airline tickets, or passes upon a cruise ship, we aren’t going to make it.”

Like imagining yourself basking in the beauty of Hawaii, not everyone talking about Heaven will inherit its glories. It takes more distinctive steps than wishing for it, and talking about it.

First, we must always maintain the spirit of a sojourner. A sojourner is one who knows his home is elsewhere while he passes through a strange land. Heaven is where the Christian’s citizenship is while he or she travels through this world (*Philippians 3:20*). The exemplary heroes 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 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 such

wide spread 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 of God is a healthy mental exercise as one sojourns on earth. Knowing I will be judged according to my works, is healthy mental tension. Knowing that God is not swayed by who I am as He judges me for what I have done, should elevate my mental pulse to reverential fear of the One who will be my judge.

Not everyone singing about Heaven will go there. Are you maintaining the necessary sojourning spirit? Singing “*This world is not my home...*” will certainly help. But living as a sojourner, consistent with professing citizenship in Heaven, will help you turn what you are thinking and talking about into reality.