

RESURECTION: Hebrews 11:17-22

Hebrews 11 verses 17 through 22, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; *it was he* to whom it was said, ‘In Isaac shall thy seed be called.’ He considered that God is able to raise *men* even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.”

Faith has to do with life. And our faith is based upon the resurrection. Abraham's faith, according to verse 19, was based upon resurrection from the dead. He considered that God was able to raise even from the dead and he received Isaac back from the dead in type.

Paul talks about Abraham's faith in the fourth chapter of Romans, this same event. Beginning in verse 19, he says, “And without becoming weak in faith, 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, in respect to the promise of God, he did not waiver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised He was able also to perform. Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

Abraham not only believed that God could bring Isaac back after he had sacrificed him, he also believed that God could give life to the deadness of Sarah's womb. So, Abraham believed in a God who could give life to the dead; whether it was the deadness of Sarah's womb, or the dead body of Isaac that he was about to sacrifice on the altar, he believed that God was a God who gave life and a God who could resurrect men from the dead.

This then is the basis of all faith. The basis of all faith is found in the resurrection of Christ. Chapter 10 of Romans and verse 9, “if you confess with your mouth, Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” The basis of saving faith is the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead. That's the only faith that will save.

Now, let's look at the promises. The Book of Hebrews talks much about the promises and here in the 11th chapter of Hebrews verse 17, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*.” In verse 13, speaking of those who died in faith, “All *these* died in faith, without receiving the promises.” And then in verse 39 it said, “And all these (everyone that he has mentioned in chapter 11) having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised.”

So, what is it that God has promised that they had faith in? Let me give you a few passages: I John 2 and verse 25, “And this is the promise which he himself made to us, eternal life.” That

which is promised is eternal life. II Timothy, chapter 1, verse 1, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus.” God has promised life in Christ Jesus.

Now, in the first chapter of Romans, verse 1, Paul calls this the good news or the gospel, “Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart to the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through the prophets in the holy Scriptures.” The promise is the gospel and the gospel concerns life. In Titus, Chapter 1, verses 1, 2 and 3, “Paul, a bondservant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.” In ages long ago, they had the promise of eternal life, so that was their hope. In verse three, “but at the proper time manifested, *even* in His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior.”

That which is promised to all of those Old Testament men and women of faith, recorded in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, died without receiving the promise. And though they had faith in it, and looked for it, and hoped for it, they received approval for their faith, but none of them received what was promised; and, that which was promised was eternal life.

So, our faith has to do with life and that life is resurrected life. And all of it is based upon the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. Now, if the Gospel teaches anything about the Christian life, it is the fact that it teaches the close connection between confidence in Christ’s resurrection and the way we live. Somewhere along the way, I think we have missed that. There is a close connection in our faith in the resurrection of Christ and the way we live-out our lives. We live in the light of the resurrection, not in the light of the cross.

Most Christians live in the light of the cross. And they live with a burden of the guilt of sin upon them because that's what the cross is all about, Jesus bearing our guilt of sin. But we live in the light of the resurrection of Christ, the fact that He lives. And there's a great deal of difference in the kind of life we will live as to whether or not we are basing it upon the cross or upon the resurrection.

I think this is discussed in the sixth chapter of Romans, let me read some verses to you: Verse 9, “knowing that Christ, has been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.” Christ has been raised from the dead and death no longer has anything to do with Christ. Now, verse 10, “For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.” Jesus died to sin once and for all, and then the life that He lives after that death on the cross, He lives to God. Verse 11, “Even so (in the very same way), consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” That which governs your life is that you are alive in Christ Jesus. Jesus is alive, and you are alive in Him, and that's what's to govern the way you live. Verse 12, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your moral body that you should obey its lusts.” You take control of your life, and the sin in your life is not to dominate you because you are living the life that has been resurrected from the dead because you

are a partaker of His resurrection. Verse 13, “and do not go on,” he says, “presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

Apart from the resurrection, the world has no knowledge of any other destiny than death. If you take out the resurrection, and you don't believe in the resurrection or you don't apply the resurrection, or you don't live in the light of the resurrection of Christ, the only destiny that is out there before you is death. There is nothing left. And this renders vain the meaning of your personal existence. You're just living until you die. And the kind of life that you're living is a life which is oriented to this life only. So, you see how important faith and the resurrection is, and what a difference it makes.

