

Not ashamed to be called your God - February 1st

Last week, if you were here, we had a missionary friend, Brother Rob Grindley, spoke to us and what a great word that we heard last week. It was a powerful word, to believe without doubting. To believe without doubting.

See if we doubt, God rewards our doubt with not answering our prayer request. That's basically what James says. But if we pray and believe that God has heard us and will answer us, we will receive from God.

What a great word. Amen? To check our hearts. And he made a statement that just really hit me in the face and he said, most of the times our mouths, meaning the words we say, stop the blessings from God flowing into our life because we speak doubt and we speak negativity.

So we have to check our words, which of course flow out of our heart. And I love Brother Rob because he always challenges me with scripture. We, of course, last week was Last Chance Chapel's Mission Summit and since Brother Rob was speaking here we just went ahead and hosted him the whole week.

And long days, we would get home about 10 o'clock at night after the evening service and then for the next two hours we would begin discussing and he would always ask the most difficult, challenging questions. But then we would spend two hours discussing things until midnight and then back up at six to do it all over again. But really, really enjoyed Brother Robyn.

And one of the reasons I enjoy having him here to speak to us is though he's a missionary, he always brings the Word of God. That's his most important thing that he does. And yes, they do have the fundraise, that's the part of it.

But I trust that with Brother Rob he's going to come and he's going to hear from the Lord and he's going to give a word to us that we need to hear. And it was really challenging in my heart. And so this week I'll do my best to bring a challenge to us out of the book of Hebrews.

But we're going to be in Hebrews chapter 11, starting in verse 11 if you want to go there. And this passage starts out talking about Sarah and the writer begins to explain how the faith of the fathers begins – I'm sorry, the faith of the father blends well with the Old Testament and New Testament believer. It's a really good mix of faith.

And so let's read our passage here in Hebrews chapter 11, starting in verse 11. It says, Now by faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed. And she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

That's a very important part of that scripture. Therefore from one man and him as good as dead were born as many as the stars of the sky and a multitude innumerable as the sand which is on the seashore. For all these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For those who say such things seek a homeland, and truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a

better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Let's pray this morning. Father, we thank you for your word this morning. Father, we're thankful for Lord that we can judge you worthy to keep your promises, and that you have built a city not made by human hands, but by your own hands, a place which where we can belong and call home.

And Father, we thank you for that, for the love that you have showed us, for the mercy and the grace that you have given us. And Father, we pray that you would help us to understand your word as we speak it and hear it this morning. Father, anoint my lips to say your words, to speak your truths, and anoint our ears to hear what the Holy Spirit says to us, that we might apply it to our hearts and become more like your Son.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. As we've been going through the Old Testament, Fathers, I began to have a question as I was studying this week.

Have you ever wondered how the Old Testament guys did it? I mean, they didn't have the Holy Spirit. They didn't have communion with the Father like we do. They got an opportunity to go and offer sacrifices a couple times a year, but outside of that, they were kind of left on their own a little bit just to make it.

And I find that interesting because from an early on, at least I was brought up in the church, but when we become Christians, from the very beginning, we're often taught that whatever we have faith for and whatever we ask God for, we will get, right? I mean, that's kind of what Brother Rob preached last week. But if we don't have enough faith, then we don't. And I believe, if it's a truth in my life, it must be a truth in your life, but I believe we all have hopes and requests that we have prayed about repeatedly over the years without seeing much progress, at least it seems that way.

So what do we do with those requests, near and dear to our heart, but yet, no matter how much we pray about them or ask about them, there just doesn't seem to be any moving. And so I began to ponder, well, how do I deal with that? Taking the passage in James, I begin to examine my heart. Is there any doubting that I can take care of that? I've prayed for God's will to be done over my wants and desires because I realize sometimes what I want and what I desire may not be what God wants.

And I begin to pray that way. And after all of that, I still continue to make my petitions known, but yet there still doesn't seem to be much moving. Not many answers.

So what do we do then? And I believe that's what the heart of this passage speaks to us this morning, and we want to talk about that. And it's interesting that faith in the New Testament is a little bit different than faith in the Old Testament because, like I said, we have the Holy Spirit living with us. We have the Word of God that's written for us to go back and read, but it's really not that much different from the faith in the Old Testament.

And I believe in reality it's two sides of the same coin. So I hope this morning to share three ways that they match up perfectly, faith of the Old Testament and faith of the New Testament, so that we can understand that our faith is ultimately in God and not the answer that we seek. Amen? Amen.

