

## **Introduction – 10 Minutes**

### 1) Greeting & Welcome:

- a) Dismissal of Children to Transformation Station (PowerPoint Slide)
- b) Words of Introduction – Family Feud – “Concepts of Faithful”
  - i) I’d like us to imagine that we are watching the television game show “Family Feud”.
  - ii) And the host tells us that “100 people surveyed – Tell me something or someone that is ‘faithful’”
  - iii) If you are like me, you start yelling out some possible answers, like:
    - (1) “Old Faithful” - The geyser in Yellowstone
    - (2) A dog, “Man’s Best Friend”
    - (3) A marine – “*Semper Fi*” – “always faithful”
    - (4) SamWise Gamgee – Frodo’s faithful friend - From the “Lord of the Rings”
- c) What would probably NOT make anyone’s list is this: The Nation of Israel.
  - i) Now I want us to remember, it was God’s intention that the Sons of Abraham – the nation of Israel – would be a faithful people receiving the blessings of His covenant faithfulness back to them.
  - ii) And that by Israel’s faithfulness, the nations of the world would see their faithfulness and thereby gain a more accurate picture of who their God actually was.
  - iii) Unfortunately, throughout its history Israel struggled with that very intention of YHWH, including this morning’s story found in the Book of Numbers, chapters 13-14.

### 2) Context of the Scripture:

- a) The Exodus (recapped; to date):
  - i) Before we read, let me remind us where Israel had been so far up-to-this-point. (The Exodus)
    - (1) As we’ve learned throughout this series, Israel’s journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land was not without difficulty.
    - (2) Through God’s ten plagues upon them, the slave-keeping nation of Egypt was confronted by Israel’s God, YHWH.
    - (3) While observing the First Passover, Israel’s first born sons are protected from the death while Egypt’s first born sons are taken by death.
    - (4) And then, fleeing through the Red Sea which had been miraculously parted, Israel experiences God’s rescue from their life of slavery in Egypt.
    - (5) You would think that emotionally and spiritually and physically that they’d be “all set” – that God’s faithfulness to them would be sunk deep into their collective spirits AND that their faithfulness to Him would be easily returned but... this was not the case.
    - (6) In short time, while Moses is at the summit of Mt Sinai receiving God’s instructions, Israel impatiently rejects YHWH, melts the golden plunder received from Egypt, and constructs the Golden Calf – an idol made from their own hands – and then they worship offer their devotion to that very same god made with their own hands.
    - (7) YHWH, in His mercy, spares this nation His full wrath for their outright disobedience and at Moses request remains with them, ever-present as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire.

- (8) He moves ahead of Israel as they journey towards a Land that had been Promised to them by their forgiving, powerful, and liberating God.
- ii) But, for the balance of this journey, a pattern for Israel’s conduct emerges. They would receive God’s grace.
  - iii) Then, when difficult circumstances would confront them, they would falsely interpret their circumstances against God’s care.
  - iv) Great grumbling and crass complaining would soon follow – eventually turning into active disobedient.
  - v) This would become a pattern that Israel would repeat over and over again..
    - (1) The prophets saw this. Jesus pointed it out.
    - (2) God, the Father - YHWH - was aware of it.
    - (3) It can be found throughout the pages of the Old Testament.
- b) Numbers 13:1-33 – summarized:
- i) And this pattern can be found as we consider our text beginning in Numbers 13 this morning. After the disaster of the Golden Calf at Mt. Sinai, this story is considered to be the second Great Apostasy of Israel – its turning its back on God’s gracious face.
    - (1) Israel is now in the desert; the Wilderness of Paran – just at the edge of the Promised Land.
    - (2) Just as the nation of Israel is about to enter the Promised Land, Israel demonstrates its DNA of unfaithfulness.
    - (3) It is here. Almost crossing the finish line from their wandering that Israel literally seems to “Snatches Defeat from the Jaws of Victory”.
    - (4) And, what had been intended to become a blessing for them is changed into tragedy.
  - ii) To begin our story, God instructs Moses to send out scouts into Canaan, the Promised Land.
    - (1) While Israel is camped in the Wilderness, God clearly states that Canaan will be a land that He “is giving” to Israel.
    - (2) Therefore, a leader from every one of the 12 tribes of Israel are selected and specifically named to go and check out this gift.
    - (3) Amongst those leaders, are two men familiar to many of us:
      - (a) From the tribe of Judah = Caleb, son of Jephunneh
      - (b) From the tribe of Ephraim = Hoshea, son of Nun (whom Moses then renames as Joshua)
  - iii) Moses instructs these 12 leader-scouts concerning the Promise Land.
    - (1) They are to go throughout the lengths and widths and summits and valleys of the Promised Land.
    - (2) For there are questions to be answered:
      - (a) What is the land like?
        - (i) Is it good or bad? Rich or poor?
        - (ii) Are there trees or no trees? What kind of trees? What kind of fruit?
          - 1. In fact, they are to bring back some of the fruit.
          - 2. This was a good time to make this request.
          - 3. It was the season of “First Ripe Grapes” – probably late July.
      - (b) What are the cities like?
        - (i) Are there camps or are there strongholds that are walled and fortified?
      - (c) What are the people there like?
        - (i) Are there many people or few? Strong or weak?

