

Inheriting the Promises

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If you could turn with me to Hebrews chapter 6, and we'll begin reading at verse 9, "But beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way" — and he's referring to these verses that have come before. "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name and having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end. That you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.' And thus having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves; and with them, an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. 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: in order that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast, and one which enters within the veil; where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Let's pray before we look into the Word. Our Father we confess our utter dependence upon You this evening. We pray that You will save Your people from their sins. Everyone of us. We're asking for help this evening, we confess that apart from You, we can do nothing. We confess that we have no sufficiency in ourselves to think anything is from ourselves. Our very sanity just hangs on a slender thread that You hold. But Lord, we also confess that You have made us sufficient, You've made us adequate, You've made us able ministers of the New Covenant. We pray for your Holy Spirit this evening; the Spirit of faith and power and love, and of a sound mind. And we ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

I'd like to direct your attention this evening particularly to verse 12, "That you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." I want to consider with you, "Inheriting the Promises." God is telling us some things here in this verse that are very important for us to lay hold of, and to have engraved on our hearts. And I hope at least two or three of the words of this verse would stick with you and be a help to you in the days ahead.

First thing to learn from this passage is that God has made promises. God has made promises. And we're all familiar in the human realm what a promise is. Your grade school friend says, "I'll do such and such," and you get him back up against the wall and you say, "Will you promise? Will you promise that you'll do this?" Give me — Now think of this in relation to God: "Give me Your Word." Isn't that something? We've got His Word. "Will you promise me?" And it all depends on the character of the person that you're dealing with. But even in the human realm, a promise sometimes means a great deal. There are some men who will keep a promise for 50 years if need

be, regardless of the cost. That's just in the human realm. The Bible talks about the one who swears to his own hurt and alters not.

Well, God has made promises and if we look back through the Scriptures, some promises particularly stand out. They are major, big promises that God has made. And the author of Hebrews, here in the verses we've just read, specifically mentions the promise God made to Abraham in verses 13 and 14: "When God made the promise to Abraham," and he goes on and talks about it. So you remember how when Abraham was an old man, years old already when God first spoke to him; and he had a wife, Sarah, who was already in her 60s. And Sarah had been unable to have children, and up until that time, she was barren. And God told Abraham, He specifically promised him, that one day his children would be like the stars of the sky innumerable, and like the sand which is by the seashore.

And He told him that in his descendants, in his seed particularly, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And that's why we're here tonight. Through God's seed, Christ, all the nations of Gentiles have been blessed. They've been passed from a state of being under the curse and condemnation, into a state of justification and blessing. And Abraham's seed is like the stars of the sky and like the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.

That was one of God's promises that is particularly noteworthy. There are several other major promises. The Bible talks about the promise of the Holy Spirit. And you remember the Holy Spirit is called "the Holy Spirit of promise." And Paul talks about us "having received the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Another major promise is the promise of Christ's coming. Remember in 2 Peter, it says, "The day is coming when scoffers will come, saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" Have you ever thought about that? God promised, Christ promised He's going to come again. It's a promise. "Where is the promise of His coming?" — the scoffers call into question, the promise of God.

Again, Peter talks about exceeding great and precious promises, in relation to believing on Christ and in relation to salvation. And Paul talks about the promise of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago. He promised eternal life. And that's really the subject here in Hebrews 6, specifically, the subject is the promise of eternal life. And I think sometimes we take this too lightly. Eternal life. The promise of eternal life. And these Hebrew Christians, their hands were starting to hang down, their knees were weak, they were starting to get weary in the race; and he says "eternal life," God has promised eternal life.

I don't know, there may be someone here tonight who is still struggling but on the point of turning back, he says, "Don't cast away your confidence." There is a promise, God promised you eternal life. He says, "Cast not away your confidence which has a great recompense of reward." He says, "You have need of endurance that after you've done the will of God, you might receive what was promised. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." So hold on.

You remember Bunyan's 'Christian' in Pilgrim's Progress. He's starting out towards the celestial city, and all of his relatives and everyone of his friends are trying to pull him back. They're saying, "Don't go." And he puts his fingers in his ears and says, "Eternal life. Eternal life," and he kept running. That's what we ought to be doing tonight. Eternal life! We're talking about vast things that are beyond our imagination.