So verse 11 tells us that by faith Sarah received strength to conceive life in her barren and dead womb because she heard the promise from God, and the most important part of that passage is she judged or believed that God was faithful. She heard the promise even though there was no life, she

was past the age of bearing childhood. Everything in her life said that this can't happen, but she judged the one who gave the promise to be faithful to keep his promise, so she believed.

And this is the point I plan to get back to as we go through our sermon this morning. In verse 13, I believe that this passage of Scripture lays out three ways which the Old Testament faith blends smoothly with New Testament faith. See, faith gives the eye and the mind confidence, or it gives it a future vision.

Faith allows the mind and the body to belong elsewhere. It's something called detachment. And faith brings complete victory in death, or it gives us triumph when we seem to lose all.

So Hebrews 11, verse 13 said, All these died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.

So my first point is going to begin in the middle of this passage. It says, they saw it from a distance and they welcomed it. I began to think on this, how can you see something in a distance that's not there and welcome something that you don't have in front of you? Seems kind of difficult, doesn't it? But it seems the writer breaks from his pattern that he's established so far in this chapter and he's going to help us recall how he has arrived at this truth.

See everything God does centers on trusting and believing in Him and His Word. Everything God does centers on us believing Him and His Word. So remember how chapter 11 starts.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. See, the eye is always looking for evidence. It's looking for evidence, it's looking for the reality, it's trying to perceive what's in front of it so that it can give the mind the confidence that it needs to move about to accomplish its goal, to get where it's going.

So can you finish this statement? Seeing is believing. In the physical world, that is one of the truths that we operate on. If I can see it, I believe it.

So I thought about this. Someone comes up to you and tells you this crazy, crazy story. I mean, so crazy you're like, that can't be true.

And they keep telling you this story and if you're me, one of the first questions that come out is, well, did you see it? Did you see it happen? And if they say, no, I just heard about it, you're like, oh, well, yeah, that might be true, but it might not be because you didn't actually see it, so I don't know, maybe it just could be a story. But if they were to say, yeah, I was right there, I was right in the middle of it, I saw it all happen, well, we instantly categorize that as truth because they saw it and they're a first-hand eyewitness and they're telling us about it, so it has to be true. But faith doesn't exactly work that way, does it? To echo the message from Brother Rob last week in James 1, verses 6 and 7, it says, But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. So, as we learned last week and with this scripture, it teaches that if we believe without doubting, we will receive. But you must, you must believe first.

In a weird way, that allows us to kind of glimpse the future or it gives us future sight. See, our mind says, God has promised and I believe because I judge him faithful who has made the promise, and

we all believe that, I believe most of us believe that. But there's one more problem that enters the equation.

We don't know when God is going to answer the request. So if I was to ask everyone here who's saved, do you believe that you're going to heaven? When are you going to heaven? Soon, great. When I die or when Jesus comes back, whichever one's first, then I would ask, well, when is that? We don't know, do we? It's God's plan, not mine.

But do we believe it? But how do you know? It's interesting how we can believe something even if we don't know when it will happen. And the reason we can do that is because we know who's making the promise. God said it, therefore I believe it.

Whether I see it or not, guys, we could really take this to heart because there's so many times we're walking through life, we get discouraged because why? We don't see it. We don't see it. Therefore, we're like, well, God must not care.

He must not be worried about it. God must be absent. I must be outside of his will.

I must have done something wrong. We keep checking it and being like, man, we doubt God. If we're doubting God, as we learned last week, God doesn't have to answer our request.

That's the only way that faith works. When we can see down the road and receive it, knowing that we will possess it based upon the one who has promised, not in the actual act of receiving it. That's what faith truly is.

And in a way, it's kind of like a paradox. A paradox is something that seems contradictory, but it's true. How many of you love to eat jumbo shrimp? That's a paradox.

That's a very contradictory statement. Another contradictory statement is thrifty government. I mean, I don't think that one's actually true, though, so I don't know if that technically counts.

But, hey, there's paradoxes out there. See, faith in God gives us the confidence our eyes need and the evidence our mind needs to believe the promise that he's made. And the truth is, how faith works is not seeing is believing.

How faith works is believing is seeing. It's contradictory. We don't typically operate that way.

We want to see it so we can know it. But if you want to have faith in Christ and you want to follow after Him, you have to believe it so that you can see it. So this faith that we're talking about also allows the mind and the body to belong elsewhere.

