

*13All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*

Last week we ran out of time, and gloriously so, before we got to consider these verses, this paragraph carefully.

This chapter on faith seems to me to be a rich vein of gold and I hope you'll enjoy and benefit from it as much as I am if we stay right here and high grade for a while. This is proving to be a wealth of truth to me, and I hope also, for you.

Last week we looked at the 3 promises to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 and how they look forward all the way, beyond our day, to the return of Jesus Christ to this world and His glorious kingdom.

Abraham did not see the ultimate reality of those promises. Neither did anyone else listed in this often called; Hall of Faith. Neither will we in this life.

I think that's important for christians and especially christians in our generation to understand.

The church today has made evangelicalism all about NOW. We're the Now Generation, right? And so in answer to consumer resistance, and in keeping with current trends, the mega church has

changed it's focus. Everything must be about now. Be a better you, now. Find answers to every possible emotional issue now. Have greener grass than your neighbors, now.

In order for the church to be meaningful to the now generation everything has to be geared for now. God wants you happy, healthy, wealthy, whole, now.

Those first words of vs. 13 are foreign to us. *13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises,*

The now generation doesn't like waiting. What kind of God makes you wait for the promises? The current generation of evangelical christians views future promises as pie in the sky that current modern thinking people will not buy. Consumer resistance.

Pie in the sky is for a more gullible simpler time. We post-post-modern folks have heard all that and nobody will respond any more to pie in the sky by and by. If you can't show me something I can get my hands on NOW, this conversation is over.

We're looking at Abraham's faith, because it was a faith that pleased God. He left home and comfort and some of his family behind and set out to find the blessings that God promised. He lived in tents. He waited for God to fulfil what He had promised, not fully understanding that it was for a future time, a future place.

Do you know how many books in the christian book store are about chilling out and waiting for God's promises?

I was interested a few months back, listening to one of MacArthurs tapes and he said out of over 150 books he's written, the only one he's upside down with the publisher is the one about heaven. That one never sold enough copies to pay the publishers investment in

getting it printed.

Christians don't care about heaven? We're only interested in how to have the best life now.

That's what the evangelical church is selling. Jesus will fix everything for you. And heaven is sort of a value added bonus.

I'm trying to show you that there is a disparity with the current church's expectation, and what these hero's of the faith chapter in most cases experienced.

I believe that's important for us. Some undergirding so that if America, and our current life style of ease and mass supply were to evaporate we would still have the foundation of a faith that is unshakable.

Last week we looked at 3 promises God made to Abraham. Real Estate. A place. A land mass area from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates.

Then He promised him offspring that would be un-countable, like the stars of heaven, or the sand at the seashore. Too innumerable to count.

And that offspring would become a mighty nation blessed by God. And then ultimately, all the families of the earth would have blessing by God opened up to them in some way, through Abraham the believer.

Those are the promises. Now what did Abraham experience? How did the reality realized stack up against the promises? Listen to Stephen, in Acts chapter 7 give an account of Abraham in a sermon he was giving to the children of Abraham just before they

stoned him;

*2 And he said, “Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, ‘LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.’ 4 “Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living. 5 “But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM. 6 “But God spoke to this effect, that his DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS. 7 “ ‘AND WHATEVER NATION TO WHICH THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE I MYSELF WILL JUDGE,’ said God, ‘AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE.’*

Abraham never owned a foot of ground in the land God promised him. He moved from place to place and dwelled in tents.

His nephew Lot decided to maybe help God along by pitching his tent with Sodom. Lot says if this is all ours, I'd like to live in a house. And we see Lot living larger than Abraham, dwelling in Sodom. He had a house with a courtyard and a gate. How'd that work out for him when the two angels came to tell him to get out of town.

Abraham never inherited a foot of ground in the promised land. He waited 25 years for the child of promise, and when that child came, he was a very old man.

And as for a great nation blessed by God, after Abraham was dead, the descendants of Abraham were captive slaves in Egypt for 400 years.

God makes vast promises, and yet the experience of the people who are the direct descendants of those promises is un-realized. Why? How do we justify the reality of what was promised against what was realized?

We spoke briefly of that last week. The promises are for a time in the future. The promises in their full realities are still un-fulfilled. We are praying for those promises to be realized when we pray the Lord's prayer.

Come and depose Satan and set up your Kingdom with your rule on this earth for a thousand years. Thy will be done on earth, like it is in heaven.

All of the chosen of God will see those promises fulfilled completely, together, at His table, in His kingdom.

But where does that leave us now, in 2018. What can we expect?

4000 plus years have come and gone since the promises were made. We live 2000 years on this side of the cross of Jesus. We have the complete Word of God in our hands, available to us.

We see in this book how God has worked out His will according to those promises. We have a lot more information than Abraham did.

2000 years of God's dealing with Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel is there for us to ponder. And then 2000 years that they did not see, a parenthesis if you will that we call the church

age.

