



The Footsteps of ABRAHAM

Living By Promise

- Romans 8
- Abraham and Sarah were already old when God promised them a child
 - They waited and waited and waited... 30 years before it happened
- Abraham was 75, and Sarah 65, when God confirmed that a son would be born to them
 - 25 years before it happened
- 11 years later God said that they would surely have a son
 - It still didn't happen for 14 more years
- Most people would get discouraged after a year or two...
 - Try living your whole life barren...
 - Then be promised a child at age 70
 - Then not get pregnant for 30 more years...
- The strain on their faith must have been incredible!
- I think we get a glimpse of how hard it was in Genesis 17
- Genesis 17:1
 - 1) And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

• 90 years old... It had already been 15 years...

• Genesis 17:2-7

- 2) And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.
- 3) And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,
- 4) As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.
- 5) Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.
- 6) And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.
- 7) And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

• God continues to promise them a son...

• And then he gets specific... And look at what happens...

• Genesis 17:15-17

- 15) And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall* her name *be*.
- 16) And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her.
- 17) Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall *a child* be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

• An understandable response from someone who has been waiting for so long...

• Sarah has the same response in the next chapter:

• Genesis 18:10-14

- 10) And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard *it* in the tent door, which *was* behind him.
- 11) Now Abraham and Sarah *were* old *and* well stricken in age; *and* it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.
- 12) Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

- 13) And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?
- 14) Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

- To wait so long for anything is amazing...
 - They obviously would have given up on the idea of having children after Sarah reached Menopause
 - But that still means that they had waited 30 to 40 years after marriage...
- And then God promises them that it **IS** going to happen...
 - And they have to wait another 30 years!
- I've never waited 30 years for anything!
 - Ask my wife... I can barely wait 30 minutes for anything!
 - The strain on their faith must have been intense...
- But, we know that they believed God and it was imputed to them for righteousness!
 - They believed that it was going to happen...
- Look at how Paul describes their faith in Hebrews 11:
 - Hebrews 11:11-12
 - 11) Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.
 - 12) Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.
- Notice how it says that through faith she “received strength to conceive”?
 - This was something that she was looking for
 - It was something that they were trying for
- They Lived by Promise!
 - They were constantly looking forward...

- Living by Promise
- Look at the rest of Hebrews 11, and you can see this same pattern in Abraham's life:
- Hebrews 11:8-10
 - 8) By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.
 - 9) By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:
 - 10) For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.
- Ur was no backwater...
 - Ur was civilized and cultured
 - Archaeologists have shown that it actually had running water!
- God tells Abraham to pack and virtually go camping
 - He doesn't tell him where he is going to send him
 - He doesn't tell him how long he is going to be gone
- And Abraham goes...
 - What's greater than that? He stays...
 - Over 30 years of living in tents with Isaac and Jacob
- He could have returned to Ur
 - But, he was more concerned about what was before him... Not what was behind him
- This is the attitude that God is looking for!
- God wants people of Promise
 - People who live in Hope
 - People who live in Faith

- And in Abraham's case... Die in Faith

- Hebrews 11:13-16

- 13) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
- 14) For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.
- 15) And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.
- 16) But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

- His whole life spent following God

- Those many years wandering the desert

- And he did not receive the promise

- What kept him going?

- He saw the promises

- Even though they were a long way off

- He saw them in the distance... with the eye of Faith

- He saw the Kingdom

- It was that vision that kept him going

- He **KNEW** that God had promised him that Kingdom, and that God was going to give it to him

- Hebrews 11:16 - NIV

- 16) Instead, they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

- Abraham lived by the Promise of the coming Kingdom

- The same Promise that we live by

- He looked forward all the way to Christ

- ...and to the Resurrection
- We know that he understood the resurrection, because of his actions with Isaac...
- Hebrews 11:17-19
 - 17) By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,
 - 18) Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:
 - 19) Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.
- Talk about living by Promise!
 - Talk about living in Faith!
- Abraham believed God so thoroughly that he was willing to do the unthinkable...
 - His vision of what lay ahead of him so clear, that he could see Isaac rising from the grave at the feet of his Lord
- Abraham never received the Promises in his lifetime...
- Hebrews 11:13
 - 13) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
- But, he saw them afar off...
 - And was persuaded of them...
 - And embraced them...
- He realized that what was to come in the future was SO much better than what he could have then...
 - He understood the value and beauty of the Kingdom
 - He saw the Glory...
- He looked forward
 - He looked to Jesus...

- Hebrews 12:1

- 1) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

- Do we hear the message of Paul?

- Laying aside every weight? Setting aside the sin that weighs us down?

- Do we spend our time focused on what we've done wrong in our day?

- Or do we look to Jesus...

- Hebrews 12:2-3

- 2) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- 3) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

- We don't need to carry a suitcase of shame for the sins that we have committed

- We don't need to discourage ourselves with guilt

- We need encouragement in our daily battles

- We need to look to Jesus

- Hebrews 12:2-3 NIV

- 2) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- 3) Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- Want to talk about looking forward?

- Consider our Lord

- Luke 9:58 (***Don't Look This Up***)

- 58) And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

- Three and a half years moving from place to place
 - Not finding companionship with a wife
 - Not starting a family or settling into a comfortable house
- Knowing from your youth the Cross that lay before you
 - Having your most loyal disciples fall asleep when you ask them to pray for you in the final hour
 - Being deserted in your final moments by all that you love
 - Denied by your friends
 - Ridiculed and humiliated by your enemies

- Hebrews 12:2 MESSAGE

- 2) ... he never lost sight of where he was headed - that exhilarating finish with God - he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God.

