

These All Died in Faith

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[0 : 00] I invite you this morning to open up your Bibles to Genesis chapter 23.

We are this morning going to cover all of Genesis chapter 23, which is not as long as it may sound. Chapter 24 is very long, and we'll see that next week. But chapter 23 is not so long, and so we are going to take our time right here at the beginning and read through the entirety of this chapter, all 20 verses.

And so I want to invite you to stand as you turn there and read God's Word with me. Moses tells us, Sarah lived 127 years.

These were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died at Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. And Abram went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

[1 : 10] And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, I am a sojourner and a foreigner among you. Give me property among you for a burying place that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

The Hittites answered Abraham, Hear us, my Lord, you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead.

Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. And he said to them, If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat me for Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns.

It is at the end of his field. For the full price, let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place. Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city.

No, my Lord, hear me. I give you the field. I give you the cave that is in it. In the sight of the sons of my people, I give it to you. Bury your dead. Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land.

[2 : 18] And he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, But if you will, hear me. I give the price of the field. Accept it from me that I may bury my dead there. Ephron answered Abraham, My Lord, listen to me.

A piece of land worth 400 shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead. Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, 400 shekels of silver according to the weights current among the merchants.

So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it, and all the trees that were in it throughout its whole area, was made over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites before all who went in at the gate of his city.

After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

Father, even in a story like this, which seems to contain obscure details, haggling of prices and various things, I pray, Father, even here, that we would be able to see the glory of Jesus as it shines forth through your word, and that you would teach us how to trust in you all the more.

[3 : 40] I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. Usually when we think of the book of Genesis, we think of the book of Genesis as a book of beginnings, because that's what it is.

After all, it begins with the words, in the beginning. So that throughout the book of Genesis, we are shown a number of beginnings, not only the beginning of all of creation, but the beginnings of humanity, for instance, the beginnings of marriage, the beginnings of the first family.

We see eventually with Abraham the beginning of the covenant people of God, the people of Israel. As we look at the life of Abraham and his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, we are seeing the very beginnings of the covenant family.

So the book of Genesis is very much a book of beginnings. But in many ways, to a much lesser extent, of course, it is also a book of endings.

We see not only the beginning of creation, but after six days, we are told that God finished all of His work that He was doing in creation. He finished, we are told, and He rested from all of His work of creating.

[4 : 51] There is an end to the process of the creation of the universe. God finished. It ended. There is, of course, an end to Adam and Eve's and therefore humanity's bliss in the garden, in paradise, when they fall into sin.

There is an end to that time period and they are expelled from the garden never to return there again. There is an end to the tranquility of Adam and Eve's family.

They find themselves in the next generation with murder among their own children and their sons. There is an end to many things as we move our way through the book of Genesis.

But probably more than anything else, what signals to us that the book of Genesis contains a number of endings are the number of times that we see various deaths recorded for us throughout the book of Genesis.

So, for instance, in the earliest full genealogy that we see in Genesis, we hear the refrain over and over, and He died, and He died, and He died, reminding us that life comes to an end.

[5 : 55] Moses, as he wrote the book of Genesis, wanted us to know not only how things began, but how things will end for each one of us. It is appointed for everyone to die, the writer of Hebrews tells us.

And Moses wants us to remember that, that there is an end to our lives. God almost brings an end to all of humanity when He brings the flood into the world. Over and over, we not only see beginnings in Genesis, but we see ends.

And here we are in chapter 23, where we see the end of the life of one of the most significant figures in the book of Genesis. But not only are we seeing the end of her life, of Sarah's life, but we're also seeing the beginnings of the end of the section of Genesis that focuses primarily upon the life of Abraham.

We will, when we get two chapters later in chapter 25, see a very brief account of the death of Abraham himself. But really, beginning now, and in some ways, beginning with the last few verses of chapter 22, we are now moving toward the end of this particular generation of God's people into the focus being shifted to the next generation.

