

Hebrews 11:17-40

“Life Lessons In Faith”

Life lessons in faith; that’s what we’ve been looking *at* & learning *from* as we’ve made our way through this Ch. What faith is *doctrinally* (the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen) & how it impacts & affects us (as believers) *daily*. We’ve come to realize that it’s by faith that we’re accepted *by* God, that we walk intimately *w/God*, that we respond *to* God regardless of the ebb & flow of this world, & the tide of modern society. Faith reaps obedience to God’s Word *from* us, patience *in* us; it brings about real time practical results *through* us & will impact the lives of those *around* us. Faith doesn’t attach itself to the things of this world but looks *forward* to a heavenly homeland whose builder & maker is God. Faith is intricately intertwined in every aspect of our lives; our walk, our witness & our worship. Faith permeates & infiltrates, that is it penetrates every fiber of our being down to the very core of who we are. There’s no part of who we are that faith does not touch &/or have direct impact upon.

As we continue on today we’ll see the sacrifice, & the separation of faith, the fact that faith sees the future & thereby reacts, & responds accordingly. & We’ll be encouraged by the victories & the dedication of faith, & ultimately the consummation, that is the culmination of faith; perfect righteousness & eternal access into the very presence of God.

Vs17-19

Of course here we’re seeing both the willing obedience & the worship of faith. “By faith Ab, when he was tested, offered up Isaac,” Last week we spent some time considering the fact that God promised Ab & Sarah a son, but how Sarah had this idea to help God out. & Of course all that really came from their efforts to bring the promise to pass themselves was problems. Ishmael was the result of their efforts in the flesh, & of course *anytime* we try to “help God out” doing in the efforts of the flesh what He desires to accomplish through the power of His Spirit all we’re going to breed (no pun intended) is problems. However even though we may occasionally (or quite frequently as the case may be) get in God’s way, that will not keep Him from performing His promise. & So 13 yrs later God did exactly what He said he was going to do He gave them a son, Isaac. & You know the story, some 25-30+ yrs later (some suspect 33 yrs) God says to Ab, “*Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.*” Gen 22:2

Now we read that & think (well we think a couple things, but one thing we think is) “... your *only* son...” I thought Ab had *another* son Ishmael who was 13 yrs older than Isaac? & That’s exactly accurate; however we realize that God didn’t recognize Ishmael because he was the product of Ab’s efforts in the flesh. God *does not recognize* work done in His name in the efforts of the flesh as opposed to the power of His Holy Spirit.

There are all kinds of things that are done today in the name of God, that are *supposed* to be for the glory of God that God refuses to recognize because they're the product of man's efforts in the flesh rather than the result of a genuine overflow of faith in Him, the work accomplish through the power of His Spirit via a simple willing vessel. Remember this Vs; we quoted it just recently, “*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, ' Says the Lord of hosts.*” Zech 4:6 Ishmael was by Ab's might, by Ab's power, Isaac was by the Spirit of the Lord, & so God didn't recognize Ishmael, but Isaac as Ab's *only begotten son*, whom He loved. (Now that phrase sounds familiar don't it, we'll touch on it more in just a minute).

But we read that when he was tested, he offered up Isaac, “...and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of who it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’” “Now let me get this straight, you're saying that God promised Ab a son?” Yes, “& That God gave him a son, Isaac?” Yes, “& Now some 30 yrs or so later God is asking Ab to give his son back to God in the form of a sacrifice?” Yes, “Didn't God promise Ab a lineage extending even to the Messiah through Isaac?” Yes, “Did Isaac have any children at this point?” No, he didn't even have any prospects for a bride. “Doesn't that present a problem?” For you & me, yes, for God, no. I'll touch on that in just a minute but before I do I want to draw your attention to something else.