Now verses 17 through 19, in Hebrews 11, speaks of Abraham's faith. When he offered Isaac up on the altar or was willing to offer Isaac on the altar, he had faith that God would give Isaac life. Let's go back to verses 8 and 12 of this chapter, again speaking of Abraham's faith, verse 8; “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.” And then in verse 12, it talks about the birth of Isaac, “therefore, also, there was born to one, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS UPON THE SEASHORE.*”

Back in Genesis, Chapter 12, verse 8, when Abraham is first called and given the promise that through him all the world, the nations of the world would be blessed; in other words, the Messiah would come, Abraham was 75 years old (Gen 12:4). In verse 12, whenever Isaac was born, Abraham was 100 years old (Gen 21:5). It took 25 years for his faith to develop. It took 25 years for Abraham to actually believe what God promised him when he was 75 years old.

We go back to the Book of Genesis, let me show you that. In the 12th chapter of Genesis, when the Lord calls Abraham, he gives him the promise in the first three verses, and then in verse 4 it says that, “Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran.” So, Abraham was 75 years old when God first called him. Now if you go over to the 15th chapter, Abraham is getting a little bit impatient because he has not received the promise and nothing has happened, and Abraham is talking to God, and in verse 2, Abraham said, “O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless?” How can You fulfill Your promise that You made to me when I am childless? I don't have a child. Now, that's the question that we ask every day in our Christian life. How can God do in my life what He said He can do? Can I actually believe what God says in His word to me and about me? That's what Abraham is asking.

Abram continues talking to God, verse 2, “the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.” Abraham has a brilliant plan. He wants to help God out. He said, verse 3, “Since Thou has given me no offspring, the one born in my house is an heir.” Let Eliezer be the one to whom You fulfill this promise, Eliezer is Abram's chief servant. Verse 4, “Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth

from your own body, he shall be your heir.” So, Abraham is a little impatient, he wants to help God out, he has a brilliant idea, he says, “Let Eliezer be my heir.” God said, No, that's not what I said. That's the way it is in our lives. We don't see God doing what He said He would do, so we begin to substitute what we want. God comes back and says, it's not going to be that way, so stop trying to help me out.

Now, if you go over to chapter 16 of Genesis, something else happens. Verse 16 says, “And Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.” Now Ishmael is from his own body, but the wrong wife, the wrong woman. Hagar, is Sarah's handmaid of Sarah, but he's still Abraham's son. Over in chapter 17, when God again renewed His promise, verse 18, “Abraham said to God, ‘Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee.’” Abraham's faith is still developing and he's still trying to help God out. And he said, let Ishmael be the heir, I'm 86 years old, let Ishmael be the heir, not Eliezer, but Ishmael. “But God said, ‘No, but Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac, and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and his descendants after him.’” I'm going to do what I said I will do, in spite of your unbelief, and in spite of your substitutes, and in spite of your not living in the light of what I have promised you . . . that's too bad because I'm going to fulfill My promise. And so in chapter 21, and verse 3, “And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, Sarah bore to him, Abraham called him Isaac, and he was 100 years old (vs 5). For 25 years, Abraham struggled with his faith, but God did exactly what He said He would do.