Even in this section, when Isaac, the next generation, the son of Abraham, even when he is prominent in a particular story, so for instance, in last week in chapter 22, as Abraham and Isaac went up on the mountain for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, even though Isaac is somewhat prominent in the story, it makes no sense without him being present, he's never the focus of that particular story.

[7 : 27] In chapter 24, a bride will be found for Isaac, but Isaac is found hardly at all in the chapter. He's not yet the focus. The focus is still upon Abraham, even in those stories that center around Isaac in some way.

But that focus is shifting. And the days of Abraham and of his generation are now coming to an end, and that can be seen no more clearly than here in the account of the death of Sarah.

But what we're seeing, I believe, in these sort of transition chapters, what we're seeing is more than just the end of a generation, more than just the transition to a new generation.

What we are seeing is in the midst of that end, as Abraham's life comes to an end, as Sarah's life comes to an end, later in the book of Genesis, when the other patriarchs' lives come to an end, what we are seeing is not just the end of their lives, but we're able to gain a glimpse into their hope for the future.

Because this end, death, is not the end for them. And in all the things that they do, we sometimes find to be curious and strange, there are these hints to us that there is a greater hope that they hold on to.

[8 : 37] There is something that they are looking forward to beyond the moments that they are living within. And so as we look here at the death of Sarah, what seems to us to be sort of a strange layout, a strange record of her death and Abraham's mourning over her, actually is a signal to us

that there are greater things at play than merely the recording of the death of this great woman of God.

In fact, if you notice there, we're only given at the beginning of the chapter two verses. We're given two verses in this whole chapter that are actually really and truly devoted to telling us about her death.

Look at verses 1 and 2. This is all we get. Sarah lived 127 years. These were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died. No information about how she died.

No information about all the details. We're only told that she died at Kiriath Arba, which is another name for the region of Hebron, in the land of Canaan. And we are told that Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

It's a fairly typical picture of what you might expect. Sarah has died and her body now lays in her own personal tent. She probably in all likelihood had her own living quarters that would have been directly connected to Abraham's living quarters because they all had their own servants that would have attended to them and lived in their areas.

[9 : 59] And Abraham has now gone into her section of their sort of tent compound, you might call it. He is now there and he's spending time weeping and mourning for her, which was the normal way that things were done.

A period of weeping and mourning would be recognized for the dead. That's still the case in the Middle East among cultures that have a greater cultural connection to the people of the Scriptures than we do as Americans.

There's still a sort of almost ceremonial-like period of weeping and wailing and crying out, and that's exactly what Abraham's doing, which doesn't lessen the reality of his grief, but it shows us that the account, as Moses records it here, it's not exceptional.

He's not in detail and telling us the details of Sarah's death. He's not giving any details that would stand out to any reader of this particular account. In fact, what stands out is the lack of detail.

And what stands out is the sudden shift at verse 3 away from any hope of getting details about what happened. What was she thinking? How was she feeling?

[11 : 05] Who was around her? Who was with her? What things were taking place as she died? What events took place leading up to her death? We're not given any of that. Just suddenly the attention shifts to Abraham wanting to acquire a place where he can bury her.

And we almost go off on a rabbit's trail as Abraham begins to haggle with the people of the land over a place where he might bury her. Take a look at the text itself.

Immediately in verse 3, we're told, Abraham rose up from before his dead. So just, he rose up. He's done. Period of mourning is officially over. He rises up from before his dead and he goes immediately to the Hittites and begins to speak to them.

He says, I am a sojourner and foreigner among you. Give me property among you for a burying place that I may bury my dead out of my sight. Now that's a significant sentence there.

That's a significant statement. Abraham is seeking property for himself within the land of Canaan. The land that belongs to him. The land that has been promised to him over and over.

[12 : 16] And yet here we are at the end of the life of Sarah, getting nearer to the end of the life of Abraham, and we are forced to realize he doesn't actually own anything.

He doesn't own a single square inch of land in Canaan. He identifies himself again, not for the first time in this book, but again as a sojourner, as an alien, as an outsider among them.