When we read that Ab, “offered up Isaac when he was tested” understand that what Ab did was w/out hesitation, w/out reservation & w/out thinking that God was only toying w/him. As far as Ab was concerned it was a done deal, Isaac was as good as dead. For 3 days Ab journeyed to the land of Moriah & during that 3 days in Ab's mind his son was dead. There was no notion in his head, or in his heart that thought that God was only going to take him so far & then stop him. There was no thought way down in there somewhere whereby he was say to God, “See... I knew you wouldn't really have me do that, after all You made a promise.” Ab considered his son dead (for 3 days). Of course you're beginning to draw the parallels because it was on that 3rd day that Ab (the father) received Isaac (his only begotten son) back from the dead, figuratively speaking.

Now, man's impossibilities become God's opportunities. & Though we know all of these people listed in this Ch had flaws in their faith this is definitely one moment in which Ab's faith shined. Because Isaac was dead, in his heart, in his mind it was a done deal. However he'd thought this thing through, he'd carefully calculated his crisis & just as we reasoned it through a moment ago God had made him a promise. That in *Isaac* his seed would be called, that is, the promises would come *to him through* Isaac, the problem is that Isaac didn't have any children. “Well, there's only one conclusion,” Ab thought (because Isaac was to be sacrificed) “God is going to have to raise him from the dead so that He is able to perform His promise to me.”

Vs19

That word, “Concluding” implies carefully calculated reasoning. He thought it through & came to a conclusion based upon the character of God that God’s promise was worthy of his confidence & so he carried out God’s word. & On that 3rd day as you know when he was about to plunge that dagger into the heart of Isaac the angel of the Lord stopped him & he turned & looked there was a ram caught in the thicket; & figuratively speaking at that point Ab received his son back from the dead. We read there in Gen 22 where the Angel of the LORD said to Ab, “*Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.*” Gen 22:12

Of course all that was a foreshadowing, Ab did figuratively what God would do literally in not w/holding His Son, His *only* Son from us. & It was on that very mount some 2,000 yrs later when God would allow His *only begotten Son* whom He loves to be slain for the sin of the world, He was delivered up for our transgressions & 3 days later He was raised up for our justification.

But what a monumental moment highlighting Ab’s faith. & We see it there in Gen 22 when he said to his servants, “*Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.*” Gen 22:5 Notice it’s a continual course of action.

“The lad & I will go yonder & worship, & we will come back to you.” He was heading up the mountain to slay his son! Yet in his heart he knew he’d return w/Isaac (God having raised him from the dead) because God had made him a promise & God’s promise was worthy of his confidence. Now listen, God’s promise is worthy of *your* confidence, & *my* confidence as well. God has *promised* everlasting life to all who place their trust, place their faith in J.C. & His finished work upon the cross on their behalf. Not only has He promised our *salvation* but our *sanctification*, a life led in holiness & purity, that’s well pleasing to Him, in intimacy, don’t resist His work in your life, receive it. It’s not about you & your ability, it’s about Him & His ability to do in you & through you what you could never do for yourself & God is able, well able to perform His promise, have confidence in the Word of God.

One more thing & then we’ll move on. Last week we were discussing the fact that faith never contradicts reason, & that even though it may stretch into the realm of human impossibility it only creates opportunity for God who specializes in making a way where there is no way. It seems unreasonable for God to expect anyone to believe that Sarah would have a son at 90 yrs old, yet when God is factored into the equation (the giver/created or life, the womb etc) it’s not unreasonable at all. He’s promised, He’s able to perform for w/God nothing will be impossible.

God promised Ab that through *Isaac* his seed would be called, the problem was that Isaac didn't have any children, was it therefore unreasonable for God to ask Ab to give up his only begotten son? No... why? Because God who promised is able to perform, God is not a man that he should lie, he promised Ab a lineage through Isaac extending even to the Messiah, therefore Ab concluded that God would do whatever He needed to do, even raising Isaac from the dead if necessary to fulfill His Word; that's faith. To believe that under no circumstance will God *ever* break, go against, or compromise His word *even* when His promise *seems* to contradict His command.