- (3) **What was not up for debate was whether or not to a conquest was possible?**. Nope. That issue had already been settled. God had instructed. He was giving the land to Israel. They simply had to take it.
- (4) Their scouting expedition was more like a young child who sneaks down the stairs on Christmas Eve to take a peek at their presents under the tree before taking possession of them on Christmas morn. That child KNOWS in his heart that those presents belong to him... It's already been determined that the GIVERS (his parents) are GIVING them to him... and in the next morning, they will come into his possession.
- iv) So the Bible tells us, the scouts go out and explore.
- (1) For 40 days, they travel throughout the land – openly (not skulking in secrecy like “spies”)
  - (2) They cover over 200 miles
  - (3) From Negeb near Kadesh-Barnea where they camped...to the cities where the Anak lived...
  - (4) to the Valley of Eschol – a valley noted as rich with grape clusters so big that they had to be carried back suspended upon a pole between two men.
- v) Eventually, they return and 10 of the 12 scouts offer a “Majority Report” to Moses, Aaron, and to all of Israel in the wilderness.
- (1) They showed everyone the fruit – HUGE grapes, pomegranates, and figs
  - (2) They acknowledged that the land was so abundant that it flowed with “milk and honey”
  - (3) But they also were alarmed, petrified even...
    - (a) The cities – Large! and Fortified!
    - (b) The people who dwell there – Many!
      - (i) Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Canaanites, Amorites, and Medfordites - ☺
  - (4) And these people are - Strong!
    - (a) In fact, “we saw the descendants of Anak there!” - men of tremendous height and strength.
  - (5) The implication is that Israel should not go into the Promised Land. There is too much danger.
- vi) But, there is a “Minority Report” - one of two dissenting scouts offers different counsel to Moses,
- (1) Caleb - *"Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."*
  - (2) For Caleb and Joshua, the facts reported were not an issue. The truth is the land was bountiful. The inhabitants were many and strong. The cities were walled and fortified. The opposition would be stiff. These facts were not in dispute.
- vii) An alarming rebuttal was quickly given by the “Majority Report” Scouts.
- (1) *"We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are."*
  - (2) They continue to give a poisonous report –
    - (a) *"The land, through which we have gone to spy out, is a land that*
      - (i) *(Listen!) **devours its inhabitants,***
      - (ii) *and all the people that we saw in it are (Listen!) **of great height.***
      - (iii) <sup>33</sup> *And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves (Listen!) **like grasshoppers, and (Listen!) so we seemed to them."***
  - (3) To paraphrase their report – “We felt like shrimps!” and “We don’t want to be shrimp cocktail!”