Well, these are some of the major promises of Scripture but God has made literally thousands of lesser ones. Now think about this for a minute: Ephesians 6:2-3, Paul is talking to Gentile children and he says, "Honor

your father and mother, (which is the first commandment with a promise,) that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.” Now notice: In the verse itself, God did not say, “I promise that if you do this, this is what will happen.” He just makes a statement: “Honor your father and mother, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.” Paul says that’s a promise.

In other words, any statement where God talks about blessing that He will shower on you as you walk with Him, any statement of fact like that, is a promise. It’s a promise. “Will You promise me, will You give me Your Word?” He says, “This is My Word, I promise you.”

“I will never leave you nor will I ever forsake you.” – that’s a promise. “I promise you, I’ll never leave you, and I’ll never forsake you.”

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.” – that’s a promise. Those are things that you can hold up to God and say, “God, You gave me Your Word! You promised me.” You see that?

“Call on Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me.” – that’s a promise. What are you supposed to do in the day of trouble? Call on the Lord! “I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me.” It doesn’t say, you see, it’s not saying if you’re some great Christian. It just says, “Call on Me.” – a promise.

How about this: “From of old they have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen a God besides thee, who acts on behalf of the one who waits for Him.” You get that? The God of the universe, the God who spoke all things into existence, will act on behalf of the one — I like the way it says that. Just the one. Whoever. One. However weak, however unworthy, He’ll act on behalf, He’ll act on your behalf. He’ll act on behalf of the one who’ll wait for Him. What a promise!

Well, these are some of the promises of the Scriptures. But the Bible is literally full of them, isn’t it? One of the first books that I ever got after I became a Christian was called, ‘Precious Bible Promises.’ And it was compiled by Samuel Clarke who was born in the late 1600s. And it’s a whole book. I mean, he just compiles from the Bible, promises. And I mean, so many things: food and clothing, and guidance and peace and honor, and God’s presence... promise after promise after promise. Exceeding great and precious promises! And we read them many times as if they were just hot air. This is God giving us promises. Answered prayer, wisdom, forgiveness, so many things.

So that’s the first point: God has made promises. But before I leave it, I just want to emphasize it a little bit differently. God...has made promises. God has made promises. The One who is infinitely powerful to keep His Word, and infinitely good who will not lie. One who cannot lie and One who has infinite power to keep His Word, has made promises. The One who has made these promises that we have here, always fulfills them. He always fulfills them.

And that is again repeatedly emphasized in Scripture. Let me just give you some of them. In order to strengthen our faith, God says it. He spells it out. And I won’t give you every reference but starting in Genesis and goes through Joshua and Samuel and Kings and so on. Listen to these: “Then the Lord did for Sarah as He had promised.” - (Gen 21:1). “The Lord your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you.” - (Joshua 23:10). “And now O Lord God, You are God and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant.” - (2 Samuel 7:28). “And the Lord gave wisdom to Solomon, just as He promised him.” - (1 Kings 5:12). “Now the Lord fulfilled His word which He spoke... as the Lord promised.” - (1 Kings 8:20).

There are so many of these, you just read them as you go through Scripture, you see it over and over. “You have kept with Your servant, that which You have promised Him.” - (2 Chronicles 6:15). “Indeed You have spoken with Your mouth and have fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day.” - (1 Kings 8:24). How about this: “Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed. All came to pass.” - (Joshua 21:45). How about this: “Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He promised, not one Word has failed of all His good promise.” - (1 Kings 8:56). “And You have fulfilled Your promise, for You are righteous.” - (Nehemiah 9:8).

How about the New Testament. “In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised.” (1 Titus 1:2) — emphasizing His truthfulness. Hebrews 10:23, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

So think of this: We have a book full of promises made by God who cannot lie, and who has all the power to keep these promises. Now here’s the question: Why have we not entered into more of these promises? And the answer is in the first part of the verse, “That you may not be sluggish (or as the KJV says, slothful.) They’re both pretty good words. You’ve seen slugs moving on the ground; you know, they are not just zipping along normally, are they? Or sloth, the slothful, slow.

If you watch some of these National Geographic commentaries and they show a sloth, have you ever seen any of those? They have algae growing in their hair, their hair looks green. They are so slow. And they’re hanging on a limb, and you can barely stand to watch it. They get ready to reach up for another branch. I’m afraid that has often been the way I have lived my Christian life. You know, I think it’s time to trust God... (laughter) for one promise, out of a book of ten thousand promises. It’s just so much.