- We need to follow that example...
 - We need to look over the current trials of this life and look forward to the one to come

- Hebrews 12:3 MESSAGE

- 3) When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he endured. That will fill your soul.

- Look to Jesus
 - Take encouragement that whatever trials you face, they pale in comparison to his

- Hebrews 12:1 NIV

- 1) ... 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.

- Repentance is the means by which we lay aside the sins that weigh us down
 - We turn them over to God and release them...

- We shed them daily
 - Instead of carrying them with us...
- Paul speaks about putting off the Old Man...
 - This is the process by which we focus our energy and our talents on the actions of the New Life, and let the former life die...
- Ephesians 4:22-23
 - 22) That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
 - 23) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
- With the mind we serve Christ...
- Ephesians 4:24
 - 24) And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
- Ephesians 4:24 MESSAGE
 - 24) Work the New Life into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you.
- It all boils down to building the Character of God in our hearts
 - To replacing our existing, natural, fleshly RE-actions with Godly actions
- What we would normally, naturally, instinctively do...
 - Needs to be re-thought and re-considered...
- “My own best thinking is what got me in the mess that I’m in...”
 - Turn your life over to God
 - Start to see things His way
 - Follow His character, and not your own
- Paul continues with some great examples of changing from “**our**” way of things to God’s

- Examples of making this transition from the Old Man to the New Man...
 - Taking the extra step...
 - The Godly Step...
- Ephesians 4:25
 - 25) Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.
- It's not just a matter of stopping lying...
 - The focus here is on speaking truth with your neighbor!
- Ephesians 4:28
 - 28) Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.
- That's the life God wants us to live
 - Sure, stop stealing... That's a given!
 - But, move forward from that! Do something GOOD with your life!
 - The Law simply said, "Thou shalt not steal."
 - Focusing on avoiding the negative doesn't feed the hungry!
- Ephesians 4:28 NIV
 - 28) He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.
- Ephesians 4:29
 - 29) Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.
 - Yes, filthy talk shouldn't come out of your mouth...
 - But, what is helpful is to speak edifying words to your Brethren

- To build them up according to their needs...
- Is an occasional bad word going to come out of your mouth?
 - We pray not...
 - But, if it does... That really isn't the point.
- The Point is that you obviously shouldn't focus on filthy language as a Goal in your life...
 - You set your goal as speaking kind, loving, upbuilding, caring and encouraging words to your Brothers and Sisters...
 - Pursue that Goal!
 - Live that Life!
 - Focus on that...
- And have faith in the fact that God's grace will cover your errors...
- Ephesians 4:32
 - 32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.
- Why do we have this as a Goal?
- Why do we act this way?
 - Not because we are trying to earn our way into God's good graces by our actions
 - But, because ***"God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"***
- We are walking this way as a response to God's loving actions towards us...
- This is the race that Paul calls us to run in Hebrews 12
- Hebrews 12:1 NIV
 - 1) ... 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.**

- Remember, it's not simply a matter of looking forward
 - It's a matter of moving forward
 - Walking! In the Active sense of the word
 - Progressing!
- Not Regressing...
 - Not focusing on the past... What we have done wrong...
 - But focusing on the future... All that we have before us to do right...
- Let's look at how Paul describes this walk in Romans 8
 - Walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit
 - Changing our perspective so that we live not for the Old Man but for the New Man
- Romans 8:1
 - 1) *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
- Those who are in Christ are no longer condemned by their sins...
 - if you walk after the Spirit, and not the Flesh then you walk freely
- Romans 8:2-4
 - 2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.
 - 3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
 - 4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
- God sent His son to free us from sin
- Romans 8:5
 - 5) For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

- Your flesh may still follow the law of your members...
- But your mind is set on the things of the Spirit
 - The battle is fought in your mind... Not in your flesh...

- Romans 8:6-9

- 6) For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.
- 7) Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.
- 8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.
- 9) But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

- We are not walking in the “flesh”...
 - The spirit of the Living God dwells in us...

- Romans 8:10

- 10) And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

- Romans 8:10 MESSAGE

- 10) But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells - even though you still experience all the limitations of sin - you yourself experience life on God's terms.

- Even though we still experience all the limitations of sin...
 - Even though our souls yearn for an Immortal, Incorruptible body that can serve God in perfection without sin...
 - We are still able to experience life on God's terms through the power of our minds
 - We can see brief glimpses of goodness in the midst of our wickedness
 - If we focus on a life of Service...
 - We will see the goodness of God's grace as we help others...

- If God is powerful enough to raise Jesus from the dead...
 - How much the more will He be able to raise us from a life of worthless sin to a life of service to others?
- Romans 8:11-13
 - 11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.
 - 12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.
 - 13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
- If God has blessed us with this freedom...
 - This release from sinful cares
- We OWE it to Him to live spiritual lives
- We have our sins forgiven through the Lord Jesus Christ
 - God has extended His Grace to save a sinful soul like myself...
- Therefore I'm not going to wallow in my sins, simply because I know they are going to be forgiven...
 - I am driven and motivated to live a life that pleases my Father, and shows Him my appreciation by sharing His love with others...
- No matter how powerful the temptation...
 - No matter how grievous the sin...
- Can anything separate us from this Love that God has shown us through His son?
- Romans 8:31-39
 - 31) What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?
 - 32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?
 - 33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that **justifieth**.

- 34) Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.
- 35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
- 36) As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
- 37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.
- 38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
- 39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to **separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**