Now, in our text this morning, the verses that we're looking at, there's another test of Abraham's faith because he is told to offer this only son on the altar and kill him. And Abraham is ready to obey because by this time, he knows that God can give life to the dead, and so the test concerns the resurrection. Can you believe that I will fulfill my promise based upon the resurrection? And Abraham passes that test. **Abraham demonstrates that faith in the resurrection frees men from the power of death and enables him to live victoriously in this present world. So, how we live is determined by our faith in the resurrection. It is the resurrection of Christ and our participation in that, that determines how we live. And we can believe what God has promised, and believe what God has said, and believe what God says has happened to us, and we can live in the light of that, and be victorious in our lives, because Jesus is alive and we are alive in Him, we have been raised from the dead, or we can be like Abraham, and struggle along for the next 25 years trying to substitute what we feel, and what we think, instead of what God says.**

Now let's go a little further here in verses 20 through 22. “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau regarding things to come. By faith Jacob when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and by faith Joseph when he was dying made mention of the exodus and gave order concerning his bones.” There's one thing that all three of these men have in common; Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, they are all three near death. **They're all three going to die shortly whenever they do what they do by faith. And they all three had a faith that conquered death. They knew that they were going to die, but they looked beyond their death and blessed their inheritance. The ultimate test of our faith then is how do we deal with death?**

Two things here, first, faith accepts the reality of death. Faith accepts the reality of death. In my opinion, about 90% of the professing Christian church rejects the reality of death. The second, faith looks beyond death and sees the purpose and the power of God untouched by death. Now the important thing to me is that faith accepts the reality of death and therefore it appropriates the meaning of the death and the resurrection of Christ to our lives. Until we accept the reality of death, we're never going to turn to the death and resurrection of Christ and not have any meaning in our life. That's why so many young people I think reject Christ and go their own way. They're young and full of life and vibrant and they're never going to die. The whole future's ahead of them. They're invincible. And so, the resurrection of Christ means eternal life, that means nothing to them because they've got it all themselves. And so they don't appropriate the meaning of the death and the resurrection of Christ.

Now, let's look at this. I don't want to sound morbid this morning but we've got to face, before we can be victorious in our Christian lives, we've got to face the reality of death. Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death spread to all men, because all sinned." Now, in verse 14, Paul says, "death reigned from Adam to Moses." In verse 17 he says, "Death reigned through the one." But now he says, "righteousness reigns through Jesus Christ." In verse 21, "sin reigned in death." And in the sixth chapter of Romans and verse 23, "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." The wages of sin is death.

Now Paul said, the gospel that I've declared in you said first of all, the first point of the gospel he told the Corinthians was that, "Christ died according to the scriptures." So, Christ tasted death, Hebrews says, for every man. And in the second chapter of Hebrews, it says that **His becoming a man and doing what He did, was explicitly for the purpose "of delivering those who through the fear of death were subject to slavery all of their lives."** That which holds the world in its grip, whether they realize it or not and most of them don't, is "the fear of death." Death reigns.

Christ has come and through His resurrection, He has broken that because Christ died, Jesus died. And when He was dead, He was as dead as any other person. **Death is the absence of life.** How many funerals have you heard when the preacher gets up and denies death? "Oh, they're not dead, they're just in a better world, death is only a door to life." **There is but one door to life and that door to life is Jesus Christ. I'm the door, He says. I'm the light, you don't enter into light through death, you enter into light through Christ.** Don't deny the reality of death. When a person is dead, he is dead. And when Christ was dead, He was dead, and **if God did not raise Him from the dead, He would be like Buddha and Muhammad, He would still be dead, because He died.** The wages of sin is death, and Jesus paid that price for us.

Now in particular, let's note something about appropriating the death of Christ by faith. John 5:24, Jesus says, "There's an hour coming and it now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God and those who hear shall live." Now that point, he's not talking about those who are in the tomb. It doesn't make any difference whether you're in the

tomb or whether you're walking around saving funeral expenses, you're still dead out of Christ. A person who is out of Christ is as dead as Christopher Columbus or Elvis. It doesn't make any difference, if you're out of Christ . . . it doesn't make any difference whether you're in the tomb and whether you're buried physically, or whether you're existing and living the life of the Pepsi generation, you're still dead. Paul said, "A woman who gives herself to pleasure is dead while she lives." So, it really doesn't make any difference, you see, whether you're walking around, whether you're what we might call the living dead, or the so called living dead, or those who are stone dead, it doesn't make a bit of difference, you're still dead outside the resurrection of Christ.

