

The Offspring of Faith
Hebrews 11: 20-22

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Galatians 3:15-29

Responsive Psalm 8

Today we are going to be continuing our journey through Hebrews chapter 11. Let us start this morning by reading our passage, Hebrews 11:13-22. Up until this point we have looked at lives of a few of the faithful who are mentioned here and we have talked about the life and death of those who are in this faith. What it looks like, how it should be as we see in the examples we have laid out here in this chapter.

As I have been meditating on these things, and thinking about the subject of faith itself I have found this area of study to be quite encouraging. We live in this life, bound up in the concept of time, we have that which we have lived, that which we are living, and that which we are yet to live. Throughout all of these phases in our timeline if we are children of God, faith plays a huge part.

That which we have lived through, our experiences, or as Casey puts it, our story, serves as a reminder, as an encouragement, and as a teacher, as we can look back in our story and see God's faithfulness, we can recall to our minds his deliverance in trouble times, we can worship and praise him for his blessings and provision for us, we can look back and see this truth, that God is faithful to his promises, that he does indeed keep us, provide for us, bless us, and love us.

All of these things help us with the now, with the life that we are currently living facing the unknown future. It can be easy to fall into doubt and despair I think, we as humans tend to fret and worry about the future, about our lives but honestly we shouldn't. For do we not believe that God is sovereign? Do we not believe that nothing will happen to us without his allowing it? And does not the outcome ultimately serve his will and purpose? We have our past lives to look upon to see that these things are true, and resting in that which God has already done for us helps us through what God is doing for us now.

I have thought about this a lot with my current situation. Never did I think that I would have been diagnosed with an auto-immune disease, never did I think that I would have spent 8 days in the hospital near death. None of us do, and when or if it does happen it happens quickly. We don't plan on having a heart attack, a stroke, cancer, or any of those things and it would be easy to cry out to God complaining asking why me, why do I have to endure this. In the face of any trial, we all have our doubts, we all have moments of weakness. Even Abraham and Sarah listed here in this hall of fame of the faithful had their moments of doubt, where their faith in God and trusting upon him wavered. Abraham had a child through Hagar, his wife's slave. In Chapter 12 of Genesis God visited Abraham and told him that he would make him into a great nation and would bless him, yet at chapter 16 we see he had been living in the land that God had told him and has not yet produced an heir.

Understanding that he would need to have children to have this great nation that God promised him, he took matters into his own hands and had a child with Hagar. But this was not the child of the promise, but that child was to come through his wife Sarah. Yet despite this doubt, God was faithful, God was true to his word and provided a Son, and heir to Abraham and his wife and just as he had promised this Son was the beginning of the lineage that would bring about the Messiah, who would come and bring deliverance to all who are of the faith of Abraham. Even Abraham doubted, but in the end he was faithful, he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

I bring this up for it is the same with us, we all have our moments of doubt, we all can have moments of weakness where we lose sight of God's faithfulness and become so engrossed in our own worry. Yet we know, no matter what befalls us, even death itself, God provides. For even in death, God has provided and made it that the death of his children is not a cursed thing, but as he says, a blessed thing. For in the death of this body, we are united with him, we finally arrive at the promised land which was promised Abraham for his offspring.

God does not promise us success and an easy life, but he does promise us ultimate victory over it. And he does work in us to believe, and to remain faithful. For if it was not by the sovereign power of God in our lives, we would not believe. I don't know about you, but I find this to be extremely encouraging for it seems I am one who can be prone to doubt and worry, yet it is not what I do that effects God's will, but it is God's will that effects what I do. By that I mean, despite my doubt, despite my worry and concerns God is faithful, despite my moments of faithlessness, God is faithful, and he uses my story to remind me of his faithfulness, and causes my heart and fretting mind to rest knowing that in all things he loves me.

What a faith this is, what a loving father we have, it was generations before the promises to Abraham were fulfilled, both in the physical aspect of his offspring inheriting the promised land of Israel, and the Spiritual in the coming of Jesus to reconcile mankind back to himself, to offer himself up so that we may be grafted in to Abraham's lineage of promise, We who are in Christ, we who have been given faith to believe are the offspring of the faithful, we are the offspring of Abraham, we are the nation in which God promised Abraham that he would receive. The physical fulfillment of these promises to Abraham were a mere shadow of the realities. We know this is true from what Paul wrote in Roman's 9, dealing with this very issue of the offspring of Abraham.

He says, "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorry and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelite's, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises, of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. BUT, it is not that the word of God has taken no effect, for they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but in Isaac your seed shall be called. That is those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of promise are counted as the seed."

That is us, we who are in Christ are the promised offspring of Abraham, the holy nation that is innumerable. In verses 20-22 here in Hebrews we see God working out his promise to bring about this holy nation. We see the faithfulness of Abraham's physical offspring as they operated under this very same promise, having faith in God's provision of it. Verse 20 says, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning the things to come" Philip Hughes wrote, "This was in accordance with the custom whereby a father, when he came to the end of his days, would pronounce a paternal blessing over his children, who were regarded by him as a guarantee of the future. But for Isaac this was something more than the insubstantial hope that his name would be kept alive in a physical posterity, for his children were the guarantee of his own future, inasmuch as his faith was focused on the line of the promise, and this promise, as we have seen, belonged to him and to his father Abraham. Far from being the end for him, his death was but a milestone along the way to that better country on which his hope was fixed."