Which means, of course, that he doesn't have any rightful claim on any land in the land of Canaan. He doesn't actually own any place. He grazes there with his sheep. He sets up his tents in various locations, but he does that at the goodwill and pleasure of those who live around him.

We've said in the past that the life of a nomad like Abraham would have been a, at times, fearful existence. That whenever he did move into a new region, he never knew how people were going to react.

Some places, in many places, they would treat sojourners and foreigners very badly. In other places, he would be treated a little better. Now he's reached a stage in his life where he's older.

[13 : 21] He's acquired many possessions. He has obtained a reputation for himself. He's much respected among the people of the land, but he's not one of them. He's still a sojourner.

He's still an outsider. And he's still, though he has been given great promises by God concerning this land, he owns none of it. It doesn't belong to him. That's all the more surprising if we think back

upon the number of times that God has given to Abraham what become known as the covenant promises that relate primarily to the seed or the offspring, the descendants of Abraham, and then the land of Canaan promised to Abraham.

Over and over and over, we hear the refrain throughout the book of Genesis about Abraham's offspring and about the land that God would give to him. In fact, the offspring of Abraham and the land given to Abraham and his descendants, it is the theme of the story of Abraham.

From the very beginning of Abraham's story, we are reminded, we are told that Abraham has been given very great promises. Promises that center, yes, upon his descendants, but also upon this land.

I want you to look at a few of those. Turn back to chapter 12 because it is helpful for us to hear these again and have refreshed in our mind just how frequently Moses mentions these because if we were reading through the book of Genesis rather than taking small sections at a time, these promises would be more fresh in our minds.

[14:56] You can go all the way back to chapter 12 where God first calls Abraham. He says in verse 2, I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Then you move down to verse 7. You see how that happens? The Lord appeared to Abraham and said, To your offspring I will give this land.

And we are told that Abraham built an altar there. To your offspring, to your descendants, I will give this land. There are both features of the covenant promises given to Abraham. Offspring and land. And then over and over it occurs again. Look down to chapter 13. Beginning in verse 14, God says to Abraham, Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward.

For all the land that you see, I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth so that if no one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.

[16:01] Move over to chapter 15 where God gives the actual covenant promises to Abraham. Where God enters into covenant with Abraham. Down in verse 18 of chapter 15.

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying, To your offspring I give this land. From the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Canaanites, the Canaanites, the Cadbanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

All the land of the Ites belongs to Abraham. And here he is, chapters later, near the end of his life, negotiating with the Hittites over a tiny little piece of land where he can bury his wife.

Chapter 17, where the covenant promises are reiterated. Verse 7, I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and your offspring after you.

And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of all your sojournings, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. And I will be their God. And then finally, chapter 22, after Abraham has obeyed God and God has stayed his hand in executing Isaac, God then comes and reiterates the promises.

[17:21] Verse 17, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies.

And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed my voice. over and over. He has promised offspring and he has been promised land.

And Abraham, as he goes decade after decade initially, without having a rightful heir, without having a son, grows desperate. Even Sarah herself, they grow desperate for this aspect of the promise to be fulfilled.

But we never see them grow desperate for the promise of land to be fulfilled. Never does Abraham say, God, you said this was going to be my land, so when is it going to happen?

He said that about a son. God, you said you would give me a son. You said you would give me an heir. I don't have an heir. What's the deal? My servant, Eliezer of Damascus, he's going to end up being my heir.

[18 : 23] Never once does he protest, you've not given me the land that you promised me. Now here, the end of Abraham's life, he needs a small portion of land.

It all belongs to him. And yet he owns none of it. Not a single square inch. And as he comes to find a burial place for Sarah, he is, I believe, doing much more than finding a place to lay her body. He is purchasing a portion of the land that has been promised to him in its entirety. He is purchasing a portion of it because I think that his faith clings ultimately to the reality that someday his descendants will own this land.