And we can ponder how God has dealt with His beloved remnant during those long ages. And here we are in 2018. The promises are yet incomplete in all their fullness.

Satan is still the God of this world. His rage is to hinder and kill anything that has anything to do with those promises to Abraham. What is our expectation, right here, right now.

Can we expect more than Abraham who never owned a square foot of the promised land? What is it that God has promised us now, and how does that align with our expectations.

Why is this chapter here, anyways? This is an important topic for us. Faith. How is your faith this morning? If faith had a dipstick like the engine on my old cars, could we take a reading and see what the level is?

I'll just talk about me for a minute. Preachers aren't supposed to do that, and usually I don't. But my example is as good as any.

65 years old. I enjoy good health. A faithful wife of 43 years. Comfort, we live perhaps substandard to what we see on TV these days, but a whole lot better than many others. Our home is very comfortable.

My kids and grandkids are generally doing fantastic. Everybody's standing on their own feet and our kids are excellent parents with excellent mates. My grandchildren are being raised in stable love filled environments with some discipline.

I've got toys out the kazoo. It's embarrassing. Giant wood cameras and lenses with artistic capabilities off the charts, if there was

someone with any talent standing behind them. 5 antique cars to play with and enjoy.

An excellent career where they don't want me to retire. I'm appreciated at work, and the work itself is very satisfying. And I'm rewarded with enough time away from work that I can study and do this little bit for you in the spiritual realm.

I'm blessed, right? But the reason I bring these things up is this; How much of what I just spoke about is promised to me and I can count on it always being there, and how much is the benefit of the place and time where I woke up this morning and found myself?

What if most of that got swept away in a moment of time, like what Job and many others of God's people have experienced. Is my faith of the variety, like Job's that I would shake myself off and say, *though He slay me, yet will I trust Him?*

That's the reason for this chapter, this hall of faith. This is a reality check for God's people. All the stuff is great. We love our life of ease and comfort and enjoying our cool house on a hot day, and our toys and distractions . . . but none of that is promised. All of it can vanish in a day.

Ask Cindy about that. Or Michael and Debbie Baca.

So we want to ponder, what is our faith based on, our perfect life, or something else that would still be there if a tidal wave comes and sweeps all of the good things we enjoy so much away.

Can we say with Paul; *11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the*

*secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Ppn. 4:11 - 13*

Our current context is America, 2018. We've got a president that's running it like a worn out race car, full throttle. It could explode at any moment. Full throttle is great, until a connecting rod comes off the crankshaft and finds a way out of the motor through a hole that was never there before.

How is your faith? If your retirement money and your stuff evaporates and anarchy comes instead, can your faith survive? Is that a fair question to ask?

I just want us to take our pulse. Check our faith dipstick and ask what's really there. If chaos comes is our faith of the variety, like the people in this chapter, that after the tidal wave comes and goes back out to sea, we'll still be standing.

Abraham heard the promises. He never got to experience them in his lifetime. And we'll see in vs. 17 - 19, that the one thing he did get a taste of, Isaac, the promised son, was asked of him.

How's your faith Abraham. I've made all these promises. You're not going to see any of them. Finally, when you're half dead, you'll get Isaac. And then I'm going to ask you to give up even that.

How're you doing with that Abraham? How's your faith holding up?

*13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*



Here's the bottom line beloved. The promises are for a future time and place. As long as Satan is the god of this world, all bets are off. That's your expectation.

All the goodies and comforts and ease and health and retirement income stored away, can come and go. It isn't about here. It isn't about now.

The object lesson for us, for the NOW generation, is in those words; *All these died in faith, without receiving the promises.* That's our base line for faith. If you have expectations above what these folks got to experience, you need to re-consider what your faith is based on.

*but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance,* that's reality. The promises are for the Kingdom, the Authority to reign of God, when Jesus returns and deposes Satan and binds him up, and rules on David's throne at Jerusalem . . .

That's when the promises become reality. Somehow, Abraham and all the others listed in this chapter, understood that and welcomed future promises, as if they were already complete.

Jesus gives us a remarkable insight while he argues with the Jews who are busy rejecting their promised Son, the Messiah of Israel, and plotting His murder.

This is from John chapter 8;

56 *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”* 57 *So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”* 58 *Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”*

Abraham looked way into the future and understood and saw the

Kingdom of God, the authority of God to reign on this earth, and the Son of God who would come and reign.

The blessings of the promises that Abraham understood are a reversal of the curses on this earth when sin entered and Satan displaced God as king.

How does Abraham reconcile the disparity of what is promised and what actually is?

The author of Hebrews is speaking inclusively of everyone who has this same faith that Abraham modeled for us when he says; *and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*

When God calls his beloved people, His own possession out of this world where Satan is currently the usurped ruler, we come out of this world and into a different situation.