3) Transition & Prayer:

- a) And this is where I'd like us to actually read this story.
- b) At the "tipping point"... the place where temptation to disobedience and unfaithfulness is greatest...
- c) It is a place that was familiar to Israel...
- d) It is a place that we'll learn that was intensely experienced by Jesus, our Lord.
- e) It is a place that is probably familiar to each one of us...
- f) Because we face temptations to faithfulness everyday, don't we? I know that I do.
- g) So, would you bow your heads and simply repeat after me while I pray?
  - i) "Speak to my heart... and change my life". Amen."

**MAIN BODY: (30 Minutes):**

**PART 1: Unfaithful Israel (15 minutes)**

1) Scripture Reading - Numbers 14:1-4 (read)

- a) Let's read about the response of the people of Israel to this bad report... beginning with Numbers 14:1 (Pew Bible, p\_\_)

*Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup> And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."*

*[Numbers 14:1-4 ESV]*

- 2) The people respond to the reports with grumbling and complaining and lies and distortions.
  - a) Better to die in Egypt? Or in the Wilderness?
  - b) Did the LORD bring them to this point so that they could "fall by the sword"? Really? That was His motive?
  - c) Rather than seeing their circumstances with eyes of faith in the One who had safely brought them this far, the people turn to rebellion and are overcome by the irrationality of unbelief.
  - d) Instead of being motivated to obey and demonstrate faithfulness, they sink into rejection.
    - i) They will elect a new leader – against God's appointed leaders.
    - ii) They wish for the certainty of death in the desert rather than possible life in the Promised Land. How crazy is that?
    - iii) They will reverse the Exodus and return to the slavery of Egypt.
    - iv) In fact, they cling to their irrational fear like a drowning man clings to a sinking heavy stone.
  - e) Rest assured with a mindset like that, it will get worse before it gets better.

3) Scripture Reading – Numbers 14:5-9 (read):

- a) Let's keep reading. Turn your eyes to verse 5.

*<sup>5</sup> Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. <sup>6</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes <sup>7</sup> and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."*

[Numbers 14:5-9 ESV]

- b) Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb correctly identify the fork in the road of faithfulness set before Israel.  
c) The land is not just good, it is exceedingly good!  
d) And it is the One who is giving them the land that will be the One who brings them into that land.  
e) The only question for Israel is – Will they prove themselves faithful? Will they obey the command of God? Even in the face of what looks to be evil and danger.  
f) To choose otherwise is to “rebel against the LORD”.  
g) If fear is the emotion to steer their choices, then fear God! Do not fear mere mortals who can be consumed before His power. God is with us! There is no protection on heaven and earth that cannot be overcome by the Holy and Powerful will of God.

4) Scripture Reading – Numbers 14:10-12 (read):

- a) Beginning in verse 10, the writer of Numbers goes on to record:

*<sup>10</sup> Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. (not exactly the response that Moses was looking for...) But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.*

*<sup>11</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? <sup>12</sup> I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."*

[Numbers 14:10-12 ESV]

- b) Sadly, the people fall prey to their own fear.  
i) They respond with a determination to do violence to the only truly reasonable voices among them.  
ii) It is as though their unfaithfulness was hardening like a newly poured concrete slab sitting in the sun.  
c) God responds to the harshness of Israel. The glory of God appears before all of the people of Israel and he proclaims His judgment for their unfaithfulness to Him. He has been patient and long-suffering. He has made Himself know and seen. There are consequences to unfaithfulness. And Israel is in much greater danger than any danger that they could face or fear in the Promised Land of Canaan.

5) The Rest of the Story - Numbers 14:13-45 (summarized):

- a) There is so much more to this story but time will not allow us to read every sentence so let me summarize for you the “rest of the story”.  
b) Moses prays and appeals to God on behalf of the people of Israel.  
i) This is not the first time that Moses has interceded on behalf of them. Their continuous unfaithfulness has kept him on his knees in intercessory prayer.

