

The Rock: 08-23-2020**Series: By Faith**

First reading: Jeremiah 29: 11-14

Title: Therefore

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-2

Theme:

How can we live out the faith-driven life? Can we be assured of God's will and design for us, like the heroes of old? Can we really know what God has planned for us, and if so, how?

Introduction:

Being surrounded by so many witnesses to the faithfulness of God, which actually, is why they were faithful to him, we really can know. But how?

We will get to that. But I think we should recognize a very important thing, and that is the imperfections of all these men and women of faith.

That is a hopeful thought as we wrestle with how we apply these things. A very good friend asked recently about the practical ways we can know we are in God's will -by faith.

Afterall, we are talking about Moses, Abraham and Sarah and Abel. All giants of the faith who made the list right? Yet, they were as broken as any of us, struggling to make the right decisions every day.

Our text this morning in Hebrews 12 tells us a few things that we ought to keep in mind.

#1- **Set aside.** We are told to put off to the side the weight and burden that we tend to carry on our own. The sin that clings to us.

The doubt, fear and concern that we are doing the right thing at the right time. We are challenged here to set those things aside.

It's important that we live as New creation people who are trying to be like Jesus and not our old self.

#2- **Run with endurance.** That's encouraging isn't it? We have a race to run, and that means we need to at some level, train for that race. Part of that training is setting aside the old way of being and doing, and focus on the new.

Learning to live by faith and not by sight. This means also that the Christian life is not a one off. What do I mean by that?

Well, we are not all set and ready for heaven simply by saying a prayer to accept Jesus and then just go to church. There is much more than that which makes a faith lived life.

How do we do all this and understand it?

#3- **Look to Jesus.** Why, well in a nut shell, He is the founder and perfecter of our faith. Our means to HIS end for us. It is by His faithfulness that we can live by faith.

His life shows us how to live and respond and follow the leading of God in heaven. More on that in a bit.

The Story:

Because for the next two weeks we will be looking at the practical application of how we can know. Next week will be mine and Lisa's story of assurance in a message titled: How can we know that we know.

Because you can, and that is what we are going to walk through. Now, Henry Blackaby, in his book *Experiencing God* has probably the best four principles to help us know God's will for our lives.

It will be good for you to remember them as we will look at these verses and our journey in light of them.

Both for this week and next, and I pray that you will tuck them somewhere in your Bibles to go back to and be reminded when you are wondering.

How can we know God's will for our lives?

#1- **The Bible**

#2- **Prayer**

#3- **Circumstances**

#4- **Other people**

A life of faith is exactly that, one of faith, and sometimes there will be answers for us in our questions and struggles, and sometimes not.

But we can rest in God promise that He gives us what we need.

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

-Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV

God has given us enough in His word -The Bible, to give us confidence to live in the dynamic tension of the unknown and the unanswered questions.

Some things, please remember, will simply always be a mystery. And one of the most

important things we look at in laying aside every weight and sin that clings to us is:

We have to decide to lay those things aside. Deep insight, I know. But we know that it is hard to do.

We have to grow beyond our "feelings" and into the practical reality of living life. What do I mean by that? Afterall, my feelings aren't bad. And you would be right, they aren't. Until they are...

When we begin to make choices based upon how we feel, most often we step outside of God's care and His plan for us.

Feelings are not bad. God has given them to us with reason and for a purpose as part of who we are as His image-bearer's. So, we ought to understand them and how they work in each of our lives.

But a life lived by pure feelings tends to keep us from using our own minds in the process, and we make poor decisions based not in fact and reality, but in how wd feel at the moment.

Let's look at our world for a minute. Every day we see people making emotionally charged accusations or comments which all too often are based in nothing more than their own personal feeling about it.

One political leader said last year that it didn't matter if they were factually correct, only that they were "morally right". Because they felt strongly about the issue at hand, they believed they were morally right, even though the facts they had actually contradicted how they felt.

If you think that is silly, you would be right. It is, but it makes the point. Abraham, our Father of the faith -twice tells Sarah to lie about being his wife. Why? Because he is afraid of what might happen to him.

Not much faith happening there, just feelings of fear.

Sarah, as you recall from a few weeks ago, told Abraham to sleep with her maidservant. Why? Because the promise made by God wasn't working out and she was worried that it would never happen.

Her choice was culturally sound and acceptable, but wrong. Why? Because God made it clear that the promise would be through her. But she became emotional and feared that God wouldn't come through. I am sure every one of us has been there too.

But how she felt in that situation, contradicted what she KNEW about God and

His promise. As a result, her actions got her in trouble.

One of the primary ways we can be sure of our faith choices is to see if they are consistent with who God says He is **in the Bible** -and does that choice line up with the pattern we see in Scripture.

God will never direct you toward something or to do something that is contrary to His word. The Bible! If it doesn't line up with His word, you can be assured, it's not from Him.