So the writer to the Hebrews said don’t be like that. Instead “be imitators of those, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises.”

The first point is, God has made promises to us. Second is that faith and patience are necessary to inherit the promises. Now that’s pretty straightforward there, isn’t it? Faith and patience. He doesn’t just mention faith, he doesn’t just mention patience. Faith and patience. It’s not that faith and patience somehow merit God fulfilling the promises. That’s not it. It’s not that somehow faith and patience enable God to fulfill promises, or cause Him to fulfill promises. But, in the whole process of inheriting promises, God has set it up in such a way that faith and patience will inevitably be called forth and be necessary. He has seen to it that that’s going to happen. Faith and patience will inevitably be involved and be called forth.

So let’s consider faith briefly. First of all, faith is necessary to inherit promises. In Hebrews chapter 11 verse 33, he says, “Through faith” — you know, the faith chapter — “Through faith, they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,” and then just sandwiched in there, and the last one is “stopped the mouths of lions.” But right in there, “obtained promises.” They subdued kingdoms. They wrought righteousness. They stopped the mouths of lions. Through faith, they obtained promises. It’s necessary.

And again, not that faith, in itself, is some great thing. You remember the woman with the issue of blood? She’s pressing through the crowd, and she reaches out and touches the Lord’s garment; and immediately she was healed. And He said, “I perceive that power has gone forth out of Me.” And what does He say? He turns to the woman and He says, My power has made you well. Well, it was His power that made her well, but He said, “Your

faith has made you well.” Why would He put it like that? Her faith didn’t make her well. Faith doesn’t do anything in itself, but it gets you in touch with the power of the One who fulfills the promises and who does everything.

And He puts that emphasis on there because, beloved, you can almost say, you know, Jesus said to those two blind men; He said, “according to your faith, be it unto you.” He keeps emphasizing this. And it’s almost like you could say the opposite, According to your unbelief, be it not unto you. Didn’t He say “He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Not because He didn’t have power but because God has set it up in such a way He will not honor unbelief. He’s not going to honor that. “Why couldn’t we cast it out? Because of your unbelief.” And so, He’s calling upon us to believe Him.

When you think of the necessity of faith in inheriting promises, just think in the matter of prayer. Let me just read some of it to you: Mark 11:22-24, “Jesus answered saying to them, Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, Whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted to him.” Now here is the hard part: “Therefore I say to you, All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them.”

You ever tried to do that? You squint your eyes harder, you know, and try to believe? We can’t do it. But beloved, somehow, we’ve got to enter in to believing God. He’s saying, “Have faith! Have faith in God!” And He marvels at their unbelief in different situations. And sometimes, it says “He marveled at their faith.” Amazing. But somehow, we’ve got to come to God, and we say, “O Lord, I want to enter into this more; and I know I can’t do it myself, will You work this in me.” And He’s putting you in situations that call forth that impossible thing that you can’t do, and He is making it happen as we give ourselves to Him for that purpose.

Well, faith is necessary. Patience also is necessary in inheriting promises. The word patience here means just that. It’s the opposite of being impatient. When things wear on you, and seem to go on and on and on and on and on (I ought to do this to really demonstrate it,) it goes a lot longer than that. And seemingly, no change, no change.

Patience is tied in directly with endurance. And let me just give you an example: James 5:10-11, James says, “As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience (there’s that word,) take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold we count those blessed who endured. You’ve heard of the endurance of Job. Now see, he was being patient but he was enduring, he was just enduring. A lot of patience is that. And the old King James translates it ‘long suffering,’ — that’s pretty good too, isn’t it? Just putting up with it on and on and on. Patience.

So, not only faith but patience is necessary. We live in an extremely impatient culture. I mean, we live in an absolute instant culture. “I want it, and I want it now!” Ravenhill told about a man praying like that. He said, “Lord, give me patience, and I want it now!” And that’s the attitude we have. Well, He doesn’t do that, does He?

“You know, Tim taught that if we’d read the Bible, we’d become stronger day by day, and we’d become established. And I’ve done it for two days now and I haven’t seen any change at all.” That’s the attitude. Patience...on and on. The Lord told this in the area of prayer, He specifically brought it out, didn’t He? That woman who came to the unjust judge and kept coming and kept coming and kept coming and kept coming. What’s that? Persistence. Endurance. Patience.