- (1) On a side note:
- (a) In a sense, intercessory prayer is a profound mystery.
    - (i) How is it that a sovereign, eternal God listens to and responds to the prayers of sinful human beings like us?
    - (ii) And how is that reconciled with the idea that His holy will has been designed from eternity-past?
  - (b) As perplexing as this “HOW?” question is... there is a constant biblical theme that intercession of the faithful on the behalf of others is real and powerful and effective.
  - (c) Now if I’m honest, I can’t say that I completely understand the intricacies of the mechanics of intercessory prayer but.... I do know this...
  - (d) The Bible tells us that there are those around us who do not know Jesus Christ. Today you may know someone like this. If so, the harsh reality is that that person stands under God’s holy and just judgment. Spiritual death is their reality. Physical death will soon follow. And eternal separation from God will be the result of rebellion against Him. **AND...** (pause)
  - (e) Because we who have received His mercy by faith alone and have been spared that consequence, we are urged to intercede in prayer on their behalf. **AND...** (pause)
  - (f) We may be privileged to see some of those condemned prisoners freed from judgment.
  - (g) They will move from death to eternal life.
    - (i) It is one of the reasons why at *Redemption Hill Church* we use a simple yet helpful tool that we call a “Movement Card”. After reflecting about those around us, we record the names of individuals that we believe God is calling us to pray for. We pray that they would come to know God. In fact, you may be here today because someone has been quietly praying for you... interceding on your behalf... that God would free you from the irrationality of running from Him... and the natural consequences that occur when someone rejects Him.
- ii) Moses’ prayer, like our prayers should be, was solidly based on two basic biblical truths – the requirements of God’s glory and His merciful nature
- (1) First, Moses points out that the Egyptians will hear of Israel’s demise. And Egypt and the entire world will conclude that YHWH is not able to do what YHWH said that He would do. You are not able. Your glory will be diminished.
  - (2) And Second, the nations will not understand who you really are... your true nature and character... the very purpose that the nation of Israel was set apart for...
    - (a) Please pardon Israel “according to the greatness of your steadfast love”.
- iii) God’s Glory and God’s Character should always be at the heart of our prayer with Him.
- c) God responds to Moses.
- i) God grants Moses request for He is a God of grace.
  - ii) But He is also a just God... there will be consequences for foolish choices and unfaithful decisions made.
  - iii) Those men who saw His glory from the plagues in Egypt to the miracles in the desert wilderness but stubbornly remained in their disobedience... they will not enter into the Promised Land.
  - iv) Rather, they and their children will remain in the wilderness for forty years – one year of wandering for every day of scouting done in the Promised Land.
  - v) And those descendants will not enter Canaan until every last one of those who were unfaithful have passed away in the wilderness.
  - vi) Then, and only then, according to verse 31, will the “*little ones, who you said would become a prey, I [God] will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected*”
  - vii) God exacts three judgments:
    - (1) The leader-scouts who had returned with a poisonous and unfaithful report and actively stirred up the people to grumble against God died as a result of a plague.

- (2) Afraid by this turn of events, a number of Israelites then impulsively and ironically decide to go into the Promised Land and take it. However, this was no longer God's current instructions. He removed His covenant protection and they were overtaken by the Amalekites and Canaanites.
- (3) And, the nation of Israel, true to God's judgment wanders in the desert for 40 years, not to take possession of the land promised to them until all of the unfaithful and disobedient grumblers and complainers had all died.

6) Transitional Thoughts.

- a) All-in-all, this is a pretty depressing scenario.
  - i) What was the difference in the responses of the scout-leaders?
  - ii) How could these two groups come up with such different assessments of the same facts?
  - iii) The answer is not hard to find. The "Majority Report" completely left God out of the equation. They described the land they toured as "the land to which you [Moses] sent us" (13:27), not "the land the Lord is giving us" (compare 13:2). They forgot the Lord, and so they feared their enemies.
  - iv) But Joshua/Caleb looked at the very same set of facts but from a perspective of faith, not unbelief.
    - (1) Even Joshua's name, "the Lord saves", testifies to that point of view and expresses the specific hope that at a crucial moment in time that the LORD would show up in saving presence.
  - v) This specific faith in God's presence, the necessity of obedience to His commands, and privilege of His favor is what drove their interpretation of the facts and solidified their commitment to obedience – the very foundation of faithfulness.
- b) And the truth is, most of us struggle more with the daily choices of faithfulness and unfaithfulness than we care to admit.
- c) That is why I think that it is important that we recognize the key truth that "Jesus is the 'True & Greater Israel' who remains faithful to the will of the Father – even in the face of great evil, danger, and suffering.
  - i) If we consider His example, the example of one who walked through a sin-tinged world with perfect righteousness – not for one hour or one day or forty days but for an entire life time, then I'm hopeful that we can gain some insights and encouragements that can help us to be a more faithful people.

