

A LIFE THAT COUNTS
#4: The Stewardship of Legacy
November 4-5, 2006

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 11:39 – 12:2 TNIV

Introduction: Central to the Christian faith is the Biblical concept of Stewardship—the careful and responsible management of things entrusted to our care. Everything we are and have comes from God, Who places the treasures of life in our charge with a calling to serve as His stewards and trustees. How we employ and manage these resources of opportunity, skill, material goods, relationships, etc. affects both time and eternity.

In His providence, the Lord has given to us, through faithful believers who have lived before us, a legacy of faith and faithfulness—a story of vision, service and sacrifice. Our stewardship of this legacy requires that we follow Christ in a way that both honors our past and challenges our future.

- I. Christians have a great heritage, a legacy left to us by believers of previous generations. We are part of a grand parade of the faithful, a long line of servants of God who sacrificed their lives for His Kingdom's cause. "We stand on the shoulders of those who've gone before us."
- A. In the pre-Messiah era, regardless of the temporary results in their lives, each faithful person was noticed by God and received His congratulations. V.38.
 - B. But, their story was not yet complete. V.39. For God's incarnate Messiah did not come in their lifetime.
 - C. Now that Messiah Jesus has come, we see the fuller picture. He is that "something better." Our experience of faith in Him completes the story of faith for those who lived and trusted God before Messiah came. V.40.

- D. As believers in the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus, when we faithfully fulfill God's calling on our lives, we complete the picture of faith for those who have gone before us.

II. Present-day Christians run a race of faith.

- A. We are not alone. We have a solidarity with the past and are being cheered on by those who've gone before us. V.1.
- B. Having already run their race, believers who have died are in heaven's grandstand, surrounding us and encouraging us, as a "great cloud/crowd of witnesses."
- C. Part of their reward is witnessing the way we run our race of obedience and faith.

III. In turn, how we live for God and run our race impacts the legacy that we pass on to those who follow us.

- A. The stewardship of legacy means that we continue the story of faith and service to our Lord.
- B. As we run the race of faith, we avoid evil things that can hinder, entangle, and trip us.
- C. By fulfilling our calling from God, we pass on the baton of the story to those who follow after us. Someday we too will join the ranks of those "witnesses" who cheer on the coming generations until that time when we are all gathered together in eternity in the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Whether we enjoy a long personal heritage of faith, or are now beginning a new legacy in Christ, we have the opportunity, responsibility, and awesome task of fulfilling God's calling and purpose for our lives, our families, our church. As we faithfully obey our Lord, we pass along the baton of the race to those who will come after us. And so the story continues.

The success of your life story, your family story, the Columbia story, the Crossroads story, the Kingdom story depends on your faithful stewardship of that legacy. May all those who come behind us, as well as those who have gone before us, find us faithful. Let us run the race of faith focused on Jesus Christ, Who died and rose for our salvation, and waits to receive us at the finish line of life.