How about this for a promise? You talk about a promise: He says, “I say to you, Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened.” What a promise! You say, “Well I asked and I didn’t receive.”

I am sure you didn't. Just about everybody in the whole room, as a Christian, could testify, "I asked and I didn't receive" — if you're talking about the first time you asked. What does Jesus say? He has that in the present: "Ask and keep on asking, knock and keep on knocking, seek and keep on seeking; for every one who does that, receives; every one who does that, finds; every one who does that, the door would be opened." What an incredible promise! It means persist in keeping on, it means patience. Faith and patience.

George Mueller, a lot of you know about him, I think there was talk about his life, maybe, in some of these book reports. He took care of 1200 orphans without ever asking for any support. He says, "I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk, when I lie down and when I rise, and the answers are always coming. Tens of thousands of times have my prayers been answered. When once I am persuaded that a thing is right, I go on praying for it. The great point is never to give up till the answer comes. The great fault of the children of God is that they do not continue in prayer, they do not persevere. If they desire anything for God's glory, they should pray until they get it."

Well, testimonies from men like Mueller are helpful sometimes, aren't they? Especially when those men have seen God do great things in fulfillment of His promises. And the writer to the Hebrews realizes this, so he doesn't just say, "You're gonna have to have faith and patience to inherit the promises." He goes beyond that, doesn't he? He says, "Follow those" — in other words, there are some real life people who have come before us, who have, by the grace of God, entered into this; and they have seen God supernaturally fulfill His promises. And he's not talking in theory, he's talking about real people who have demonstrated what this means.

You remember in Hebrews 13:7, he says, "Remember those who led you, taught the Word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and their faith, follow. Imitate their faith. So he's talking about people that we've known in our own lifetimes. We've seen people who were men and women of faith and patience, and we've seen them inherit promises.

But he particularly here, and this is the third point: We are to imitate those who through faith and patience, inherit the promises. And he particularly here, calls our attention to one of them. You know, you say, "Well, I understand I need to have faith and patience to inherit the promises. What are you talking about I need to have faith? What are you talking about I need to have patience? I mean, are we talking about two weeks or are we talking about six months. Or maybe, you mean maybe I might even have to have patience for a whole year? Trust in God when nothing is happening, nothing is changing, maybe a whole year?"

He says, "Well, let me just tell you what I'm talking about. I want you to consider Abraham, alright." And so he talks about Abraham in verses 13 -15: "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself saying, 'I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.' And thus having patiently waited, he obtained the promise."

He is telling us that if we want to know what faith and patience look like in concrete terms, we can consider Abraham. Abraham was an example of faith, first of all. He was the father of the faithful and the pattern of the way faith manifests itself in every true believer. Now this is a profound thing, it's really a message in itself. But Abraham believed in God who raises the dead. You say, "Well, how could I ever believe in God raising the dead?" You already do if you are a Christian. If I told you that somebody found the bones of Jesus over in the grave somewhere, you wouldn't believe that. Why wouldn't you believe it? Because you know that God raised Him from the dead. God

has revealed that. It's harder to believe that Jesus died than that He rose from the dead.

See, the faith of Abraham is a pattern for the faith of every believer. It's something God does in every Christian. We can learn a lot from the faith of Abraham. And we can't look at that whole thing tonight, but you can at least look at the aspects that are related to what he's talking about here. You remember what happened in Genesis 15:5 when Abraham was already old, still had no children; God took him outside and He says, "Look toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able to count them." Well, the fact is we can't count them. They are so many that we can't count them. You know like exceeding abundantly beyond all — and He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." Then Abraham believed in the Lord. It's an impossible promise. He believed in the Lord, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

In Genesis 17, Abraham is 99 years old and Sarah was 90. God spoke to him and gave both of them new names. Let me read the verses to you: Genesis 17:4-6, "As for Me, behold My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram but your name shall be called Abraham (which means father of a multitude of nations,) for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations and I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you and kings shall come forth from you." And then in verses 15 and 16, "Then God said to Abraham, As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her, indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her and she shall be a mother of nations (Sarah means princess,) she shall be a mother of nations, kings of peoples shall come from her."