**PART 2: Faithful Jesus – the True & Greater Israel (15 minutes)**

1) Scripture Reading - Matthew (read):

- a) Let's quickly turn to the gospel of Matthew, chapter 26:36-46 (Pew Bible, p\_\_\_).
- b) We are heading into Easter... so this Scripture is timely as we head into remembering His sacrifice.
- c) In this passage, Jesus is found in the Gethsemane, a garden area amongst the olive groves on Mount of Olives.
  - i) Most likely, this was where Jesus and His disciples established a "camp-site" just outside the boundaries of Jerusalem. Remember, many pilgrims had to sleep out because this Passover season would have overcrowded most of the cities accommodations.
  - ii) Gethsemane means "oil press" - the kind of machine that squeezes every last drop of juice from the fruit in order to make rich and valuable olive oil. And, as we'll read, it seems like an appropriate name for what is to follow.
- d) On the edge of the most pivotal moment in all of history, Just as He is about to be betrayed by Judas with a kiss (a betrayal by the way that He could have avoided by simply moving his regular "camp-site" to a different location), Jesus prays three agonizing prayers, as He faces His greatest temptation and His greatest opportunity to demonstrate faithfulness through obedience to God the Father.

e) Let's read:

<sup>36</sup> 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." <sup>37</sup> And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

<sup>39</sup> 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." <sup>40</sup> And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? <sup>41</sup> Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

<sup>42</sup> Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." <sup>43</sup> And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

<sup>44</sup> So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

<sup>45</sup> 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." <sup>46</sup> Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

[Matthew 26:36-46 ESV]

- f) I'm struck by how many parallels or similarities can be found between our story in Numbers and this account.
- Both had been given clear instructions from God the Father; Israel was to "take the land"; Jesus was to bear the cross.
  - Israel had been brought to the edge of the Promised Land; Jesus was approaching the culmination of his life's mission – to bear the sins of the world.
  - Israel was confronted by real enemies – walled cities with strong people; Jesus was confronted by real pain and death.
  - Both were at their "tipping points" – cross roads of temptation, Israel faced the temptation to reverse course and flee; Jesus faced the very real temptation of finding a way to redemption other than the cross.
- g) But that is where the similarities stop between unfaithful Israel and faithful Jesus for Jesus is the "True & Greater Israel" and it is He who will demonstrate what faithfulness looks like.

2) *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

- Where is the attention of Jesus? It is on His heavenly Father.
- Is he aware of what lies ahead of Him? Absolutely! He know what was coming.
- "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"*
- This is not a demand or a rejection of the mission.
- This is the acknowledgement of the severity of what faced Him.
  - Physical Pain – He would be flogged, speared, and crucified. He would undergo death.
  - Emotional Pain – He would experience abandonment by friends and the tears of His mother.
  - Social Pain – He would be stripped, mocked, and jeered as the "King of the Jews".
  - Spiritual Pain – We need to slow down here for a moment.
    - In the Old Testament, "the cup" is a metaphor or picture for divine punishment for sin. In his identification with sinful men, Jesus is acutely aware that soon He will become the object of the holy wrath of God against sin – Israel's sin in today's story, your sin, my sin, everyone's sin!
    - And, here in the Garden of Gethsemane, the full horror of that wrath becomes ever more clear.