"I feel like this might be from God", is merely a starting point for us in our faith walk and spiritual growth.

A great question to ask yourself at moments like that in your life is this:
Is this something that lines up with the overall teaching of the Bible?

This is why it is so important that you read you Bible, every day. That you study it, and get to know it by memorizing parts of it.

Afterall- it is our guidebook for living.

But not every question we have is directly answered in the Bible. True enough, that's why there is more help for us beyond our primary one of His word.

Prayer is essential -not just alone, but also with trusted friends, mentors, and those who have been there and done that. Who bring wisdom to the table!

To have folks like that pray with you is an exercise in wisdom. That is the "**other people**" in your life. Being in community, in small groups and in a Church setting every Sunday becomes so essential for your growth.

It can't, and they can't simply be another choice or thing to do if we want to be healthy, disciplined followers of Jesus. You have to get into the Book and get with His people.

Others in your life, given to prayer for you and your choices is a very good thing, because God wants to be found by you. Remember last week, he isn't the Hide and seek champion of the universe:

"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord..."

-Jeremiah 29:12-14a ESV

He's not playing that cosmic hide and seek game with you and me, like life is some divine game He is playing for His

entertainment in the hopes that we get things right.

No - That is a false god and ancient myth way of thinking. That we are somehow designed by the gods as playthings for their entertainment, and we have to keep guessing what they want.

God -YHWH- The creator of the universe made us in His image for fellowship. With Him and then with each other.

We run the race of life with endurance because we know **His word, we pray** for direction and can know what to do along the way.

This is helped greatly by those whom God has put in our lives. Think for a moment who they are in your life. Write their names down!

We then look to Jesus. Why? Because He is the best example. He knew what He was supposed to do. "Well of course He did", you say, "He was Jesus."

Well yes, I am aware of that but He didn't use His superpowers, as it were to navigate through life. No, when you read the 4 gospels you find that He knew His Bible, and how to apply it to His life.

His prayer life was consistent and intentional. Every day, and then at

certain times when he had big decisions to make, He got alone with the Father.

Right up to His very last night alive:

"Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is

at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”

-Matthew 26 36-45 ESV

He knew why He was born; the Scriptures were and are clear on that point. He had spent three years teaching His friends. But in that moment of doubt and pain -He prays.

Why? For clarity, for direction, and for assurance. And His answer came back to Him in the silence of no answer.

So, when that happens to us, we ought to change exactly nothing! We continue to do the last thing we know with certainty God told us, and keep doing that until He clearly tells us otherwise.

We should never think that God's silence is Him trying to ponder and decide how He's going to answer you and we are somehow on hold.

That thinking is inconsistent with His word. We stay the course, and continue in prayer -until He changes our hearts and direction. OR, just like Jesus he reaffirms what you already know and are doing.

The Bible said so, His prayers were answered in silence, those around Him affirmed it by their actions (even though

it was confusing and bad), and His circumstances made clear that Golgotha was the end game.

FOR US. That is the joy set before us.

"...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

-Hebrews 12:2b ESV

Oh- the upside-down world of the Kingdom of God. In the horror of a crucifixion, the hour when evil thought it won, evil was defeated by evil itself and death, its ultimate weapon of fear, was no more.

Look, just because we can't know everything. Doesn't mean we can't know anything. We know what we need to in order to do the next right thing.

Moses -Listen, you know what to do, lift your staff, hit the water, and take everyone for a walk!

He knew what to do, he had just never done that before and in the back of his mind he wondered: "Will this work?" That's **faith, based in reason** (God has been faithful in all the other things so far), **turned into action.**

Listen, everything God had done in Moses's life up to that point and all his circumstances, were the proof he needed to step out in faith and part the Red Sea.

Moses still needed His active faith, even though it was based in good evidence. We do too. Are we actually watching the **circumstances of our lives** and living with the understanding that God is in control?

One of the key elements in mine and Lisa's journey -more next week-is that the circumstances in our lives began to speak loudly to us. We were observant of what God was doing, and we were united in that.

There was not division or confusion between us. God was moving within the little day to day things as well as through the people in our lives.

You see, others were getting a sense that our time at AGCC was drawing to a close, and that it was time to move on. But we didn't know where, so we stayed the course.

The comments of our prayerful friends were filed away in our hearts and minds as one more piece of God's conformation in the process.

This is how all people of faith operate, or should. We didn't corner the market on this, we simply have learned that God operates a particular way, and if we watch, as we should, we will see it.

Just as we close today, I want to challenge you to watch your life, even journal if you don't already. Look to see what, where and how God is moving and speaking.

Remember, he wants to be found by you, so His will for you isn't some divine mystery puzzle that you are blindly trying to figure out.

We set aside the weight and sin of our old lives and begin to run the race set for us, looking to Jesus as our Lord King and best example of how it is, we navigate our lives By Faith.

The Bible, Prayer, Circumstances, and Other people in our lives. These are the ways we can know that we know.