

Intro.

- A. If I described a huge chain attached to a 12,000 anchor, your mind quickly goes to the Columbus Belmont State Park
 - 1. In 1861, Columbus, KY = site of a fascinating stronghold for Confederate troops in the Civil War.
 - a. 140 heavy canons along the bluffs of the Mississippi R. & numerous gun boats were commanded by Gen. Leonidas Polk, the fighting bishop from TN.
 - b. The Confederate troops held off General U.S. Grant in his first active engagement of the War.
 - 2. A tremendous chain was stretched across the channel of the Gt. River, significantly halting river travel for a considerable time, & it eventually brought about a change in strategy by Union forces.
- B. There is a much stronger chain of which we read in the Bible that we focus our study on at present – it’s the *chain of faith*, faith that was confident in the promises God pledged to Abram.
 - 1. This chain spanned 4 generations, each being a link in a long chain of belief in God’s trustworthiness.
 - 2. We need to examine 3 aspects of this mighty chain: its **links**, the **strength** of that chain, the **length** of it

Discuss.**I. THE L-I-N-K-S IN THE CHAIN.**

- A. When God called Abram to leave Haran, He made a 4-fold promise, **Gen. 12:1-3**
 - 1. God would make from him a great nation.
 - 2. Abram’s name would become great.
 - 3. → Thru Abram, *God would bless all the families of the earth.*
 - 4. Canaan Land was promised to Abram’s offspring.
- B. God changed Abram’s name as an indication that God would keep His promises.
 - 1. In **Heb. 6:12-19** we are reminded that this serves as a strong anchor for our faith.
 - 2. Abraham would be *the father of many nations*, **Gen. 17:3-6**
- C. In due time...
 - 1. God forged Isaac as the 2nd link in this chain, **Gen. 26:2-5**
 - 2. The 3rd link was Jacob, to whom God repeated the promises as Jacob fled from Esau’s threats, **Gen. 29:1-4, 11-15**
 - 3. Jacob never lost confidence in God’s promises, & his final request was burial in his father’s land, **Gen. 49:29-33**
 - 4. In the 4th generation (Joseph), the promise remained vibrant, **Gen. 50:24**. Like his father, Jacob, Joseph made plans for his bones to be carried out of Egypt into Canaan.

II. THE S-T-R-E-N-G-T-H OF THE CHAIN...

- A. ...was obviously God Almighty, who forged the chain with a solemn covenant to gt-grfather, Abraham.
 - 1. It was to him the original promise was made, *To your descendants I will give this land*, **Gen. 12:7**
 - 2. At Hebron, God gave the promise the firmness of a covenant, **Gen. 15:7-21**
 - a. Abram butchered required animals, laid their parts on the ground in 2 parallel lines.
 - b. Then the 2 making an agreement typically met between the lines of animal parts.
 - c. This symbolized that what had happened to the animals should happen to them if agreement violated.
 - d. Since God was the sole covenant-maker, He passed thru the corridor between sacrificial pieces.
 - B. The strength of the patriarchal chain of faith was that each link knew of God’s covenant promise!!!
 - 1. That is the backdrop of **Heb. 11:13**, *saw them (promises fulfilled) afar off, assured of them, embraced...*
 - 2. *...not having received them* = for their own possession.
 - C. Nonetheless, Joseph said as he was dying, *God will surely visit you*, **Gen. 50:24**
 - 1. *Visit* = to notice & give attention to, c. **Psa. 8:4** - *What is man ... & the son of man that you visit him?*
 - 2. *Visit* = to intervene in order to bless, Naomi heard God had visited his people by giving bread, **Ruth 1:6**; or to intervene in order to punish, **Ex. 20:5** the iniquity of the fathers was visited upon the children.
 - 3. *Visit* = to give deliverance (c. **Jer. 29:10** promise that God would visit Babylonian captives after 70 yr.)
- Joseph knew God would *take notice of His people, intervene on their behalf & deliver them into Canaan*
Heb. 11:22

III. THE L-E-N-G-T-H OF THE CHAIN.

- A. With a fortified faith, the patriarchs looked toward a far-away horizon.
 - 1. It would be 400 yr. for retribution to come to Egyptians & Amorites; the Canaan would be the Israelites
 - 2. Heb. writer stretched the chain stretches the chain to our day, who are also **sojourners & pilgrims** (**Heb. 11:13 & c. 1 Pet. 2:11**) & we *desire a better, heavenly country*, **Heb. 11:16**.
- B. Christians are part of that strong, long chain of faith (@ **children of Abraham**, **Rm. 4:13-25; Gal. 3:29**)
- C. A 3rd proof that we are part of that chain is in **Heb. 11:40** – God’s faithful heroes *are not made perfect apart from us!*
 - 1. Paul explained **1 Cor. 10:11** that the promises of Christ represent the completion of all that went before.
 - a. For our admonition, Paul covered a list of several unworthy examples from the O.T.
 - b. The goal of God’s work (i.e., promises made, seeds planted in ages past) are to bear fruit in us.
 - c. Our eternal inheritance is what God’s promises & the chain of faith were all about. We = the other end of the chain!
 - 2. The roll call of God’s faithful in **Heb. 11** points towards a conclusion – us – **Heb. 12:1-2**
 - 3. We should look backward to find our motivation, & forward to find our direction, to Jesus – *the author & finisher of our faith*, **vs. 3**

Concl.

- A. In 1947, explorer Thor Heyerdahl & 5 others drifted 4300 miles in 103 days from Peru to Polynesian Islands
 - 1. In *Kon Tiki*, he wrote about how he found the unseen islands.
 - a. Every day, large flocks of sea birds flew, circling aimlessly around the raft.
 - b. One evening before sunset, the birds began to fly away together towards the west.
 - c. He knew they were flying home, so he twisted the steering oar & set a course in that same direction.
 - 2. After Jesus had endured the cross, he walked among men, & then went home to His Father.
 - 3. Keeping our eyes on Him, we need to steer our lives in the same direction, towards eternal rest, **Heb. 12:3**
- B. Joseph last request was that his bones would rest in the promised land.
 - 1. If that had been the absolute rest God had promised, God would not have spoken of any other.
 - 2. But listen (**Heb. 4:8-11**), *There remains therefore a rest for the people of God...Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest.*
 - 3. In **2 Cor. 1:20**, Paul said,
For all the promises of God in him are yes, & in him amen, to the glory of God through us.
- C. That land of rest is promised to God’s faithful, **Rom. 1:17**
 - 1. Receiving the promised inheritance is dependant on our faithfulness to God.
 - 2. The strength of your faith (& obedience) will not only effect your salvation, but – as one link in a very long chain – may effect the salvation of many others, as well.
 - 3. Only faith that obeys is strong enough to stay the course thru life in find rest on the peaceful shore.