- (3) The awfulness of the cup of God's wrath against sin is so bitter that Jesus cannot help but cry out, *"if it were possible"*.
- (4) While praying in Garden, His anguish of spirit was so great that Luke adds in his account that Jesus "sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground". (Luke 22:44)
- v) From cover-to-cover in the Bible, we are told that the weight of sin is so incompatible with a holy God that the only possibility for redeeming sinners like you and I was the sacrifice of a perfect Lamb. And that Lamb was to be Jesus.
- vi) And He knew the horror that awaited Him... not imaginary giants from the land of Canaan...
- vii) Something much worse than that...
- viii) For He knew, as he hung... crucified + dying... for the sins of the world... your sins; my sins...
- ix) As He neared the last moment of His life, there would be a moment in time... the only moment in time... where He would experience separation from God the Father...
- x) It's why He would cry out, *"Eloi, Eloi, Lema, Sabachthani?"* [*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*] (Mark 15:34)

### 3) More thoughts:

- a) Matthew writes that Jesus prays a second time,
- b) *"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."*
- c) Luke puts it this way, *"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly..."* (Luke 22:44)
- d) In other words, this was Jesus persistent affirming of his commitment to obedience.
- e) It will be God the Father's will that will be done.
- f) He resolves to remain faithful.
- g) It will be God the Father that will be glorified.
- h) It will be God the Father's mercy that will flow out from the penalty of the cross to you and to me.
- i) So strong is this commitment that Matthew says that Jesus *"prayed for the third time, saying the same words again."*
- j) He is fully aware of what lies ahead of him.
- k) Shortly, He will be betrayed by Judas and arrested.
- l) But, despite the circumstances to come, He will remain "totally faithful" to the will of the Father.

### Concluding Thoughts (xx Minutes):

#### 4) Final Exhortations:

- a) And so, I bring a few encouragements to us this morning.
- b) Encouragement #1: Choose faithfulness to God's instructions and promises while depending upon Him - even in the face of great difficulty.
  - i) As Israel approached the Promised Land, they forgot who the Promise Maker was..
  - ii) They allowed their emotions, especially fear, to overwhelm them.
  - iii) And they forgot the natural consequences of disobedience – rebuke before a Holy God.
  - iv) Let me ask you some questions. Let's get practical.... Real practical.
    - (1) Where is God calling you to greater faithfulness to His instructions or promises?
    - (2) What difficult circumstances are you facing?
    - (3) Is there a fork in the road where you stand? A decision whose outcome hangs in the balance?
    - (4) What is your "tipping point"? Your temptation from faithfulness?
    - (5) Are you like Israel in our story today?
    - (6) When you consider the facts of your circumstances, do you see giants or do you see God?
    - (7) Some of us are right on the edge... ready to enter into the Promised Land.
    - (8) Let's commit ourselves to be faithful despite the apparent difficulties that can be all too real.
  - v) Let us remember what the Apostle Paul reminded us in his second letter to the Corinthians.
    - (1) *"We walk by faith, not by sight"*. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