What are you & I to do when God's promise seems to contradict His command? We obey the command & let God worry about the establishing of His promise. For instance, God has *promised* the believer *abundant life*, now often times the believer will associate an abundant life w/simply a *happy* life. But they're unhappy in their marriage, & so the reasoning goes like this, "God has promised me an abundant life, I don't have an abundant life therefore I'm not bound to this marriage because it doesn't fulfill God's promise." Yet God has *commanded* you to stay w/your spouse (barring there's no extra marital affair, we understand the biblical exceptions). So what do you do when the promise seems to contradict the command? You don't toss the command out the window & cling to the promise, you obey the command (as Ab did) & trust God to establish His promise in His time & in His way.

Vs20-22

Now I suppose that there's a # of things that we could glean from these few Vs however the common thread that seems to be woven through each of them respectively is the fact that faith sees the future, & reacts or responds accordingly. "Isaac blessed Jacob & Esau concerning *things to come*." Jacob when he was dying blessed Ephraim & Manasseh (Joseph's sons) concerning God's favor to come upon them. Joseph, when *he* was dying made mention *of the departure* of the children of Israel from Egypt, & gave instructions concerning his bones. & It was going to be another 400 yrs before Israel left Egypt yet Joseph (by faith) told the nation what to do w/his bones when they left because he knew the day was coming when they'd leave. How did he know that, how could he tell the future?

He had the word of God to guide him. Remember God had told Ab, "*Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.*" Gen 15:13-14 Joseph *believed the word of God* concerning the future & reacted, responded accordingly, that's faith.

By the way, brief side note; do you realize that God will stake the validity of His word upon the fact that He alone is able to foresee the future & He calls it out in writing before it happens so what when it happens you'll know that He's God & there is no other. The bible says, "*Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*" Isa 46:9-10

Or in the NT vernacular, “*God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;*” Rom 4:17 There is no other book on the planet which will place it’s integrity, it’s veracity & it’s legitimacy upon the fact that it’s able to foresee the future w/100% accuracy & will never miss. & If it ever misses you can throw it all out & dismiss it from cover to cover. But that’s how God sets His word apart from any other. & There are hundreds & hundreds & hundreds of prophecies in the bible written down before history happened & guess how many have ever missed. Zero, zilch, not one of them, & if in the course of several thousand yrs it’s never missed, we can be fairly confident (I say that facetiously we can be confident completely) that it never will.

Now, God’s given *you*, He’s given *me* His word concerning the future as well. Be it about salvation, be it about the tribulation, be it about the course of this world prior to the rapture of the church, & we’re to believe it, receive it & live our lives in a manner that reflects it accordingly; w/a sense of urgency, purity & holiness. Because when He comes we want to be found so doing that which He’s committed unto our trust, we want to be good & faithful servants. Not wicked servants who’ve said in our heart, “My master delays His coming” & so we lower our guard, mix & mingle w/the ungodly, & our Master return on a day & in an hour that we’re not expecting. Because Jesus said that it’s not going to be good for that servant on that day. These guys foreseen the future by faith & set things in order accordingly.

Vs23

Of course following Ab concerning the honorary mentions of faith you have to know that Moses wouldn’t be far behind. However here it’s actually *his parents* who are in view. & Though mom & dad can’t make a decision for their children they can certain foster an environment that’s conducive to a godly outcome. & Such was the case w/Moses, you know his story. The Pharaoh had commanded that all the Israelites throw their baby boys into the river to kill them, but when Moses was born, somehow, somehow his parents knew there was something about him & they refused to adhere to the Pharaoh’s command.

Another side note. When is it ok to disobey the authority of man? Only when it stands in opposition to the authority of God. When it comes down to you having to make a decision to obey God or man, go w/God every time. We see it here w/Moses Parent’s, we see it w/Moses, we see it in the book of Acts when the disciples were forbidden to preach in Jesus name. They respectfully declined the authority of man & honored God, & God honored them. Doesn’t mean trouble won’t potentially find you, but better to fear God, then to fear man; Jesus taught that.

So Moses’ parents didn’t destroy him, & as you know they set it up so that he floated in a basket down the river to the place where Pharaoh’s daughter was bathing & she wound up drawing him up out of the water.

