

05.31.26

Genesis

Chapter 22 - God's Test of Devotion

Devotion's Promise (vs. 11-14)

Genesis 22:11-14: But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.”

1 John says that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Faith is what it's all about, really. We oftentimes quote the passage in Hebrews 11, that tells us without

faith it's impossible to please God. We must first believe that He is and that He actually rewards those who diligently seek Him. There is that sense of devotion and dedication that God is looking for. The eyes of the Lord case the whole earth seeking for those whose heart is wholly His. And so, clearly, God is looking for those that would be devoted, those that would be faithful. Luke makes reference to this in Luke 18 where it states, when the Lord comes, will He find faith on the earth? The more I read Scripture, the more I realize that faith and fidelity is a big deal to God. And He takes it seriously. That's what it's all about. Will you trust in Him? And really, that's where the temptation begins at the very beginning, as you read Genesis 3, as the serpent comes into the garden. The great temptation is, will you believe Him? Will you trust Him? "Has God said...?" That's a simple question to ask, as the serpent does in the garden. And I think that's kind of where it begins, because as Paul makes mention of, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. And there is an obscurity that is going on by virtue of the god of this world, and he is not making things clear. All he has to do is simply put in a question,

“Are you sure God said that?” I mean, how many times have you been looking at a particular passage in Scripture, then you come to a point where God is telling you to do something pretty intense, and there's something inside of you that goes, “Maybe He didn't mean that. Maybe He didn't mean that I had to go all the way.” You know where God comes to Abraham and He tells him, “I'm going to make you a great nation.” “Well, maybe He didn't mean through children, because obviously I can't have kids.” And so, he begins to work through manipulation and all kinds of things. “Indeed, has God said...?” And then, of course, the next thing that the serpent says is, “Surely, you will not die. So, He didn't mean what He said.” Maybe at first you didn't understand what He said, but now you don't believe that He actually meant what He said. And I guess one of the most difficult things that I have to convey, and one of the reasons why I try to be as dogmatic as I can be, is that people don't think that God actually means what He says, but He does. And it is important for us to act upon that by virtue of doing what He says. Jesus will say in John 13, “If you know My will, you're blessed if you do it.” And I think we've kind of

gotten into the realm of thinking that by virtue of maybe quoting something or saying that we believe something that that's good enough for God, but God goes, "No, you have to do it." Of course, that's what the whole Book of James is about, "Faith without works is dead." Did you really believe it?

A number of years ago, I was about 10 years old, I thought I would go into the lawn mowing business. And I remember my father saying, "You know, those lawns are pretty big. And if you start the job, you're going to need to finish it." And I thought it was no problem. So, I'm towing this lawn mower behind my bike and hitting this house and that house and the next house. I'd say about 10 houses later, I finally find this door in which a lady opens the door, and she goes, "I've been looking for somebody to mow my lawn." And I'm basically, "Here I am." So, I come before her, and I said, "Yeah, I'll mow your lawn." She goes, "Well, how much you charging?" And I go, "I hadn't thought through that one." I said, "How much do you want to pay?" And she says, "I'll pay you \$5." And I thought, "Wow, that's great. 5 bucks. All I

have to do is mow a lawn.” So, I started the lawn, and wow, that yard got bigger the longer I mowed. But I kept hearing a voice in my head and in my heart from my father, “Finish the job.” So, I stuck it out. I finished the job. Just suffice it to say, I didn't look for more jobs that day. But it came to a point in which the commitment that I made had to be worked out. And it was the working out that showed the reality of what I said, “I'll mow your lawn.” Now, on the lady's part, she said, “I'll pay you.” But here again, I had to mow the lawn in order to get paid. We start off with a commitment. We start off with, “I'll do this.” And God says, “Let's see.” And it is in fulfilling the commitment that God rewards. And so, it is in this particular passage that we see the rewarding that God gives to Abraham because he did what he said he believed.

If you go all the way back to Genesis 15, we have that magnificent passage in which God promised Abraham something. And it's kind of an interesting picture in which the lady said, “I'll pay you \$5.” There's a promise that's

made. But once again, the realization of that promise didn't come till I actually did something.