- c) Encouragement #2: Receive the encouragement to remain faithful to God through the example of Jesus Christ and the filling of His Spirit.
- i) The writer of Hebrews puts it this way: *“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.”* (Heb 5:7 ESV)
- (1) Jesus acknowledged what He faced.
- (a) While being fully divine, Jesus was fully human as well.
  - (b) He acknowledged the reality of his circumstances.
  - (c) He did not deny the truthfulness of the facts.
  - (d) He did not treat real pain as mere illusions.
  - (e) He experienced very intense emotions.
  - (f) Emotions that we often experience.
  - (g) In fact, He gave voice to those emotions with *“loud cries and tears”*.
  - (h) The Garden of Gethsemane passage is a powerful testimony to the reality of Jesus’ human nature. And we should be comforted by that notion.
- (2) Jesus submitted to the will of the Father.
- (a) He prayed *“with reverence”* because He knew to whom He was speaking.
  - (b) God the Father had all authority.
  - (c) For the sake of the mission at hand, Christ willingly laid down His life.
  - (d) Rather than embracing temptation to disobedience like unfaithful Israel, Jesus rejected temptation and laid down His life – willingly.
- (3) Jesus persisted in prayer.
- (a) In Luke’s account of the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, he notes that Jesus had gone there to pray *“As was his custom”*.
  - (b) Connecting in prayer with his heavenly Father was not something Jesus did just when the things looked difficult.
  - (c) No, Jesus, the Son of God, demonstrated the rhythm of prayer on a regular daily basis.
  - (d) It was His lifeblood.
  - (e) He was able to submit to the will of the Father because He knew His Father.
  - (f) He knew the glory due God the Father and that it was deserved.
  - (g) He knew the character of the One who gave instructions and promise.
  - (h) It resulted in great confidence and fervent devotion.
  - (i) And when submitting to the will of the Father might appear to be difficult because of the intensity of the opposition... when faithfulness came under assault... Jesus tripped down on the prayer...
  - (j) Remember, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew clearly writes that Jesus, the only truly faithful person to ever walk Planet Earth, voiced His commitment that *“Thy will be done”* at least three different times.
- (4) Jesus trusted the One who gave the instructions and made the promises.
- (a) While obedience flowed from duty, it also flowed from intimate relationship.
  - (b) God the Father’s character was well known to Jesus.
  - (c) It had been bathed in prayer and experienced in real life.
  - (d) And He knew that it was God the Father *“who was able to save him from death”*
  - (e) Not only was God the Father willing but God the Father was able.
  - (f) That is faith – trusting in someone who has not yet completed what He has promised.
  - (g) But being confident that He will.

- ii) We need to look to the example set before by Christ and do likewise.
  - (1) Let's be real and acknowledge the temptations to faithfulness that lie before us.
  - (2) But let's also choose to submit ourselves to will of the Father in obedience.
  - (3) Let's persist in a regular rhythm of prayer – recognizing the need for persistence when tempted.
  - (4) And let's trust that He who is able is also He who is willing to see us thru evil and temptation.
- iii) And we will need to one other thing that Jesus never had to do – We'll need to confess.
  - (1) Despite the example of Jesus set before us, we can be more like unfaithful Israel.
  - (2) We fail to be faithful. I fail to be faithful. All the time!
  - (3) It can be so discouraging.
    - (a) Natural consequences to poor choices follow.
    - (b) A sense of guilt and unworthiness can set in.
    - (c) The enemy of God rises up and accuses me.
  - (4) What possible alternative do I have but to confess?
  - (5) But the Apostle John reminds us of some good news.
  - (6) *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1Jo 1:9 ESV). We get a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance at faithfulness. Don't we all need that?
  - (7) So let us confess and confess quickly when we fail the test of faithfulness.
  - (8) And let us learn from those failures and resolve to learn to do better.
  - (9) So that God would be glorified in our transformation and that others would see His true character.
    - (a) The Apostle Peter put it this way, *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit”* (1 Peter 3:18)...
    - (b) Why did Jesus push through that night in the Garden of Gethsemane in order to die on the cross? For us! You and me and those who have yet to hear about Him. And for the glory that that would bring to God the Father!

## 5) Final Words:

- a) The goal of faithfulness is not that we will do work for God, but that He will be free to do His work through us.
- b) God calls us to His service and places tremendous responsibilities on us.
- c) He expects no complaining on our part and offers no explanation on His part.
- d) God wants to use us as He used His own Son.
- e) I like a tweet that Tanner sent out recently, *““When we fulfill all that God wills for us, we will experience all that God has for us.”*
- f) Imagine, a group of people known as Redemption Hill Church... gathered together... committed to obedience and faithfulness... failing often, confessing often.... imagine the power of that commitment unleashed into broken and hurting world... bringing good news.... Like a fleet of taxi cabs dispatched by One Central Dispatcher – God the Father....
- g) That was Israel's missed opportunity – faithfulness
- h) That was Jesus' achievement – faithfulness – for He was the “True & Greater Israel”.
- i) May His Name Be Glorified... Let us pray....