Then Moses' mom was actually paid to raise him while he was nursing, & during those formative yrs they were spilling into him, who he was, to whom he belonged & who were his people. & When it came time to make a decision, Moses opted to choose the Lord as opposed to the passing pleasures of this life. Mom, dad, you can create a godly environment in your home, & when it's time for your children to make their decision you will have wielded your influence wisely & it will help to foster their decision tremendously.

Vs24-26

So when it came time to make his choice, Moses made it. & He refused to be called the "Son of the Pharaoh's daughter" or another way to understand that, "Prince." The idea here (though we can't state it conclusively, it does seem to be a heavy possibility) is that Moses was next in line to become Pharaoh, king of Egypt, he was the Prince of Egypt (hence the movie). Now that involves power, prestige, position, prominence, fame, & fortune, yet he *refused* to identify w/Egypt (or the world & it's passing pleasures) & took his place w/the afflicted, that is Israel, God's chosen people. Now when we're talking here about the "passing pleasures of sin" don't think only of illicit, or immoral activity. We're talking about the luxuries of this life *at the expense* of a life set apart to God, His plan, His people & all the rest.

Something else we do well to see here is that sin has it's pleasures. Don't be one of those people who tries to convince yourself, your kids & everyone around you that sin is no fun. If there were no pleasure in it, no one would want to do it. It has it's pleasure, however it's pleasures are passing, & what it leaves in it's wake is a harvest of ruin, confusion, pain & problems, & if not dealt w/& repented *of* the ramifications are eternal. & So even if the pleasures of sin last a lifetime what's 120yrs (at best) compared to eternity? Moses has been dead for some 3700 yrs or so, your life is but a blink of an eye is the scope of eternity. What's your eternal well being worth to you? Jesus said, "*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*" Mark 8:36-37 Moses looked past the temporal nature of this life & considered the eternal perspective, & he wisely opted to take the road less traveled; affliction w/the people of God as opposed to the passing pleasures of sin.

Vs26

In suffering to set men free Moses entered into the reproach of Christ. & He looked to the *eternal reward* as opposed to the pleasures, & the treasures of this world. The other day someone asked me about the significance of the eternal reward, I mean isn't Jesus reward enough? & They weren't seeking to use spiritual rhetoric, it was a genuine inquiry. & Who would say that they need more than Jesus in heaven? Yet Jesus Himself, along w/the counsel of the remainder of the NT highlights, emphasizes & places a precedent & priority upon running the race in such a way so as to obtain the prize. To win the reward, as for exactly what the rewards mean & how they impact our eternity I don't know, but to lead our lives in way that seeks to obtain as many rewards as we can possibly gain isn't self seeking, it's beneficial obedience (as if there's any other kind) to the word of God. Moses looked to the reward of eternity as opposed to this world's treasures which are temporary.

What are we seeing in Moses? The sacrifice & separation (from this world's system) of faith. Faith will work both sacrifice, & separation (or we could say sanctification) in our lives. As we seen in Ab last time, we'll leave & sacrifice the passing pleasures of the old life, & live in this life anticipating the reward, the eternal outcome.

Vs27-28

Again we're seeing faith predicated upon the confidence in God's Word. How does the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the door posts & lintels of a door save lives? I don't know because God said it would, I believe God, act upon His word, that's faith. Now we know it spoke of the blood of another Lamb, the Lamb of God, J.C. who would be slain to save us, & that as we apply (by faith) His blood upon the lintels & doorposts of our hearts we'll be saved. God will accredit His righteousness to us, I don't know how it works, He says it does, I believe Him, that's faith.

Vs29

What was the difference between the children of Israel & the army of Egypt? It wasn't courage, if anything the army had more of that; it was faith. & Of course this is a prime example of the difference between faith & presumption. Israel had God's word, they acted on faith, the army of Egypt didn't, they presumed; the results were radically different.