And so Jesus is talking here, He says, "The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live." Now, in this point He says, "The hour is coming and now is." So, here, He's talking about those who are walking around who are dead. Later on, down in verse 28, He said, "Don't marvel at this for the hour is coming which all those who are in the tomb shall hear my voice." And they'll live, they'll come forward. But either way, you see, Jesus is saying you're dead. "And those who are dead will hear my voice and they will come to the light."

Let me read you a passage from I John 3, verse 14, "We know we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." So, you can abide, you can live in death, abide means to live, you abide in death. We know, the Christian knows, he has passed, he passed through death, he has passed out of death into life. And he knows that because he loves the brethren. He couldn't love them if he hadn't passed into life. The point is, we have passed out of death, we've gone through death, that's why Jesus says concerning Lazarus, "If he lives and believes in Me, he will never die." They couldn't understand that. He says, "Though he be dead, yet shall he live." **If you believe in the resurrection and believe in Christ, physical death doesn't even count. You have already passed through death, and you've come into the state of life, and when this physical body dies, it doesn't change anything. You still have that life, and someday, God will give you a body in which you can enjoy that life.**

So . . . the only way to overcome and to conquer anything, and I think this is important, the only way to overcome and to conquer anything is to go through it. To experience it, and come out on the other side, and leave it behind. And that's exactly what we have done with death. We have died, we have already experienced death, we experienced it not personally, but in Christ. And we have been raised from the dead, we have come out on the other side of death, and now we are alive. And if you're alive in Christ, you will never have any more eternal life than you have right now. All these people that are singing about going over yonder to get eternal life are going to be disappointed because eternal life is not over yonder, eternal life is right here in Christ. You don't go to heaven to get eternal life, Christ brought heaven to you and gave you eternal life here and now. And the way you got it was you passed through death and were raised on the other side. You did that in Christ. He did it for you and God wrote it up to your account.

Sometimes we can't understand that, but Romans 6 verse 2, "Shall you continue in sin that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" We have already died. Now verse 8. "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." See, we have already died. We died in Christ. When Christ died, we died. Verse 9, "Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never die again; death no longer is master over Him." **Death does not have dominion over Christ. It cannot touch Him. And if you are in Christ, it can't touch you either. Christ is victorious over death, so are we.**

I think what we're hearing for the most part in the world today is a half gospel. It's a gospel which talks about Christ overcoming death, it talks about Christ dying and being raised from the dead, but it leaves out the fact that whenever He died, we died also, and whenever He was raised from the dead, we were raised with Him, and we are now living in resurrected life.

The fifth chapter of II Corinthians, verse 14, speaks of it this way, 'For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.' If one died for all, then all died. If Christ died for us, then we died in Him, "and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves (that's the old life), but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." **That's resurrected life.** And Paul says, those familiar words that mean little to us sometimes, in the second chapter of Galatians, verse 20, "I have been crucified with Christ." When Christ was crucified, I was crucified with Him, and if that's true, "it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." Christ lives in me. "And the life that I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

Our life, you see, is untouched by death. That's faith in the resurrection. That's what Abraham had, not only when he believed, or at least tried to believe when God said he was going to have a son. It took him 25 years, but it finally soaked in. Sarah came one day and told Abraham, I suppose, that finally they were going to have a child. And Abraham didn't look at her and say I don't believe you. He looked at her and finally after 25 years he said, I believe you. And God proved it to him. And then he was told to take his son and to kill him . . . do you see how this affects the life of Abraham and what he does? If God can give life to Sarah's womb, and my faith is based upon a God that gives life, then if I kill Isaac, He can give him life. And so he was willing to kill Isaac. Now if Isaac had been born when Abraham and Sarah were 30 years old, and there had been no miracle involved, he would have probably hesitated to offer Isaac on the altar because he wouldn't know anything about what was going to happen. He wouldn't know anything about God raising him from the dead.