The second point this morning. Another word to describe this is called detachment. And for all of us who live in this world, we're very familiar with the concept of detachment, aren't we? There are certain people who have detached themselves from the reality of life and live in some alternate universe, fantasy, whatever you want to call it.

But what's interesting is Satan always seeks to pervert what God has established, doesn't he? See, there are those who have created this construct in their mind to help them avoid the reality in their life. And this really has gained momentum in the world based upon the identity crisis that we see in the youth today, in many people today. But this all started, if you will, back with Abraham.

Because as the father of the faith, Abraham is marked with identifying as one who didn't belong here on earth. But he sought a city whose maker was God in a heavenly country. And as I shared last week was the Mission Summit, I got to spend a good three or four days speaking to and hearing several missionaries who work all over the world and with different groups of people.

And each of these amazing people are examples of a detachment from societal norms. See, they've heard the call of God and they have chosen to live in a foreign country forfeiting all of their cultural comforts that we have. And if you've traveled outside of the United States, you understand that to be in a place not America, there's not anything familiar. The language is different, the culture is different, the food is different, and most of it is very uncomfortable after the excitement of getting to this new place wears off.

It can be very draining on the mind. And if you want proof, you can ask MJ or Brother Bill what it's like in Burundi. Totally different everything.

See, they've given up on the American dream, these missionaries that I was speaking with last week, of building wealth, of driving nice cars, of building nice homes, and retiring after 20 years to live on investments. Which, if you think about it, that's becoming harder and harder to do in our own culture. See, they can do this because their allegiance is elsewhere.

Their loyalty isn't on their culture and what's comfortable to them. They belong to another kingdom, not built with human hands. And actually, Jesus speaks of this kingdom before Pilate and as he's arrested.

Because Jesus shows us his detachment from this world. In John chapter 18, verse 36, he says, my kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders.

But my kingdom is not of this world. See, for all of us who follow Jesus, this world is not our home. Nor is it all that there is.

See, you and I and everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus are looking forward to the place that Jesus is preparing for us. He says, I go to make a place for you to belong, is what he's making. It's a place where we belong.

Is God making us a mansion? I doubt it. I mean, that's an interesting translation. But what he is making for us is he's making a home for us.

He's making a place where we belong, to where we can settle in and that we can put roots down. And that kingdom is in heaven. This is the reason that you and I don't have to be like the world, to try to make a place for ourselves here on earth.

Scripture calls us in Matthew chapter 6 to put our focus where? Seek ye first the kingdom of me. No. God says, seek ye first the kingdom of God.

And he's going to take care of everything we need while we're traveling through this place. But our focus has to be not here, not here, but on Jesus. That's also why he tells us to store up our treasure in heavenly places where both moth and rust can't destroy it.

See, we put our treasure in a place that we'll be able to use it one day. And if we're storing it in heaven, we're going to receive it back. See, with faith in God, we can detach ourselves from having to keep up with the Joneses, so to say.

This is an old saying. No, it's not. Sorry.

Yes, it is. I got lost for a moment. We don't have to keep up with the Joneses, but we can keep our focuses on the one who promises.

Amen? He keeps his promises. And in that way, we live life. Even in death, we triumph.

If we live that way in life, even in death, we triumph. See, all these people died in Hebrews 11, 13, still believing what God had promised them. God had made a promise, but they didn't receive what was promised.

Death, what an interesting subject matter. In human reason, death is defeat. See, in death, we come face to face with the utter unknowable existence beyond the physical world.

The last great frontier to be explored. And in light of the Old Testament believer, I have often said this. What's the point of the promise if they never receive it? Why tell Abraham God's going to give him all these kids, and he got one? It would seem kind of like to build him up just to let him down, right? I mean, why give this great promise? I mean, guys, if you promised your wife \$1,000 and you gave her \$10,000, she's not going to be happy with you, is she? There's this concept of when we feel like we've been promised something, I mean, I should be able to enjoy the promise, right? That's not how God works, though, in a way.

See, but with God, it is through death that we receive this victory. Amen. I mean, you couldn't have asked for better than that.

That was great. Amen. Through death, we receive the victory that Jesus promises us.

So let's look at that. To the Old Testament believer, it was through the death of a lamb that they received the forgiveness of their sins, that it would be rolled forward until Jesus came, of course. It's Jesus' death that satisfied the penalty for my sin and for all of mankind's.

There's triumph in that death. Salvation brings a death to the sinful me, allowing me to be buried and raised again as a new creation in Christ Jesus. See, God has taken what man fears most in death and redeemed it into an avenue to receive the blessing of life.