Vs30

Jericho speaks of a # of things. It show us the boldness of faith, again the obedience of faith, the patience of faith, & the anticipation of faith, looking forward & locking in to what God was going to do on that 7th day. However it strikes me interesting that as Jericho is brought up, Joshua isn't highlighted (even mentioned) however Rahab (a gentile harlot) is.

Vs31

What a model of salvation by grace through faith. She hadn't seen the Red Sea part, she didn't watch the Amorites get wiped out, but she'd *heard* of it. Now faith comes by what? *Hearing & hearing by the...word of God.* She heard it, & responded in faith *to* it & confessed, "...for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." Josh 2:11 & God saved her, she married a man by the name of Salmon, & they had a son named Boaz, Boaz had a boy by the name of Obed, & Obed had a boy by the name of Jesse, now Jesse had a boy & his name was, David. As in *king* David & so Rahab (a gentile prostitute) finds herself in lineage of J.C. Himself, by grace through faith. What an illustration, of the beautiful truth that *whoever* will call upon the name of the Lord *will be* (not might be, or if you're luck you could be,) will be) saved.

Vs32-34

Much like us he was running out of time, but the point he's making is that on & on he could go showing & sharing life lessons in faith. How God took & transformed lives, demonstrated *His* strength through human weakness, how the miraculous was worked & battles were won through faith. & The idea here is that God is faithful, you can count *on* Him, trust *in* Him, He will perform every promise of His word to you.

Now, there's one more point he's going to make here & we want to see that then we'll wrap up, because we've been hearing of all these incredible life lessons, lessons of victory, miracles worked, battles won, all of which are completely true & totally encouraging, but what about the "others." Does the life of faith *always* guarantee a "happily ever after" ending? Ultimately, eternally, yes, as for the here & now, as for the temporary, no. Does that mean someone's faith has failed them? Not at all, remember what we learned Wednesday evening. God will deliver us in *due* time, but He will strengthen & support us in the *meantime* by faith.

Vs35-40

Some were delivered, others died, but all shared the same faith. God does not deliver (in the sense of in this life) every person from every trial, or every trouble, or every tragedy. & Believe me when I say it takes *more faith* to *endure* than it does to *escape*. The common thread that weaves all of these people together is that by faith they sought the approval of *God* not the approval of man.

If God sees fit to glorify Himself through physically delivering someone, He will. If He sees fit to be glorified (even if we can't see it) in not delivering His own, He'll do that. We've got to be careful to not draw the conclusion that if someone is not physically delivered that points to an absence of faith. What was the testimony that God preserved for those who were tortured, tormented, destitute & afflicted? "Of whom the world was not worthy..." So some escaped the edge of the sword by faith, others were slain by the sword in faith, they all pleased God & obtained a good testimony through faith. Faith does not ensure circumstantial favor, but it does ensure the eternal reward.

Now these died in faith not having received the promise, they didn't see the completion of the Messiah's work on their behalf. God having provided something even better for us (we're partakers of the N.C. the completed work of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit to live in each of us). "That they should not be made perfect (that is complete) apart from us." They looked forward (by faith) to the Messiah, they didn't get a jump on us in that respect, no matter what part of history God calls us to occupy we all center around & come to Him, through the same means, the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross.

Now they were able to lead their lives in faith having never received the promise. We *have* received it, we *are* partakers of it, how much more should we be able to endure difficult & discouraging days, looking to the reward, setting aside the temporal & passing pleasures of this world, counting the promises of God worthy of our confidence?

Prayer Points:

God we've heard Your word today, & we receive the increase of our faith. You've told us that faith comes by hearing Your Word & so we receive it, we thank You for it, & now may our lives reflect it. & Whatever You want to do, however You want to do it in our lives, help us to trust in You.

Maybe you're at a place where you've not yet committed your heart to Christ, you've not trusted in Him, you've not placed your faith in Him. W/out faith it's impossible to please God, for he who comes to Him must believe that He is, & that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. God wants you to enter into the reward of everlasting life today. Will you trust Him for it, it doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done, if you'll call upon the name of the Lord, you will be saved, why not do that today?