Now you're talking about a step of faith: Abraham is 99 and he has no children; and Sarah is 90 and she's been barren all her life anyway. And it almost seems cruel what God is asking them to do. I think I mentioned this when I spoke on the name of Isaac. But Sarah comes in, they come in and sit down on the breakfast table; and she looks across at him and says, "Good morning, father of a multitude of nations." It's like salt in the wound. They don't have any children! And he looks at her, all her life she's wept and wanted children, she's barren. When she was a young woman, she was barren. And she's 90 years old. And he says, "Good morning, princess - the mother of nations." It's absurd.

And God is stretching him more and more and more, and Paul comments about this in Romans 4. He says, "In hope against hope, he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken (the promise)." He believed in order that this might happen, what God had promised. He through faith and patience, inheriting the promises. "According to that which had been spoken, so shall your descendants be. And without becoming weak in faith (faith again), he contemplated his own body now as good as dead since he was about 100 years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb, (yet with respect to what? He saw what it was, he contemplated it.) But with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith giving glory to God, being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform."

Now, beloved, are you getting this? The writer to the Hebrews says, "Look you're gonna have to have faith and patience to inherit the promises." And you say, "Well, that's nice theory, give me an example." He says, "Here's an example: here's the father of the faithful. He set an example for you."

In other words, as a Christian, there will be times (maybe not every time; maybe if we really understood it, it would be every time, the things that God has promised.) But there are going to be times where you will be called

upon to believe God when all the circumstances appear, and not only appear, but are the opposite.

Faith is not pretending that it's not as bad as it looks. It says, "He considered his own body now dead — he's looking right in the face of reality and he said, "This is impossible," and yet he believed God. These are scary things. These are things where you're moving into stuff like Wow! And you need to know that you've got a promise in these areas or you can't do this. But there's a lot in the Bible where God says, "I'll do this!" And you don't have to doubt or question, "Did He really say He'll do it?" He said He'd do that.

And it seemed like (and it says) the worse things got, the stronger Abraham's faith grew. The more impossible it became, the more certain it was. How does that happen? Well, the way it happens is: God is the One who gives and sustains faith. You don't get it yourself and you couldn't maintain it yourself. What does it say? Jesus praying for Peter; He says, "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." What does that mean? Peter's faith is in the hands of God and He's looking to the One who is ultimately holding Peter's faith.

The reason Abraham's faith didn't fail is God was upholding it and putting him in these situations and stretching his faith out. Don't you think that hurt? He felt it. And God is sustaining it all the while to keep it from failing, so that he might be able to believe God and give glory to Him; and be fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

You think of Romans 5:3, Paul says, "We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation works perseverance." Well, it doesn't look that way. You look around at professing Christians, tribulation works falling away. But for the true believer, what happens is: they may fall on their face initially, but the Spirit of God is working within them and eventually, that tribulation causes their roots to go down deeper; causes them to get before God and cry out to Him. And lo and behold, supernaturally, you see that believer walking on the water, in terms of the trials and difficulties, and he's making it! Tribulation to the believer, Paul says, "We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation works perseverance. And perseverance, proven character or testedness.

I mean, there's something after you've been through a trial that you have, that you just can't have that when you're a new Christian. That's testedness. I've seen old believers in Romania, you know, some little guy sitting there in the meeting. I don't know whether there's too much of that guy; you get to talking to him through a translator and find out all the time, he's been kicked and beaten and what have you. He's got something that a new believer, no matter how joyful they are, [doesn't have]. This guy might be real quiet but he's got testedness. He's been through [tribulation] and God has sustained his faith, and tribulation in him has worked perseverance, and perseverance has worked testedness (proven character), and proven character works hope. You say, "Here I am still here."

I am really grateful when I see somebody; maybe I knew them 30 years ago, they were weak and struggling as a Christian. You think maybe they're not going to make it, maybe they're not even real. And lo and behold, 30 years later, I see them in a meeting like this, they're still here. That's glorious. You say, "Well, they haven't made much progress." Well, I'll tell you one thing: they're still here.

Charles Wesley said this about Romans 4: he says, "Faith in thy power, Thou seest I have — this is one of his hymns — Faith in thy power, Thou seest I have; for Thou this faith has wrought." God gave it to you. "Dead souls Thou callest from their grave and speakest worlds from nought. In hope against all human hope, self-desperate I believe. Thy quickening Word shall raise me up; Thou shalt Thy Spirit give. The thing surpasses all my thought" Have you ever run up against anything like that? "But faithful is my Lord. Through unbelief I stagger not, for God

has spoke the Word. Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, and looks to that alone; laughs at impossibilities and cries, 'It shall be done.'"