Satan no longer owns us. We are God's possession. And yet, like Abraham, we finish out our lives in this place, but after we have become God's own possession, by faith, we are aliens and strangers here. We're exiles on this earth during the remaining time that Satan is the god of this world.

We walked away from that. He may be god of this world until Jesus returns and deposes him, but right now, he has no authority over me. I belong to the God of heaven.

And thus, like Abraham and all of the others in this chapter, I have become separated from this world. A stranger here. An exile. I'm a citizen of heaven. But I woke up this morning, still here. That's a game changer people.

Jesus said, occupy until I come. Well, I'm occupying and I'm enjoying all the blessings God has showered on me, but I need to have a reality check once in a while. All of it can vanish, and I am just an exile and a stranger here, waiting for promises that are for later, not here, not now.

*14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.*

That verse is a reality check that should shake us to our foundations. Is that true of us?

I mean, I look around me at modern evangelicalism, and the last thing I see is a group of people who consider themselves exiles on the earth and they are seeking a country that is . . . not here, not now.

The church of God is completely distracted. It's totally about now. Here. Now. This week I came home from work and told Pam that I found out this week I'm a racist.

She looked at me quizzically, eyebrows raised, because she never knows what's going to come out of my mouth next. So I explained that anyone who is breathing while white, is a racist.

Guess where I learned that. I learned that from the black church. This is the next big deal that Christians are separating from each other about. Racism in the church. Right here. Right now. Huge problem!

Oh, I thought Peter taught us that we are all baptized into a single ethnos. *9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you*

*out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.*

Nothing Peter says there is of any value to the modern church. White christians have mistreated the black christians and now the church is going to be split over this problem.

And that's just one select problem the evangelical church is fighting and splitting over. You can choose from a host of problems the church in 2018 is fighting with each other about.

Peter's teaching that I just read to you squares up perfectly with what the author of Hebrews is telling us.

Don't get distracted with now. The promises are for the Kingdom. Right now we are aliens and strangers in this world. Wouldn't it be nice if the aliens and strangers weren't going off the rails fighting about stuff that has absolutely nothing to do with the big picture that's being presented to us in this chapter!

*14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.*

My fear for the evangelical church in 2018 is that we've lost sight of the far off country of the promises and we've returned to this country, the one that we were supposed to have come out of.

The church is distracted with marxism and social justice and wallowing in real sins of past generations and receiving LGBT folks and on and on.

Some of those things are important to talk about. The church did fall into sin and fail in many ways in it's long history in this country.

It's OK to recognize past failures for what they are, so that we can press on towards the goal of the future promises in unity. But it's not OK to get so bogged down with this world now that it becomes a distracting derailment.

The church has gone off the tracks worrying about this country, this world. Meanwhile that rug can get pulled out from under us at any time. This country, this current American world is on very shaky ground.

We need to leave all of that behind and come out from among them, and be ye separte. So saith the Lord.

*16But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.*

Our example is Abraham, who received the promises and then wandered about living in tents, never owning a square foot of the promised ground, and never leaving the hope of the promises and returning to the old country.

He desired a country that would never be realized here and now. A better country. A heavenly one. Therefore; **Therefore!!**

*Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*

That begs the thought. Is the inverse of that statement also true. If the church is completely bogged down in this current world with all of it's sin and problems, and the so-called church is not living

seperate from this world, what this author calls this country, is God ashamed of that church?

God is not ashamed of people who receive the promises by faith and then live in this world seperated, like aliens and strangers to the sin and fallenness of this world.

This chapter is about people who lived lives seperated from this current fallen world, who were aliens and strangers in this place, and who were waiting for a better place that was promised to them.

How're you doing so far. Is that the kind of faith you have? If this world collapses in around you, are you going to say, good thing I'm just an alien and stranger here.

*17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; 18 it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."*

This is our faith model. Abraham.

He leaves the old world behind because of some promises God made to him, he wanders about, living in tents, he doesn't own any of the promised land, he's practically dead, 100 years old, and finallay, God gives him this one tiny down payment; Isaac.

And I think we'll pick it up there next week and look at this test of faith that God caused in order to give us an example in this man Abraham. Our model of a faith that causes God pleasure and makes Him say, He isn't ashamed to be our God, if we have this kind of faith.

Beloved, we are aliens and exiles in this current world. I'm

preaching to myself when I say, don't build up a fat retirement account for this place. Build one up for the next place.

We have just a few moments left. Listen to a story Jesus told. This is from Luke 16;

*1 Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and this manager was reported to him as squandering his possessions. 2 "And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' 3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4 'I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.' 5 "And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 "And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' 7 "Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' 8 "And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. 9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.*

The moral of the immoral steward is that, this guy recognized, his current situation was one that would not last, and while he still could, he payed it forward to the next.

I love my junk collection, I'm having fun with all the junk, but if I'm shrewd, I need to invest more in the next world, and less in this

one.

Faith considers us as aliens and exiles here, but uses the wealth of this world to invest in the next one.