

Psalm 82

Our Eternal Home

Hebrew 11:29-12:2

August 17, 2025

We are presented once again with an example of faith, represented by the lives of the people mentioned in the roll call of Hebrews 11; Abraham, Enoch, Noah, and the rest, revealing a search for a homeland.

In today's reading the list of people is expanded to include Isaac and Jacob, Joseph and Moses, and even more obscure examples like Rahab; until the author gives up and says, "what more shall I say? Time would fail me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel. Then there is a long rant about both their positive and negative experiences, their failures and successes, the hardships faced and the blessings they knew.

How are we to understand the significance of the searching of the people who searched? Part of its importance is that it reveals a dissatisfaction, some kind of disconnect, with the experience of earthly life. They sensed that there is more to life, and were willing to lose what they had in order to find whatever it is that provides higher meaning.

Part of a healthy human experience is a discovery that no strategy for the playing out of earthly life is meaningful. It is the modern, "spirit of the age," to insist the opposite, that meaning *is* found in the world's life, and it is also a part the zeitgeist to be skeptical about eternity, about heaven and hell, and to

settle on the belief that there is nothing beyond this life.

The search for a better life becomes caught in the web of the common experience that one can not get beyond the standard examples that fulfillment comes from wealth and pleasure and security, common to every generation, and every time and place. People can dream of more, but cannot achieve it.

The people of the world often end up dissatisfied with their efforts to fill the void, put off the inevitable end, or to conquer sin without divine help. We hear words like, estranged, isolated, lonely, afraid, polarized . . . It is a sickness that can loosen the attachment to temporary things and inspire the search for the everlasting.

One common experience comes from home, assuming that home is a positive experience; memories of childhood; its people, accompanied by a feeling of security and acceptance, and being loved unconditionally, belonging.

We remember its spaces; a room, a table where meals were shared, a backyard where there is laughter, nooks and crannies of which even the adults were unaware, pets, a neighborhood, friends; life as adventure; it all creates a dream of an ideal world, somehow lost when childhood turns to adolescence turns into adulthood and one moves away, and everything changes.

And physical space is not the only facet of home. Home is where we sleep (which means we feel safe), and where food is shared, where life's basic needs are met. It is the place of life's closest relationships. The people at home are the most important people in our lives. Our homes also locate us to the nearest nexus of community; it is the situation of proximity to places of worship and work, school and play, neighbors and friends.

All of our efforts to keep things from changing; and then once time has passed and change has happened anyway, all our efforts to re-create that past, fail. When change comes every new experience seems less secure and more fleeting. Time flies. One must hold on tighter to prevent, "the passing of what one naively hoped would never pass..

By way of analogy we can relate to this group of people in the biblical story who have left their homeland, or lost it, and are searching for a better country. The longing for home can be a prison in which we remain locked, or it can be a metaphor of the journey to our true home, the permanent one that has foundations that last.

There are several images of salvation that emerge out of the biblical stories, especially from the gospels. Words like; healing, liberation, reconciliation, forgiveness, resurrection; all give some nuance to a soteriology, that is, a doctrine of salvation. All of these shed light on a mysterious and multi-faceted reality.

There is in Hebrews another phrase to add to the mix," coming home." The longing for home is the desire for salvation and the promise is that God has prepared a place for us. Salvation is finding our way to *our eternal home*.

In the end we are led to a consideration of mortality, which not only points to the death at the end of this life, but to its giftedness in the first place, over which we never had any control. We still have so little control, but we do have the divine promise revealed to us in Christ Jesus, crucified and raised, ascended into heaven, where there is a place, prepared.

The meaning of that promise is faithful living. There is a long list of implications regarding the meaning of, "faithful living." We know about the rule of love, "love your neighbor as yourself," and, the Golden Rule, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

We know about compassion and forgiveness and about honesty and integrity and heartfelt humility and thanksgiving. We know from Colossians about the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, because theology sung is powerful.

In Hebrews 12 there are more examples: "make every effort to live in peace with everyone, and to be holy . . . see to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many . . . keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by

doing so many people have entertained angels without knowing it.

It is interesting how there is clear testimony down the ages that those who believe in eternity and have resurrection hope, find the common experiences of earthly life more meaningful, less demanding, more filled with peace and joy, less with anxiety. We are even told here in Hebrews to endure hardship as discipline, for God disciplines those he loves. Imagine hardship without hope!

It is because of the hope of eternal life that we seek to make the world a better place though we know that this world is not our true home. That we run the race . . . set before us . . .

Once again, we have a hymn to sing that helps us tap into faith as, “homesickness,” or as a, “summons to pilgrimage,” because it implies the search for a better homeland.

“O God, Our Help In Ages Past,” a stately old Isaac Watts hymn that, put in a simple way, assures us that we find *our eternal home* in God.

I will recite the words as I did a couple of weeks ago with, “O Love That Will Not Let Me Go,” to help us pay better attention as we sing them together. It looks backwards and forwards, yet addresses the present moment; it prays for security and for guidance.

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home:

Under the shadow of your throne  
Your saints have dwelt secure;  
Sufficient is your arm alone,  
And our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood  
Or Earth received her frame,  
From everlasting you are God,  
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in your sight  
Are like an evening gone,  
Short as the watch that ends the night  
Before the rising sun.

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be thou our guide while life shall last  
*And our eternal home.*

[Back](#)

[Home](#)