It is interesting to note, and I think quite significant that God in his sovereignty goes against the conventions and ideas of mankind. By that I mean, even here in our passage today we see Jacob who is the younger brother of Esau is the one in whom the promises are carried on. Normally the oldest child is the heir, is the one who is tasked with carrying on in the family line, and who receives the blessing of the father, but God's will is fulfilled through the younger. Even as far back as Abel who was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we see God was well pleased in the younger. It was not the older Ishmael, but Isaac who was the son of promise, and here we see again that it is the younger weaker brother Jacob who has been given blessings and Esau who is left with the lesser inheritance.

This all points to the fact, that God's ways are not our ways, and that the spirit and will of God are divine and sovereign and does as he pleases, and in fact seems to chose the weaker things to fulfill his holy purpose and will. And as we see in 1 Corinthians which we read this morning, "For you see your calling brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has consen the foolish things of this world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence."

Just as we see in this lineage of Abraham, that the promise is carried on through the weaker, through the younger, it is clear that the promise is a promise of faith, not of flesh, that is the promises given to Abraham and his seed are those who are of faith, it is the spiritual heir of the promises, not the physical. And that carries over to salvation today as well, that it is the weak, downtrodden, the despised, in whom God is pleased to call, to adopt and graft into this line. We are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise, a community of believers who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Joseph, just like the others mentioned here in the passages we are looking at today, one who was faithful to death, it says that while he was dying he made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. The departure of Israel from Egypt which he had mentioned would in fact not take place for another century and a half, but he for-saw, with assurance in his faith that God would be faithful and give them the promised land which was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So sure was he of their eventual departure that he gave his family instructions to bring his bones along with them so that he could be buried in that land.

Ever since he was 17, and his jelious brothers sold him into slavery, Joseph had been an exile in Egypt. Where even though he started as a slave, he rose to a position of great influence. Yet, still, he did not forget his native land, nor the promises that were tied to it. And indeed when the time did come, Moses took up his bones as Israel left Egypt and carried them through the wilderness until Joshua ,who following Moses death lead the people of Israel into Canaan where he burred the bones of Joseph in the same place which Jacob had bought from the Son's of Hamar.

Again in Joseph we see this example of one dying in the faith, which is not unlike our own journey in this world. For we are too exiles in this land awaiting the day for the inheritance of the promised land. For Joseph it was 1500 years after his death until his bones were returned, being buried at his families burial ground, the land of inheritance for his family. For generations now we who are of this faith have been awaiting the return of Christ, to come and carry his people away....and it seems that each generations believes that theirs will be the last.

Yet, the world keeps spinning, people continue to be born, to live, and to die but this does not nullify God's promise nor is it a reason that we should lose faith. For as he was with these Patriarchs so to shall it be with each of us. They died awaiting the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham, but even in death having not received the promises remained faithful that God would keep his word to them.

In a way each and every one of us is in the middle of our own wilderness journey, as time passes we march ever closer to that promise. And it is that promise that we find rest and peace, for without Christ, the seed of Abraham given so that all nations could be blessed in him we would have no hope, our faith would be empty for there would be no substance.

But we know that is not the case, These men who died before died looking to the promised Messiah, looking to that which was to come. Believing that God would send one who would reconcile his people to himself, that God would provide for himself a lamb who was worthy. Now we in the same faith, look back to the same Messiah for the same redemption and reconciliation.

Meditating upon God's faithfulness should give us great hope and peace. Through thousands of years and generations he has not wavered, each and every thing that he has promised or foretold has come to pass. I think often times Christians can have a small understanding of God's sovereignty, but if you were to take the bible as a whole and look at it as God works out his plan of salvation and reconciliation for his people, each step, every piece aligns and fits together perfectly for his purpose and plan. Throughout the bible, in every account if there had been one different decision by any of these people the outcomes might have been different....but they couldn't have been different for it is God who made it so.

For me at least, reflecting upon these accounts of all of these men listed here who have died in faith, who died looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promises, I find it rather encouraging, and it gives strength to my own faith.

As we journey through this life in the wilderness, exiles and sojourners in a land that is not our own, we must do so boldly knowing that each day we draw closer and closer to God. This faith is not a mere belief, nor hope that tomorrow, or the next day will be better. This faith is bound in God himself, who has not promised us success, or even peace in this life, in fact he says if you have this faith, you will have suffering. The wilderness journey was not an easy tourist ride through the country side for Israel, no it was fraught with suffering, with loss, and hardships but through it all remained the hope of God's promises. And it is the same with our journey, but just like the account of those 40 years in the wilderness, where God provided for their every need, so to it is the same with us as we journey through this life.

This I think should be our heart, it should be our mind, like these patriarchs who looked to these promises as being so sure, as to have seen them. We too should live boldly, believing God at his word, believing in all that he has said regarding this faith. Our focus must be upon him, for it is only Him who offers anything that is worthy, the offerings and joys of this world are nothing compared to his promises. The God who made all things, stooped down and made a promise to one man, and that promise has been fulfilled by God through the sending of Christ to be the savior of mankind, to take us from the slavery of sin, and lead us out through the wilderness of this life and ultimately into the promised land, to that city, whose builder and maker is God.