

Numbers 36:1-13

Followers of Jesus live an abundant life anchored in his promises.

As we have arrived at the final words of this account of the wilderness journey I found myself thinking of others journeys and what they were like. Traveling, road weary, wondering when we would arrive. Modern technology has removed some of that for us but we still have experiences where the march doesn't always match the destination.

Driving to Crater Lake National Park is like that. Driving through trees, a rather unimpressive landscape. The journey doesn't give clear glimpses of the goal, that which is at the end of the road. But it is worth it to crest the hill and gaze upon the beauty of otherworldly collision (to see where the alien mothership landed all those years ago!)

That journey may be just a couple of hours depending on your starting point. We can hardly think of a 40-year experience.

Only some of us can. A long wait through our own wilderness. Wondering, dreaming of arriving at the shores of home. Wanting what seems so far off. Longing for transformation, for peace.

We have before us an unremarkable image on the last leg of the journey. An exchange about keeping the inheritance in the family. I believe a model for us, the whole point of the process. Faithfulness to God who is faithful to his promises.

For our purposes to close out this story of wandering, hoping to recognize what is being highlighted here; **obedience** and how that might match our story, the **opportunity** of life with Jesus.

Obedience

“So this is it! The nation of Israel, after many dangers, toils, and snares, is drawn up in battle formation on the east side of the Jordan River, with the walls of the Canaanite city of Jericho looming a few miles across the river. In so many ways,

the Hebrews' success seems astonishing—a series of accidents has finally landed them on the threshold of the land of milk and honey. But we know better by now. None of this is the result of chance, much less of Israel's goodness or skill or prowess. Rather, it is the result of God's working out his promise to save the world, and God always keeps his promises. Which is exactly what Moses wishes his people to hear, even here on the banks of the Jordan." Story of Redemption

God is faithful - to bring his people out of slavery in Egypt (today the kids are discussing the last plague and Passover). He is faithful to bring them to a land that was promised. Along the way the law was given, ordering of the camp, making them battle-ready for taking the land.

Also along the way, questions of trust and following the leadership God has put into place have arisen. It comes to a head when the first generation gets a glimpse of the land. That with enormous fruit and big people. They respond in fear, a disobedience that would keep a whole generation - including Moses - from the land.

The last third of the book of Numbers has been the next generation learning faithfulness to God. A trust in his promises that shape how they live - flourishing awaits!

Zelophehad's daughters are here again. You may remember their story. A group of daughters who at the announcement of land distributions to the tribes, having no brothers, are concerned they would miss out. So they petition Moses to ask God if they should receive the land and God said they were right and would get the land.

Another question comes up in relation to their inheritance and the family heads of the clans in Manasseh came before Moses and the chiefs of all of Israel. 'What if they marry into another clan - does Manasseh lose land?'

No - God makes provision to maintain the inheritance - and it is guidance on whom they can marry so that 'no inheritance in Israel is to pass from one tribe to another.'

It may sound restrictive to our ears. Can't we marry whoever we want - well no. While there are no New Testament restrictions on ethnic difference, believers are

exhorted to marry believers for their good. A partnership between one that sees Jesus as Lord and another that sees themselves as lord will be fraught with hardship. (2 Corinthians 6:14)

But here it is not received as depriving them of freedom. Instead it is life in response to the gift, in response to the promise.

And they obey. They show faithfulness to God's way.

“For Zelophehad's daughters, the specific questions to be addressed were marriage and inheritance. Their obedience to the Lord stood in sharp contrast with their fathers who wrongly united themselves to Moabite women because they failed to believe in the reality and the importance of the Lord's inheritance (25). Their fathers chose present satisfaction and pleasure along with perceived political and economic advantages over the promises of God, while their children chose the way of faith and obedience. The questions that we face may be different, but the fundamental issue of faith versus sight is still the same.” ID

Obedience not to earn the inheritance - it is already theirs - this is faithfulness to God who has kept his promise.

Numbers 36:9–12 “So no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another, for each of the tribes of the people of Israel shall hold on to its own inheritance.’ [10] The daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD commanded Moses, [11] for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to sons of their father's brothers. [12] They were married into the clans of the people of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's clan.” (ESV)

40 years to learn this. A life in the wake of God's promise is that of obedience to his way.

“This story of obedience and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of laying hold of what the LORD has given is the fitting end to this book. The LORD's requirements are clear, and we have now met two generations—one which refuses to obey and pays the consequences; the second which willingly submits to the LORD's request and inherits what he has promised...

“This second generation is thereby marked out as a generation of faith and obedience, like the daughters of Zelophehad. They are a generation that trusts that the Lord will fulfill his promises and solves problems when they arise by going to the Lord through Moses. They even obey the Lord’s word when they receive it. In this section of the book, therefore, there are no rebellions against the Lord or the leaders he has chosen — only the receiving and obeying of laws for the inheritance that they will receive in the Promised Land.”

All of it is rooted in who God is.

When we interact with each other on promises, we have more experience with people who fail to keep their promises. Friends that promise to be on time and aren’t. Dads who promise to make the game but miss it. Parents who promise they are not splitting up but do. Painful.

So when someone says “I promise” we might only hear “I’ll try really hard” or “I want you to trust me.” But for Israel and for us, our lives are anchored in the only One who is faithful to keep his promises. It is who God is.

Goes back to Moses’ first encounter with Yahweh. The burning bush.

Exodus 3:13–15 “Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” [14] God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” [15] God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.” (ESV)

From their rescue to the bank of the Jordan river this is what was to be motivating them throughout. Who God is.

