"Living in Light of Our Inheritance"

Numbers 34

We're almost done the book of Numbers and we've now journeyed from Mt. Sinai (39 years earlier) where Israel was instructed by God how to organize themselves in tribes, camp strategically around the Tabernacle in the center of their camp and how to march out as tribes again, always with God's presence at the center. God told them in Num. 10 that the signal for Israel to walk was when His glory (as seen in the cloud by day or fire by night) would rise from the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and for them to stop and camp when His presence came down over the Holy of Holies. And we noted in Ch.33, that for all the times Israel grumbled and complained about God or Moses, there is no record of them ever disobeying God's signal to move or stay.

That's a very powerful word picture that reminds us that even though we may grumble and complain at times, we still need to move forward by faith, trusting that God is always with us even when we're not sure about the direction He's taking us or why we face the circumstances He's put in our path. Why do we keep walking with God by faith? Because of the promise of our future inheritance.

Here in Ch. 34, we're still on the east side of the Jordan. Israel won't cross the Jordan until Joshua leads them over in Joshua 3 because God still has some things they need to learn. But they are almost there and now that the tribes of Gad, Reuben and half of Manasseh have requested that their inheritance be on the east side of the Jordan, God reminds the whole nation that His promise to give them the land west of the Jordan still stands and now He gives them the boundaries of where their land will be. It was God's covenant promise of their future inheritance.

While the promise for Israel's inheritance revolves around this land, we, the church, Jesus' disciples, also have an inheritance promised to us – a secure future in the presence of God where all our needs will be met. How do we walk faithfully with God with the knowledge that we have an inheritance? What spiritual principles can we draw from Israel's knowledge of their future inheritance of the land that will help us walk with God with hope every day? [pray]

God now tells Moses where they will pound their stakes in specific geographical locations in the land. And the most important phrase is found in v.2,

When you enter Canaan, the land that will be allotted to you as an inheritance will have these boundaries:

Not if you enter or try to enter, but "when you enter … the land <u>will be</u> allotted to you as an inheritance and it will have <u>these boundaries</u>. That means God's people have to

<u>Believe God Will Keep His Promises</u> (34:1-15)

Can we believe God's Word? If we can't, there is nothing in all of life we can depend on. God made these original promises to Abraham saying that He would make Abraham's name great, give them the land of Canaan and ultimately bless the world through his descendants; we need to believe it. The author of Hebrews assured us we can believe this when he wrote in Heb. 6:

6:13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. 16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

We must believe God's promises by faith

Even when we can't see it yet (vv.1-15)

Israel was still on the east side of the Jordan. Even Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh had not received their inheritance east of the Jordan yet, so they had to believe by faith that would be theirs. And God gives them all geographical boundaries which, many of them they wouldn't even have known where they were yet. So for now, this was all a lesson in trust: do you believe God will give you exactly what He said He would give you?

But this was for Israel (and I will argue still is since God can't go back on His Word) and not for us, Jesus' disciples. But we also receive an inheritance. How? Through faith, believing in God's promises. Listen to 1 Peter 1:3

1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Our inheritance is kept in heaven for us. God shields it by His power. We have it now if we have believed Jesus is God's Son who lived a sinless life, was killed by those who wouldn't believe He was God's Son, yet He proved it by rising from the dead. Since Jesus is alive, He offers us a future home with Him on the new earth (Rev. 21). This is a living hope. We have it now but we don't see it yet because we haven't died. To receive an inheritance always means someone has to die. This is waiting for us. Therefore we should live confidently by faith in Jesus knowing what's waiting for us. And as Peter points out in v.3, we should be

Praising Him as we marvel at His plans for us (vv.3-15)

It's easy to dismiss these boundary descriptions but in reality, God was saying I'm going to give you this land over here (thank you Lord) and the land from there going over to here (thank you Lord!) and that land that goes from there to there (thank you Lord!!). This is the response that should happen when God's people believe God's promises to us. And Peter properly began,

1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Or the apostle Paul also praises God in Eph. 1:3-14

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in

his sight. In love [5] he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace [8] that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. [9] And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, [10] to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. [11] In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, [12] in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. [13] And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

We can thank Him and praise Him now for the future assurance that we have. Why? Because God keeps His promises. Okay, that's great. How do we show we are living by faith believing God's future promises are ours, even though we live surrounded by false narratives that say, there is no future or there is no God, or grab all of life that you can for yourself regardless of who gets in your way. After all, you deserve it!

If we believe that our future reward with God is greater than whatever we get out of life here, then we will consistently

Remove idols that hinder us from walking by faith (33:50-56)

Remember what I've often said about chapter divisions. They are manmade and we often don't see the context of the passage. What did we just read at the end of Ch. 33?