You see, Abraham actually knows that he will not possess the land in his lifetime. He is well aware of that. God has already told him in chapter 15 when God made a covenant with Abraham, God already told Abraham, I'm going to send your descendants into a foreign land for 400 years. That's the land of Egypt. He's already told him that. And then they will come back and then they will possess the land. But not yet. So Abraham knows though the land belongs to him, God has not yet determined to give it to him or his descendants in his lifetime.

[19 : 50] But what he knows and what he has been promised is that someday this place will belong to him. So he seeks out and he searches for a burial place so that he might bury his wife, Sarah.

And as he goes through the negotiations with the Hittites, he's very clear. He doesn't want a gift from them. He doesn't want them to say, it's fine, Abraham. We admire you.

We love you. We like having you among us. We would love for you to take one of our caves. You can bury your dead there. That's fine. That's not enough for Abraham.

It seems initially as if he's being picky. Abraham, they've offered you the use of their cave, but that's not enough. He doesn't want to borrow land from them. He doesn't want to share burial space with them.

He doesn't want to receive anything from their hand by their own generosity so that someday they can say, that's our land. We loaned it to you, but it's ours. No, Abraham wants to own the land.

[20 : 53] He wants to purchase the property so that it belongs to him because someday his people are returning and all the land that surrounds it will belong to them and they will have a place that has been theirs where they have been able to bury their dead.

Watch as they negotiate the price as we move through. He asks for property among them. That's a significant term throughout this chapter.

Property. He wants property. He wants to own it. And they offer him, verse 6, Hear us, my Lord, you're a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choices of our tombs. Take what you want. You can even have the best, Abraham. But Abraham refuses. Verse 7, Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. He's showing them all deference.

He's following all the customs of courtesy that he ought to follow just as they are. He bows before them and he says, If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat me for Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns.

[21 : 59] It is at the end of his field. For the full price, let him give it to me in your presence. Here again, as a property for a burying place. He wants to own it. He wants it to be his property, that is, his possession.

And then Ephron, the Hittite, who happens to be among them, responds, You can have it, Abraham. I don't want any money from you. You can take it. But Abraham again refuses.

Verse 13, He said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, But if you will hear me, I give the price of the land. Accept it from me that I may bury my dead there.

He wants to own it. He's almost desperate to own this tiny little piece of land with a cave on it.

Ephron, the Hittite, for his part, responds, In a way, in kindness, What is it to you?

What is the price of this land between you and me? I don't need you to pay for this, Abraham. But in so doing, he's also telling Abraham the price of the land. Verse 15, My Lord, listen to me.

[23 : 02] A piece of land worth 400 shekels of silver. What's that between you and me? Bury your dead. So Abraham catches on. Says he weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites 400 shekels of silver according to the weights current among the merchants.

He purchased it. Verse 18, It was given over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites before all who were in the gate of the city. Then finally, Verse 20, The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as a property for a burying place by the Hittites.

Why such an emphasis upon possession and property that he has to have actual ownership of it?

He can't borrow it. He doesn't want to receive it by their own good will. He wants to really own it.

Because this little piece of land will become a significant place for his descendants. In fact, this field, the field of Ephron in the cave known as Machpelah, they're mentioned only a couple of more times in the book of Genesis.

Near the end of Genesis. They're mentioned in chapter 49 where Joseph, not Joseph, I'm sorry, Jacob, Abraham's grandson, gives instructions to Joseph and to his other sons about how and where he is to be buried in the land of Canaan.

[24 : 21] I want you to turn there to Genesis chapter 49 so that you can see this because it reveals to us some details that are actually left out as you move through the story in Genesis. There are some details that are not spelled out for us there.

Genesis chapter 49, I want to jump in in verse 28 and we'll just read down through the end of chapter 49 so that we can see all that he says. So he's speaking and we have all the tribes of Israel gathered, all the sons of Israel, that's Jacob, gathered and we're told this is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to them.

Then he commanded them and said to them, I am to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah to the east of Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the fields from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.

Listen to this. There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah, his wife. And there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites.

It's a significant location. Abraham is buried there in chapter 25. Jacob wants to be buried there and he indicates not only was Abraham and Sarah buried there, but his father and mother were buried there.