Paul in 1 Corinthians shouts, oh, death, where is your sting? Where is your victory? In Philippians, again, he says, for me to live is Christ, but to die is defeat. No, but to die is to gain. See, they died believing what God had promised them without receiving the promise in this life, but in death, they were victorious.

They gained victory in their death. The psalmist wrote in 116 verse 15, it says, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. See, he can say this about you and I because the reward isn't receiving the promise.

Rather, the reward is being with God, the one in whom they place their faith. That's the true reward that we receive when we put our faith in Him. See, Jesus won the victory and took the keys to

death, and one day death will be locked away and we will find our home in the kingdom of God where there are no more tears, there are no more sorrow, there is no more death.

What a great day. But this only comes through faith. Judging the one who has made the promise faithful.

A faith that operates on believing is seeing. A faith and confidence in God that is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. A faith so strong that we set our loyalty and nationality in heavenly places and can detach ourselves from the desires of this world to get all we can and can all we get.

Are you familiar with that saying? My daughter wasn't yesterday. She had no clue what that was. The world says to get everything that you can, and in the old days, everybody canned everything to preserve it for as long as you could.

The world teaches us to get all that you can and protect it. Can all that you get. Preserve it for later use.

See, our home is in a city whose foundation and maker is God. Where Jesus has gone to make a place for you and I to belong. And He promises to come again one day.

But even though He tarries, you and I are to live our life with the expectation and confidence of His promise. And even in death, we triumph through the work of Jesus Christ, our Savior. And this is why this is so important.

This is why your faith is such a vital part of who you are to God. Hebrews chapter 11 verse 16 gives us one of the most amazing passages I think I have read and studied to date. They were looking for a better place.

Their faith was in Him for a heavenly homeland. And it's because of that, that God is not ashamed to be called their God. Wow.

For He has prepared a city for them. Leave that up there just for a little bit. Could you have... I couldn't even imagine someone who would have the audacity to say that God is so proud of me, He's happy.

He's not even ashamed to say that He's William Parsons' God. You can put your name there. If your faith is in Him, God is not ashamed to be called your God.

Wow. Why don't you stand with me this morning? A couple of closing thoughts. This morning is your faith in God.

Do you judge Him to keep His promise, to be faithful? Or is your faith in seeing the promise fulfilled, the prayer request answered, getting what you asked for? It's akin to someone who's very wealthy and people are just around Him to get what He has, not to know Him. It's a very different thing. See, God has all things at His disposal.

He could answer all requests and none of them would even begin to touch His resources. But what He seeks most from you and I is a faith in Him that we, despite not receiving anything, judge Him faithful to keep His promise, even though we don't have the evidence to support it in front of us. That's what faith in God is.

That's all that you and I can offer Him, is a faith that says, God, I trust You. That's salvation, guys. That is what salvation is.

God, I trust You to do what I can't do. And because I judge You faithful, I trust and believe You, even if I don't see it. Man, that's hard.

If I'm going to be honest with you, that is hard sometimes. Because we want to just go and make it happen and we have Ishmaels all over the place because we're trying to do it under our own power. But if we judge God faithful and wait for the promise, He will send the Isaac our way.

Hmm. See, when we put our faith in God who has promised, who has given us the promises, God is not ashamed to be called your God. Amen.

Father, we thank You, Lord, for Your Word. Lord, I have to admit it's hard for me to hear that passage. And as I examine my life and look at some of the choices I make, that there's no way in the world that You wouldn't be ashamed of me.

But Father, Your Word is true. And that even while we were sinful and enemies and haters of You, You loved us enough to send Your Son to die for me. And it's through that gift, Father, that I have placed my faith in You, that I have put my trust in You, that I have the ability to detach myself from this world, that I have the ability to put my faith in You, to be able to see and welcome that which I don't have yet.

Thank You, Father, for being faithful to Your Word. Thank You that You show me each and every day that I can judge You worthy to keep Your promises, because You are with me. You show Yourself strong on my behalf.

Father, You never leave me nor forsake me. And all the promises that You have spoken to me through Your Word are true in You. And I thank You for that.

And it is because of that that I put my trust and faith in You, because You are worthy of it. Help us all to walk that way, Lord, to make our heart and our mouth confess that You are truly God and our Savior. And we thank You for this.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. So, I'll give you about 10 minutes.

Don't leave yet. Lots of good things still to happen yet. If you want to grab coffee, go ahead and do that.

We'll be back here about 11.20. We'll get started. Oh, go get your kids, by the way, if you have kids over that way.