The passage starts off in Genesis 15, in which the Lord showed Himself to Abram. And He tells him in verse 1, (Genesis 15:1) “... “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.””

(Genesis 15:2) Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?””

(Genesis 15:3) And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.””

And once again, that's kind of trying to figure out what did God actually mean. “Did He actually mean that He was going to make me a great nation and was He the one that was going to fulfill that or do I have to manipulate it?”

Once again, the battle is, what actually does faith mean?

What does it mean to trust in God completely?

(Genesis 15:4) “Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one”

who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.””

Now, the Lord's going to still have to clarify this even more, though this is pretty clear to me, but of course, Abraham and his wife go, “Well, maybe He didn't mean from my body, just from your body.” And so, we know that they have that kind of battle, but what does God mean by this?

(Genesis 15:5) “And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.””

Now, this is the key verse within the text,

(Genesis 15:6) “Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

That's actually quoted in Romans 4 as well. In other words, there was a moment in which he believed in his heart.

Now, we're fast forwarding about another 40 years, and it's a disjuncture that God says, “I want to take your son,

your only son, and I want you to lay him on the altar. And I want you to offer him as a burnt offering.” Now, it's at this point that he actually has to do something in regards to what he had proclaimed. And he passes the test. We see the act of devotion. It is our perception that this was a punctiliar point in time in which he made a decision at this moment to do something. But Scripture wants us to know that there's a cumulative effect of what was going on in Abram's life up to this point that brought him to the point of full commitment. In other words, faith is something that we cultivate. Psalm 37 tells us, “cultivate faithfulness.” And it is in that cultivation of faithfulness that we begin to be able to make those magnanimous or great points that God calls us to make decisions on.

So, as we come to this passage, I just want to remind you that God has been leading up to this. And one of the reasons why this particular moment is towards the end rather than towards the beginning.

As you look at the passage, we have an interesting point in verse 15,

(Genesis 22:15) “Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time...”

Now, verse 11 tells us that the angel of the Lord came to him the first time. And the first time was in which he proclaimed the salvation that was going to be had by virtue of God providing the way. In other words, “Not your son; My son. I'll provide.” Redemption is provided, a burden is lifted, and God is declaring in this first reveal that He was going to save; that He was going to redeem; that He was going to lift this burden that Abraham had. Now, there's a second one. Scripture gives us these outlines, and really, in this particular passage, we begin to see how God is working. For instance, as you see the children of Israel, God comes to the children of Israel, and He rescues them out of the hand of Egypt. That's the first time. He then comes again and He goes, “Now, I'm going to send Joshua and he's going to take you into the promised land.” That's the second time. And that's why we have the book of Deuteronomy, which is basically preparing them for the second phase. Phase 1, salvation. Phase 2, inheriting the blessings. And that's the way it

goes. So that when you see, for instance, the first coming of Christ, Christ comes to take away your sins and the salvation of Christ. But He looks at His disciples, and He says, "But I'm coming again." It says that in John 14. Of course, we see it in Acts 1, "I'm going to come again. And when I come again, I'm going to receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also, and you'll reap all the blessings, the heavenly blessings in heavenly places; you enter into the inheritance." Now, what's interesting is that once Christ came the first time and then He goes up, literally caught up in heaven, once again, Acts 1, you read that, you have this wonderful picture in which He then looks to them and He goes, "And this is the beginning of your inheritance." So, we actually began the inheriting part as we take the journey. We've been saved, but now God says, "Do you want some of the inheritance?" And we go, "Yeah, we'd like the inheritance." And He goes, "Okay, tell me you're ready. Start mowing the lawn." See? So, a lot of people come to the Lord and they go, "Well, you know, I've been blessed. Here I am. I believe I've received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Where are the blessings?" And God goes, "Mow the lawn. The

blessings are yours.” You can hear the promise of God. “\$5 bucks is yours.” “When?” “After you mow the lawn.” So, what we have is that the beginning of the great blessings that God is going to bestow upon Abraham, and God says, “Because you have done this thing, now blessings are released.” So many times Believers wonder, “Where are those blessings that I've been promised? Scripture tells me that I have all these blessings. And I just have yet to partake of them.” And God goes, “You're just sitting there.”