Looking at the promise. Now one thing I would question about that is "Faith, mighty faith." It's usually little piddly faith but by the grace of God, looking at the promise.

Well, there's so much about Abraham's faith that we could say, but listen to this: The writer to the Hebrews also says that we ought to look at Abraham's patience. Look at his patience, he's an example. Imitate him in that. What did Abraham know about patience? Well, he's 75 years old when God first told him that he would be the father of a nation, and I can imagine Abraham saying, "Well, I know that promise. It's surely going to be fulfilled very soon. For I'm 75 years old and my wife is 65, and she's been barren all along, and it's going to get impossible here really quick. I know one thing: God's going to fulfill this one quickly."

And so, 5 years pass; and 10 years pass; and after 10 years of waiting, Sarah gets impatient, and brother Mike talked about that thing that happened with Hagar, and Ishmael was born when Abraham is 86 years old. Well, God is utterly displeased with that, and 13 more years pass. more years. Patience. Patience. God is not in a hurry. And finally when Abraham is 100 years old, Isaac is born.

We see this all through Scripture. Beloved, think of Moses. Stephen said in his sermon in Acts, that Moses thought that his brethren would understand that he was supposed to be the deliverer. He was 40 years old at the time. God had evidently showed him. And we read these things so lightly. But when he went out into the desert, he was not out in the desert for 10 years. years. And he wasn't in the desert for 20 years. He wasn't there for 30 years. He was there the entire length of his previous life before that. He lived as long in the desert as he had lived his whole lifetime up until the time he left Egypt. years!

You think of king David, a young man when he's anointed king. What did he do from then on? Run from Saul. Year after year after year. Joseph, a young man, I think he was 17 when he had those dreams. God gave him those promises and spoke to him. He lived until his age was double of what it was when God gave him that promise. He lived until his age was double, and everything that happened to him seemed to be going against the promise. I mean, he's sold as a slave, he goes down, Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him, Potiphar turns against him, he goes down into the dungeon, he goes down; and every step of the way, it looks like this is more and more impossible that God's promises were ever going to be fulfilled.

And maybe how old are some of you? Let's say if you're 25, so double that. God showed you something. You say, "God showed me something that He is going to do. I believe it really is God. I've laid a hold of this promise. I'm 25 now." Well, alright. So that would make you 50 maybe, when that promise is ultimately fulfilled. Now it doesn't have to be like that, but I'm just saying, He's giving us a feel for what's involved in real, Bible faith and patience! And it may be 40 years! Think of that. You think God is going to forsake you during that whole 40 years? He's teaching all the time, He's working all the time, He's stretching all the time, He's faithful all the time. But it does require patience.

I wanted to use George Mueller as an illustration again. I remember that he had prayed for a couple of men for years, and I thought that I heard that he prayed for 40 years for those two men. And then I thought, No I think it must have been 30, I better look that up. So I looked it up (and this was an interview with him shortly before his death) and this is a quote from George Mueller: He says, "I've been praying everyday - everyday - for 52 years for

two men, sons of a friend of my youth.” It wasn’t even his immediate family. He’s praying for sons of one of his old friends for 52 years everyday. “They are not converted yet, but they will be.” And some of you know the rest of the story, they were converted after he died. He never saw it himself but God did it.

Faith and patience. Faith and patience. God has told us over and over, as clearly as He can tell us, that the instant mentality and the unbelieving mentality is not going to work in the Christian life.

So how do we sum this up? Well, we have a book full of exceeding great and precious promises, and these promises have been given by One who is infinitely powerful, and who is perfectly truthful, and who cannot lie, utterly trustworthy; and they’ve been given to us. And only two things are required to obtain them: Faith and patience. And God is the One who gives and sustains the faith and patience.

What am I saying? This is not the time to get discouraged and give up. This is the time to press on, to lay hold, to enter in to new things. May God help us. May He forgive us for how little, how little we’ve entered in, how slothful we’ve been, how sluggish we’ve been. And He will help us to be imitators and followers of those who through faith and patience, inherit the promises. Amen.