That's why Isaac had to be born when Abraham was old. But having experienced resurrection when he was 100 years old, he experienced resurrected life from the deadness of Sarah's womb. That determined what he did when God said, "Offer Isaac." He was willing to do it because he believed in the resurrection. So you see how that affects our lives. If once we understand that in Christ Jesus we have life, and we have come through

death, we have died and been raised, and the life we have is not ours, it's eternal life, the life of God in us, it may take us 25 years to develop this faith but we can come to the place where we can do anything that God asks us to do because we believe in a God who gives life to the dead. Resurrected life then determines how we live.

But if we don't experience death and resurrection like Abraham did in the deadness of Sarah's womb, we will not be able to live it out whenever the tough times come. That's why so many Christian people fall apart whenever it comes to death and dealing with death because they haven't experienced resurrection whenever they came into Christ. They might have experienced death but not resurrection.

And so, not only did Abraham's faith show that he believed in a life giving God, but Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau regarding things to come. Isaac was old man and he was dying, but he blessed Jacob and Esau because he believed in their life. And Jacob when he was dying, he blessed the sons of Joseph. He knew there was something more by faith. Joseph, when he was dying, he had to make a promise to him because he looked to the future. He knew there was more to it than death. **You see, they all had faith in the resurrection and that's what caused them to do what they did, and that should be the reason we do what we do. And I guess it is, because Christian people do what they do because of what they believe.**

If they don't believe in the resurrection of Christ then they might as well go fishing on Sunday morning. They might as well do what they want to do instead of what God wants them to do. If they don't believe in the resurrection, then they're not committed to anything except what they want to do. And they're just like people who are dead, because they don't know that they have life.

To have something, and not know it, is as bad as not having it, as far as living it out is concerned, because if you don't know it, then you can't act upon it. And that's why Paul says so many times in his epistles, "I want you know," "I want you to understand." Now, that's faith! And that's the only kind of faith that's going to save us, is faith based upon the resurrection.

You can believe in God all you want to. The devil, the demons, believe in God and they tremble. You can believe that Jesus died for your sins all you want to, but that's only half a gospel, and you're going to live only half a life for it. You're going to muddle your way through the Christian life . . . until you get your faith based upon the resurrection of Christ, until you know that whenever He died you died, that you have passed through death, and that you now have eternal life. The life that you have living in you is eternal life. Immortality actually begins with your new birth.

At this point, the 45-minute cassette tape used to transcribe this sermon exhausted its recording capacity before Pastor Bowers completed his sermon. Not knowing how Pastor Bowers completed this sermon, the transcriber has taken liberties by borrowing some of

Pastor Bowers' comments from some of his other sermons to complete this sermon. The following comments were not approved by Pastor Bowers before publishing this sermon on his website (justification: this sermon is about the Resurrection, the current time is 2:45 am EST, tomorrow morning is Easter, time is of the essence requiring closure and publication). We will update the below-proposed ending and re-post to his website after Pastor Bowers reviews and comments on its content:

I understand it may take time for Christians to accept and believe that all of God's promises to Abraham are available to the believer now in Christ. My strongest recommendation is to not do what 95% of Christians have done for the last 2,000 years by waiting to receive and enjoy these promises until after they arrive over-yonder. Not only will you miss out on learning how to use His promises to perfect your service to God now, think of the innumerable rewards you will miss out on from sub-standard levels of service to God is in this life because you rejected God's promises that were available to you all along?

Even worst, think of how much you will miss out over-yonder on how to apply His promises to perfect the way you judge the world, judge angels, and do all of the other things God has waiting for you to do for Him after Jesus returns. The time for accepting, believing, using, and learning from the promises God made to Abraham, that He fulfilled in Christ, is right now, while you are "in the land of the living" (Psalms 27:13).

Satin's great lie and irony in all of this: By faith Abraham, believed God without ever receiving the promises. We have received all of God's promises, but because of Satan's many lies (Jesus said Satan "is a liar and the father of all lies" (John 8:44), we do not believe. The irony, and the incalculable loss, falls on the unbelieving Christian who no longer trusts or believes God in what He says He did for us in Christ.