Once again, Jesus tells His disciples, and it really is in the context there in John 13, in which we were talking about washing the feet, right? “I'm your Lord, I do this.” So, if you know what you're supposed to be doing, you're blessed if you do them. Where do the blessings come from? When you do them. It's the activation of those things.

So, as we come to this passage, we see a second time in which the angel of the Lord comes to him, and it specifically wants us to know that the angel comes from heaven. That is to say, we have this picture of

permanence rather than temporary. So, there is a permanent thing that's met the first time the angel of the Lord comes from heaven, and that is that you've been redeemed and that's a permanent thing. The second time the angel of the Lord comes and now we have the blessings and that's a permanent thing.

We read in verse 15,

(Genesis 22:15) “Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,

(Genesis 22:16) and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son.”

In other words, “You didn't just say you believed, you didn't just say you trusted Me, you showed that you trusted Me.” Once again, I just want to convey to you that God says, “Now, I know.” And once again, we talked about the fact that, okay, God's not getting new knowledge here. But what He's talking about is, “You've made it evident by virtue of doing what you said you were going to do.” And so, it is the grace of God that rewards those things that we do in earnest and in works.

So, the passage goes on,

“and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son.””

“You've been devoted. You've declared devotion to Me. You've declared that you are going to be faithful to Me. I now have seen you have practiced that faithfulness.”

Because of this, if you look in the passage,

(Genesis 22:17) “Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens...”

Now, what's interesting is, you go back to Chapter 15, 40 years prior to this, it's the same promise that God had given. But in this text, He says, “Now, it's going to happen.” So, the promise was given in chapter 15 as the declaration was given, “I trust You.” He goes, “Because of that, all the promises are yours. \$5 is yours.” I mean, before I got to the house, before the door opened, I didn't have \$5 promised to me. I didn't have the hope of \$5. But as soon as they opened the door, and they said, “Yeah,

you can have the job,” I received that job. Where are the blessings? You’ve got to do something.

“Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

In other words, they're going to be successful and productive in all that they do. “Gate” gives the sense of not only wisdom, but the place in which they have great prosperity.

(Genesis 22:18) “In your seed (singular) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

“Because you did what I told you to do.”

(Genesis 22:19) “So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.”

Now, remember, Beersheba is where the Philistines are, and that's where God gave him the “well of the oath,” which is what that particular name means. And it gives an

interesting picture of the “well of sevens,” which is a completion or a picture of God saying, “Live in the land of completion.” What Scripture is telling us is, “Finish the job, and that's where the blessings come from.” There's something inside of us that fundamentally says, “Does God say? Is He going to really fulfill this?” And one of the reasons why we don't act upon the promises that God gives us. God tells you, “If you do this, this will happen.” But we go, “I don't know if I can believe Him. I don't know if He actually means what He says. Maybe I have the wrong rendition. Maybe I need the King James. Maybe I need something else.” And so, we began to look in virtue of that rather than just simply trusting Him with that transparent trust in the clarity in which the Word of God states and means what He says. God is not ambiguous, I have found, and is very clear about the things that He says. And really, as you look at the life of Abraham all the way through his life, God has been faithful really despite in many times Abraham's inability to remain faithful. And that is to say that God has been protecting him from hostile forces from the very start. God is the One that actually took care of even his domestic problems, as you

consider. God is doing miracles in his life all the way through this journey, this traveling, and what He's getting Abram to do is to cultivate a sense of faithfulness.

James will touch upon this, and there are a couple of passages in the New Testament that I want you to see because it's important that you comprehend what God is telling you in this. By virtue of you comprehending and understanding and believing, my hope is that you'll begin to act upon it. And once again, no better book to go to than the Book of James. So, if you look in the Book of James, James will actually mention Abraham specifically in this context. And so, if you turn me to James 2, we'll see exactly what James will use this passage for.

The statement that he makes in verse 14 is,

(James 2:14) “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?”

In other words, if you don't really prove your love and devotion, is that really love and devotion?

(James 2:17) “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead...”

(James 2:20) “But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?”