[25 : 50] His wife was buried there. This is the burial ground of the patriarchs. This is the place where they go of final resting. And Abraham must own it. He must claim it as his own.

And it must be in the land of Canaan because he is looking ahead to the day when his descendants will return. And they will know and they will see and there will be a place, a burial ground where their fathers have been buried.

They will know that it's there. Abraham goes through the trouble of doing this because despite his present situation, despite the reality that here he is near the end of his life, still a sojourner, still an alien, still an exile, still an outcast, even though highly respected, even though that's the case, he believes and looks forward to the day when his descendants will come back and they will possess all of the land.

But he never receives it in his lifetime. Sarah never sees the day when the land promised to her husband and to her son is received by them.

They never see that day. But they die in faith knowing that there will be a day when God will be proven faithful to all of his promises. But there, I believe, is even more going on than just their hope in the future possession of the land of Canaan by their descendants.

[27 : 16] I believe that there is more happening and that their faith is even greater than believing that God will fulfill those promises to their descendants. Because when we turn to the New Testament and we see where these events are reflected upon in the book of Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews indicates to us that they were looking ahead to more than just possessing the promised land someday.

They were looking for more than that and they hoped in more than that. Turn over to Hebrews chapter 11. It is the great faith chapter.

We have had reason to go to Hebrews a couple of times as we've been looking at the lives of the patriarchs because the writer of Hebrews looks back upon their lives and comments upon their lives.

So, in chapter 11 of Hebrews, verse 13, referring back to Sarah, referring back to Abraham. He's already mentioned Sarah and Abraham and Jacob and how they died.

Verse 13, these all, the fathers, the patriarchs, these all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

[28 : 41] I can't imagine a clearer reference back to Genesis chapter 23. Abraham acknowledges that he is a stranger in an exile in the land. He knows it. He is sure of it.

The people know it. He acknowledges it. But he has a hope for the future that outweighs his present circumstances and his present situation. He has a hope for the future.

But his hope is not merely centered upon that tiny strip of land between the Euphrates River and the river of Egypt. It's not merely centered there. No, it's far greater than that because Abraham understood that that land at the center of civilization was meant to represent and stand for the entire world.

He understands that. Move down to verse 15. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, if they had been thinking of the land of Canaan, they would have had opportunity to return.

But we are told 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 for them a city.

[30 : 01] You see, they were Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Jacob. They were, yes, looking forward to the day when their descendants would possess the land promised to them. But they were also looking forward to the day when they themselves would enter into a better country, a better land, a better city, a heavenly city.

They were looking forward to that day because the promises of God are always about more than what happens here in this life. Yes, many of his promises pertain to this life, but his promises are about so much more than the things that we can see and hear around us on a regular and daily basis.

His promises pertain to something in the future that is far better than anything that we experience now. And in addition to that, it is those promises, it is those great future blessings held out in front of us that become a motivator for us to do things in the present that demonstrate our faith.

Abraham bought the field of Ephron to demonstrate his faith and God's faithfulness in the fact that he would fulfill his future promises. So in the present, he bought a field.

It seems like a small thing, but it is a clear demonstration of his faith for all of his descendants who would follow. He believed this land would be his and more than that, he believed that there was something beyond death.

[31 : 29] It was not the end for them. There was more to be had, more to be longed for, more to be hoped in. So much more.

And that future hope becomes a motivator and a cause of present works of righteousness. Present things that we do that prove and demonstrate the reality of our faith in that great future.

In fact, if you read down through Hebrews 11, over and over and over, we find, by faith, so-and-so did this. By faith, so-and-so did that. They are doing things. They're doing things now.

But all by faith. All because there's something they can't see now that they're hoping in for the future. Until finally you get to chapter 12 where you find sort of the preeminent example of enduring now and remaining faithful now in a fallen and broken world because of a future hope.

Look at Jesus, chapter 12, verse 2, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[32 : 58] Did you notice that language? He endured the cross. He despised the shame of the cross. There was no delight in the cross itself for Jesus.