[50] On the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho the Lord said to Moses, [51] "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, [52] drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols, and demolish all their high places. [53] Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess. [54] Distribute the land by lot, according to your clans. To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one. Whatever falls to them by lot will be theirs. Distribute it according to your ancestral tribes.
[55] " 'But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live. [56] And then I will do to you what I plan to do to them.' "

God told Israel they will inherit the land but that they would need to go in and destroy all those idols that tell them there are other gods and other ways to find happiness in life. That had to trust God that He was right and the world's ways were lies disguised in temporal happiness. God's words promise true hope when we live by them even though we are surrounded by competing voices that tell us God is wrong. Similarly, we have to remove from our life those thoughts, attitudes and false pursuits of worldly success or happiness and trust that God's ways bring true joy and that this is a good place but not our eternal home.

This would become a great challenge for Israel to go into the land and remove all these idols. They never did it completely. After Joshua died they were still trying to battle the Canaanites. We read in Judges 1

[19] The Lord was with the men of Judah. They took possession of the hill country, but they were unable to drive the people from the plains, because they had iron chariots. [20] As Moses had promised,
Hebron was given to Caleb, who drove from it the three sons of Anak. [21] The Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the Benjamites.

[27] But Manasseh did not drive out the people of Beth Shan or Taanach or Dor or Ibleam or Megiddo and their surrounding settlements, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that land. [28] When Israel became strong, they pressed the Canaanites into forced labor but never drove them out completely. [29] Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer, but the Canaanites continued to live there among them. [30] Neither did Zebulun drive out the Canaanites living in Kitron or Nahalol, who remained among them; but they did subject them to forced labor. [31] Nor did Asher drive out those living in Acco or Sidon or Ahlab or Aczib or Helbah or Aphek or Rehob, [32] and because of this the people of Asher lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land. [33] Neither did Naphtali drive out those living in Beth Shemesh or Beth Anath; but the Naphtalites too lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land, and those living in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath became forced laborers for them. [34] The Amorites confined the Danites to the hill country, not allowing them to come down into the plain. [35] And the Amorites were determined also to hold out in Mount Heres, Aijalon and Shaalbim, but when the power of the house of Joseph increased, they too were pressed into forced labor. [36] The boundary of the Amorites was from Scorpion Pass to Sela and beyond.

Some Christians don't believe God's promises to Israel and their land remain anymore. They argue that it was fulfilled in Solomon's day. It was great time of peace but the land still contained idol worship because Solomon married all these women who led him astray because of the idols they worshipped, which he never destroyed. As long as we're on earth, the obstacles to our faith remain and we have to be vigilant to not let the difficult circumstances of the present turn our mind away from our future hope. If we finish what Peter started in 1 Pet. 1:3

[3] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, [5] who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. [6] In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. [7] These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, [9] for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
[10] Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, [11] trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. [12] It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

So, what are some ways we can help each other stay focused on our future hope when we can't see it yet and our current circumstances are discouraging? Each of us need to do our part and

Encourage Each Other to Apply God's Promises (34:16-29)

We have another list! What is this list?

These are the names of the men who are to assign the land for you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun. [18] And appoint one leader from each tribe to help assign the land.

They chose these men to remind their own tribes of the fact that God was giving them an inheritance. Because for them to assign your inheritance means they must believe it themselves. And it starts with the High priest Eliezer and Joshua. And they pick 12 leaders who will do the same to those in their sphere of influence. In other words

Lead by example (vv.16-18)

We all get discouraged at times because life can be hard. When we're not seeing God's promises come true yet. That's when we need each other to remind us of what God says in His Word. You're an adopted child of God. We are co-heirs with Jesus, Paul says in Rom. 8:9

[9] You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. [10] But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. [11] And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. [12] Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. [13] For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, [14] because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. [15] For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." [16] The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. [17] Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

If the Spirit of Jesus dwells in us then we have an obligation to remind each other we are children of God, co-heirs with Jesus, called to live by the Spirit and not by our sinful (doubting) nature. Yes, we're experiencing current sufferings but we will share in His glory and Paul will go on to say in v.18 that our current sufferings can't compare to the future glories waiting for us.

So who then are these 12 leaders? What do their names represent since they were trusted with reminding those in their families of God's promises?

People whose names were associated with encouragement (vv.19-29)

And you thought this was a dull list of nobodies that mean nothing to us. But those in their families knew who they were and they associated their name with encouragers who kept reminding them that God has given us an inheritance so let's go in and live by faith and believe what God has said.

This reminded me about another encourager in the New Testament; the guy they renamed 'Encourager'. Remember Joe the Levite in Acts 4?

[36] Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), [37] sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

When people hear your name and my name, do they think of encourager? Or do they think of a grump, whiner, critical, know-it-all? If not the former then we can change. How? We need to keep focused on God's promises. What's in store for us? That he is always with us. That all things are

working for our good which is conformity to Christ. Are you an encourager to your family, and the family of God? How do we want to finish life? Then work at finishing today as an encourager.

God gave Israel an inheritance which I believe still awaits the remnant of believing Israel since His promises always stand. And His promises for us receiving an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade away is as true today as it was when Peter wrote it. The challenge for all of us is to live by faith believing those things are true even though we can't see them yet, even though we're surrounded by naysayers and false narratives that try to dissuade us from following Jesus. So we need to encourage each other daily, as Heb. 3:12 says

as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. [14] We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

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If you have any comments or questions about tis message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net