(James 2:21) “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?”

So, it's actually taking the particular passage that we're looking at in Genesis 22.

(James 2:22) “You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected.”

Let me put it another way. The job was finished. See, you finished the job. Oh, blessings coming. Right.

You read in Malachi, and He says, “Bring the whole tithe and see if I don't open the windows of heaven.” Now, the blessings are already there for Israel. But what they have to do is bring the whole tithe. They have to be all in order for the windows to open up. It's already been promised to them.

It says in verse 23,

(James 2:23) “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED

TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God.”

Well, I know you just read that, and you're thinking that, “Okay, that verse is directly tied to him offering his son on the altar,” and I would say, no, that was 40 years before. So, this particular verse that he puts in, verse 23,

“And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS...””

Now his point is, he declared his faith in God at that moment in Genesis 15, 40 years before him bringing his son on the altar. God says, “But his commitment wasn't fulfilled till he put his son on the altar 40 years later.”

That's why he uses the word, if you look at the beginning, in verse 23, “and the Scripture was fulfilled.” So, the statement clearly is making reference to the fact that the blessings come as you begin to act upon the things that God calls upon you to do. God has a great inheritance for you.

Interesting passage in Romans, and just kind of keep your finger in James because we're going to go back to Hebrews, but if you look with me in Romans in 8, it says, (Romans 8:14) “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

(Romans 8:15) For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

(Romans 8:16) The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

(Romans 8:17) and if children...”

Well, that's interesting. Wait, stop, stop. Children. Okay, so we're part of the family, right? Yeah, but there's a second part to this.

“And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if...”

There's an “if” there. Did you ever notice that?

“... if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

What's the prerequisite for inheritance? If you suffer with Him.

It's interesting, you go into Corinthians and it says, all your deeds are going to be kind of measured out, some with hay, wood, stubble, some with gold and silver. Your work will actually go through the fire. Some will be saved, yet so as through the fire, but not having anything. And I would say there are people who make the declaration of faith maybe enough to be genuine; Once again, I'm not going to give you hope that 1 John doesn't, but will not receive the blessings in this life or later because of the fact that they never did what God told them to do.

The angel of the LORD comes to him a first time; the angel of the LORD comes to him a second time. Now, the blessings are released. Why? You obeyed God.

If you look with me in Hebrews 6, it will also use this interesting passage by way of giving an example of, interestingly enough, endurance. One of the great themes of the Book of Hebrews is to endure, right? So, this act of devotion is really conveyed by virtue of... I mean, we come to God, and we go, "We're devoted to You." He

goes, "Okay, let's see." And then something happens in our life, and we go, "I can't take it anymore. It's been happening too long." And He says, "How long?" "2 days." And we get all bent out of shape.

Hebrews 6, if you look at the passage, it says,

(Hebrews 6:10) "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work..."

And I think sometimes you go into the things, and you start doing all the right things, and you go, "I don't think anybody sees me." And God goes, "I do."

And once again,

(Hebrews 11:6) "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

It's about the consistency and the enduring, that there is a reward in enduring. And one of the reasons why 40 years later, what's been happening with Abraham is that we see a consummation of perfection in which he didn't just go, "You know what, I think I'll offer my son on the altar." No, He's been cultivating this faithfulness. And the same thing

is true with you. And there is a warning. I'm going to make mention of this as we go.

(Hebrews 6:10) “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

(Hebrews 6:11) And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance...”

And once again, you go into the Book of 1 John, you go, “Where's the confidence? Why don't I have confidence? I'm saved. Why don't I have confidence?” And John would say, “Because you're not doing any of this stuff.”

“Where's the confidence about me getting paid for the lawn?” Well, you haven't started mowing yet. The longer you mow, the more confident you get about getting the reward. So, it's a consistency, right? Then it breaks down somewhere along the line.

“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,

(Hebrews 6:12) so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Okay, so you probably ought to underline that verse. When do you inherit? When you finish the job. Where are those blessings that God promised? Don't be sluggish, be imitators who through faith and patience inherit the promise. Now, in this context, he mentions Abraham and the direct text that we're reading in Genesis. Let's just read it.