And why would there be? The physical agony alone is no reason to rejoice. The flesh pulled off of His back, beaten and bloodied to a pulp.

He would have been bruised and swollen. Crown of thorns jammed down on His head. There's nothing in the physical act of being crucified and of being tortured by the Romans that calls for rejoicing.

Nothing at all. And even beyond that and more significant than that is the reality that on the cross He was not just enduring the taunts of men and the physical abuse of the Romans.

He was enduring the very wrath of His Father. He was taking upon Himself God's wrath in our place so that we wouldn't have to. And in the midst of that, in the midst of bearing what we can't even begin to imagine, we are told that He had joy.

[34 : 03] Why? Why? There was joy before Him. There was something better that was coming. Not just resurrection, but redemption.

He was achieving the redemption of His people and so He was able to scorn the shame of the cross. You don't have to delight in sufferings in and of themselves.

That's not a sign of a great spiritual life. The sign of a great spiritual life is the ability to delight in Christ all that He is for us, all that He promises to be for us in the midst of our sufferings.

You don't have to delight in the pain itself. Jesus doesn't delight in the pain, but there is joy set before Him and He pursues it all the way to the end.

Abraham, in similar fashion, pursues that future hope all the way to the end. Sarah pursues that future hope all the way to the end.

[35 : 08] They stumble, they fall, they mess up. We've seen them do some terrible things and yet through it all at the end God has been working so that their faith can be so great that Abraham can even offer up his son Isaac in chapter 22.

And now in chapter 23 he can go through the act of faith of purchasing a piece of land that signals that he has a greater faith for the future inheritance of the land and for a future inheritance of a land that far exceeds the land of Canaan.

There's something in front of Abraham. There's nothing good about being a sojourner. There's nothing necessarily great and grand about being an exile and an alien in the land in which you live and have been promised.

But there's something good and great in the midst of that of looking ahead and seeing the promises of God and taking hold of them and continuing to pursue them. It changes the way that you live.

You will find yourself doing things by faith just as these great heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11. You will find yourself doing things by faith because of what lies ahead and not because of what surrounds you right now in the present.

[36 : 19] future faith is a powerful motivator for present acts of faith. And to the degree that we look for and long for the day when we stand face to face with Christ to the degree that we do that we will be empowered to do real practical acts of faith here in our lives.

All of us have heard the saying well that guy he's too heavenly minded to be of no earthly good but in reality if we're not heavenly minded enough we cannot possibly be of any lasting earthly good here.

You cannot be. There is there is a change that takes place within our hearts and minds when we are fixed upon the future that we have with Christ that doesn't remove us from this world but empowers us in the midst of this world.

So that Peter says we ourselves are sojourners and exiles. That's how Peter describes us in the same way that Abraham describes himself. That's who we are. We don't belong here but while we're here and we look forward to the land to which we do belong by faith in Jesus while we are here he can accomplish great things through us and we can do great acts of faith.

We can do great things in the name of the Lord pointing to our hope if our eyes are fixed upon that hope. It does not mean and that is not a promise that if our faith is strong enough everything around us will be better.

[37 : 59] Abraham did not suddenly inherit the land because he had the faith to go and purchase a little piece of the land. It didn't happen. That's not the promise. The promise is not that everything will go well for you now if you have enough faith.

the promise is that if you have enough faith in what awaits you in the future you will be able to endure and rejoice in that future even now while you are in exile in this world.

And being in exile in this world means that there are terrible events and circumstances that you will face and then there are moments of joy that you will experience in the middle of this world in this life because it's a mixed up world and it's strange and good things and bad things get all mixed together.

The fall has tainted everything even the things that we view as being good and worthy and worth being treasured. The fall has tainted all of them. Some of your greatest delights in this world will also be those things that could produce the greatest pain and sorrow for you.

And in that kind of a world you either live and die by what you are experiencing now or you live and you die by the future hope that you have in Christ and all that he promises for us.

[39 : 16] Let's pray.