“In that encounter with Moses in the wilderness God promises us that he is who is, that he will be who he will be. That revelation of his unchanging, unstoppable, promise-keeping nature underpins every other promise he makes. And it finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, whose death in our place displays the unchanging love of God in the face of our sinfulness and rebellion, and whose resurrection reveals

the unstoppable power of God to overcome all that would separate us from him... God is unchanging—and so he never makes a promise and then doesn't want to keep it. God is unstoppable—and so he never makes a promise and then he finds he can't keep it." Andy Hood

Right response is obedience to his way.

"The five daughters bear this restriction willingly. The text applies to them the standard obedience refrain, "they did what the LORD commanded." We can express it like this: they know that the inheritance is everything, and they will do whatever it takes to take hold of it, whatever restrictions it may require. In New Testament terms, this is the equivalent of "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13)."

Our lives, likewise, are rooted in the same place - in who God is, and his promises. Because of who he is we are called to life in him.

Opportunity

In Christ our inheritance is not determined by our obedience but Christ's.

"This passage functions not only as another assurance that entry into the Promised Land is imminent; it functions primarily to underscore that this land inheritance will be a lasting inheritance for the people of God—not to be transferred (v. 9). This is a fitting note with which to conclude a book about life in the wilderness. When finally we exit the wilderness of this age and enter into the joys of the Promised Land, those joys amid the presence of God, his angels, and his people will last forever and ever (Rom. 6:23; John 3:16; Rev. 22:17)." GTB

And that carries us through life now.

2 Corinthians 1:20 "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." (ESV)

What does this mean for how we live? Shapes what we pursue, what we find profitable.

“Heaven seems incredibly distant, especially when we are young, while the attractions of the present seem incredibly powerful. Yet if the heavenly inheritance that Christ died to win for us is truly all-important, then other motivations will be put in their proper place. If your eyes are fixed on your future inheritance, present obedience will make much more sense.”

“At our varied stages of life the questions can be rather different. Perhaps you are struggling with peer pressure at school or work. Perhaps materialism has a grip on your heart, and your life revolves around what you own (the American dream, your cherished prize). Perhaps you find yourself overwhelmed with lust or romantic fantasies. The common thread in all of these temptations is they offer immediate satisfaction and pleasure in exchange for disobedience to the Lord and turning your back on your heavenly inheritance.”

If we have believed in Jesus - repented of sin and turned to him for the eternal living he provides - we are empowered to faithfulness. And we should walk in it.

“Promissory Note” Promise to pay upon receipt of the note... how cash began. “In some places, the official currency is in fact a form of promissory note called a demand note (one with no stated maturity date or fixed term, allowing the lender to decide when to demand payment).”

Going to buy an item - if I enter the store I have no confidence if I don't have the cash (don't have the note). But if I do have it, I can walk in with full confidence that thing will be mine.

Same as life with Jesus. We just need the reminder that the promise is ours on occasion.

For the daughters of Zelophehad it was the land - proof of God's care. For us it is salvation, purpose, identity, and life in Christ.

Romans 10:9 “because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (ESV)

1 Peter 2:24 “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (ESV)

2 Timothy 1:7 “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” (ESV)

2 Corinthians 12:9 “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (ESV)

Philippians 4:4–7 “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (ESV)

James 1:2–4 “Count it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (ESV)

Romans 8:28 “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (ESV)

John 8:36 “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (ESV)

Mark 11:24 “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (ESV)

Philippians 4:19 “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (ESV)

John 16:33 “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (ESV)

Revelation 3:5 “The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.” (ESV)

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (ESV)

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (ESV)

Romans 15:13 “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (ESV)

Hebrews 10:23 “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” (ESV)

John 14:1–3 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [2] In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (ESV)

Just 17 promises... There are more than 7000.

We are invited to live accordingly.

For me it is increasingly trusting his presence - he has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. You know what promise it needs to be for you.

Holding onto these promises will be marked by obedience to him. Above all things. Our primary calling of glorifying Christ and enjoying him forever.

I am convinced this is where abundant life, real life, good life is found.

Because of who He is - I AM - and what he has done and will do. We can live faithfully to him for his glory and our good.

It is where the chains are broken, where freedom is found, where the Kingdom goes forth.

The wilderness wandering over, faithfulness realized. “The NT applies this picture to Christians, exhorting them to enter the eternal promised land of rest by holding fast to their faith in Jesus (Heb 3:6, 12–14; 4:8–11), the one who has atoned for their sins so that they can enter into a final and perfect Eden and walk in perfect fellowship with God (Rev 5:9–10; 21:1–5; 22:1–5). This is exceedingly good news, and Jesus commands his followers to share it with all peoples so that they too may enter into his kingdom and the eternal rest that he has won for them (Matt 28:18–20; cf. 1 John 2:2; Rev 7:9–10).”

Living now in the promise headed home with Jesus.

Numbers 36:13 “These are the commandments and the rules that the LORD commanded through Moses to the people of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.” (ESV)

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Will you believe? He has the words of life, there is nowhere else to go. Jesus gave his life of obedience that it would be counted as yours, his blood shed to cover your disregard of God, come to him. Call him Lord.

Drop the weights. Turn from running after other things that don’t keep their promises and run to Jesus. Live in light of his work and promises for you.

Revelation 22:17 “The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” (ESV)

We have crested the hill. We see the beauty of Christ - of life in the wake of His promise. It's glorious. It's peace. It is abundant life.

Shall we live it together?