(Hebrews 6:13) “For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself.”

I remember so many times I've read that and I go, “Okay. But God doesn't have to do that.” Yeah, you'll see.

(Hebrews 6:14) “Saying, “I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.””

Now, once again, this is God's declaration, “Because you have done this...” It actually says that in Genesis, right? “Because you did this, because you acted on your faith,

because you displayed a work that was evident, and I experienced this. Because of this, I will surely bless you. I will surely multiply you.”

(Hebrews 6:15) “And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.”

“God gave me a promise.” “Where is it?” “Wait.” “Till what?” “Till you do something.” And it's in that consistency that brings the inheritance. God opens up the windows of heaven. God pours out the blessings that He had promised in Genesis 15, but now are going to be real. In fact, the next 50 years of Abraham, so he's fundamentally been in the promised land from the time that he was called in Genesis 12 to now 22. It's been somewhere in the neighborhood of close to 50 years. He will now live another 50 years. And we will hear very little about any kind of problems or pain. Now, I'm not saying to you that if you do what is pleasing to God, you're going to have 50 years of just bliss. But what I am saying is that God rewards those who diligently seek Him. And there is a peace that comes into your life. It's like the disciples come up to Jesus, and they go, “We followed You, we've left

everything, what do we get?" And Jesus goes, "Well, let Me tell you. You'll get many things here on this earth and then blessings eternal to follow." So, don't think for one moment that God doesn't give you blessings here. You can release the inheritance here. This is what Ephesians 1 is all about. God has given you blessings in heavenly places. You go, "Blessings in heavenly places." Yes, but do you understand what heavenly places mean? It means that God has given you eternal blessings here. When He's talking about the angel of the LORD came from heaven on these two occasions, He's talking about eternal messages from heaven. So, these are messages that are eternal that God is giving you. And you can have eternal blessings here. The souls of men are eternal blessings when you think about it. But the relationships that you build and the depth of the relationship are all eternal blessings. The peace that God gives you, when do you think it ends? The salvation that God gives you, you think it ends? So, God gives you eternal blessings, heavenly blessings in heavenly places, guaranteed, so to speak. That's basically fundamentally the point when the declaration is that God

swears by Himself, because you're going to see how this pans out.

It says in verse 16,

(Hebrews 6:16) “For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

(Hebrews 6:17) In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

(Hebrews 6:18) so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

(Hebrews 6:19) This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

(Hebrews 6:20) where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Now, what has he been saying in the text? Well, if I could just synopsise it for you, give you a “Reader's Digest” version. What God is saying is that because he was faithful, i.e. Abraham, to be devoted to Him, and once again, I want to remind you, this was not just a moment of sacrifice. This was something that had been cultivated through the life of Abraham. And then when it came to make the decision, he made the right decision. You can't just all of a sudden become faithful. You cultivate faithfulness and then you become faithful. I can tell you, once I started getting into mowing the lawns, every lawn after that I finished all of them. And after a while, you don't even think about not finishing. And God gives you perhaps something bigger and He goes, “Now, you got something really big,” but there's not even a second thought, “I'm going to finish it,” because that's who you are. You've been cultivating this person. God is rewarding, and this is a key point here, James makes mention of that, of course, that his faith was perfected in the sense that he finished. The same thing is true now within this passage, and Hebrews is making reference to this because one of

the main themes of the Book of Hebrews is “Finish-
endure to the end.”

So, in this passage he goes,

(Hebrews 6:13) “... since He could swear by no one greater...”

So, what is God doing when He swears by His own self? Well, He's taking man out of the picture. You go, “Why is that special?” Because man is transient and man is temporary. So, at this moment, what happens is God has just given something that's eternal to Abraham. He swore by Himself, the eternal One. How do we know He's talking about eternity?

Because if you look at verse 20,

(Hebrews 6:20) “where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever...”

And so, he's going to hit upon this in Chapter 7 as well, in which if you look,

(Hebrews 7:3) “... the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.”

And he actually does a comparison between the human priest, and he says, “Christ being your priest is a lot better because He's like ‘forever.’ He intercedes forever.”

(Hebrews 7:17) “For it is attested of Him, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.””

That's why it says in verse 19,

(Hebrews 7:19) “(for the Law made nothing perfect) ...”

Complete; didn't finish the job. But God has given us a better hope. What's the better hope?

Look at verse 22.

(Hebrews 7:22) “So much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.”

Why?

(Hebrews 7:24) “But Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.”

Why is it good that God swore by Himself?

(Hebrews 7:25) “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him...”

“Because you have been faithful and devoted to Me, I will give you forever blessings, reserved in heaven for you, will not fade away, something that nobody can take away because I swear by My eternal. You're going to die, but you're going to be raised again because I promised you eternal blessings.” It's such a wonderful passage.

Look, I think sometimes we perceive fidelity and faithfulness as, okay, maybe something important, but not really that. But let me just ask you a simple question. If God said to you, “I'm going to save you for 10 years,” I'm pretty sure that you would like to hear “forever,” or according to Hebrews 13, how about “I will never leave you; I will never forsake you”? How about that one? What God is saying is, “I highly reward faithfulness.” And it's one of the reasons why in the Book of Hebrews, He'll continually hound upon this, “You have to see this thing through.” You go, “Why do I need to see it through? Why do I have to endure?” Because that's where the blessings come. The blessings don't come one or two days in it. The blessings come when you're faithful.

Go back to Hebrews 3, if you'll look with me.

(Hebrews 3:5) “Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;

(Hebrews 3:6) but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are...”

Here's this “if” again. You saw it in Romans, now you see it in Hebrews.

“... if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.”

Finish the lawn.

It goes on and says in verse 12,

(Hebrews 3:12) “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart.”

In what? Not finishing. See what it says?

Drop on down to verse 14,

(Hebrews 3:14) “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”

Where do you become a partaker of Christ? Where do the gifts come from? Where do the promises start flowing? God promised the promises 40 years prior. But now, in Chapter 22, He goes, “Now, they're released because you did it. You put to practice what you said that you were going to do.” And that's why Hebrews will say, “Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves.” You go, “Well, what's wrong with a hit and miss?” And God goes, “There're no rewards in that.” There are no rewards in hit and miss. Be devoted to one another in love. That's where the blessings come. I mean, if you know these things, you're only blessed if you do them. Jesus will say.

Look at Hebrews 13, and we'll close with this particular passage. It should not surprise you how this chapter begins,

(Hebrews 13:1) “Let love of the brethren continue.”

“I love you sometimes, but I don't love you other times. Sometimes you make me mad, sometimes...” Where's the value?

(Hebrews 13:2) “Do not neglect...”

Why is he using that word? I mean, sometimes you feel hospitable, don't you? Sometimes you don't. I'm not going to say anything about a “nut,” but anyway.

It says in verse 3,

(Hebrews 13:3) “Remember the prisoners...”

And then, why do you think he puts this in, verse 4?

(Hebrews 13:4) “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled...”

Why would he say that? Because what we're talking about is fidelity. What we're talking about is hanging in there. What we're talking about is finishing the course. And it's in that consistency that God rewards. And that's why within this text, God says, “Didn't I say I would never leave you?” And quite frankly, He should have divorced me a long time ago. But He's been faithful to me. And God loves faithfulness. This is who He is. Faith and faithfulness tied hand in hand. And when you come to Him and you believe in His saving power, God saves you. Let me tell you something. He's coming a second time, and His rewards are with him. Now, the point is that the second

time, you want those blessings released that He promised you? Go for it. Start doing it.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for these blessings that You have poured out upon us, for You clearly love us far beyond what we could ever imagine. We have to admit that there are times that we are clearly unfaithful, but You remain faithful; you cannot deny Yourself. Lord, we realize according to Your word that fidelity and consistency, perseverance and endurance are all things that You love so much. And because of the devotion of this one that really culminated to the point of laying his only son on the altar was so pleasing to You that You would promise him forever blessings.

Your head's bowed and your eyes closed. Perhaps you're feeling frustrated about the blessings of the Lord, wondering where they are. Scripture is telling you that they're here. They've been here all along. The door's been opened. The deal's been made. The promise is given. All you have to do is finish.

