



Links Players

LOSSES AND GAINS 7: HOPE

Yet [Abraham] did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:20-21, NIV)

RYDER CUP WEEK LIES JUST AHEAD and, like the Solheim Cup earlier this month, it can provide twists and turns and wonderful excitement. We choose our side, of course, but really what we're looking for as fans is a close set of matches with maybe a bit of feistiness from the players thrown in.

For the players, this is a very different week, filled with tension and passion and hope. On the surface, this looks the same as a major. Here's the difference: Your hope is held by others. You can play your heart out and win every one of your matches, but if your teammates don't come through, your dreams of victory are dashed.

Some players have been fully honest with me in interviews through the years. This is one of the reasons they chose to make golf their sport. Your results are in your own hands, not the hands of others. In this way, you control the fulfillment of your hope.

We all know that's not entirely true. Sometimes things you can't control influence the outcome: Weather. Illness. The play of others. And yes, we see the same in life, where troubles big and small stick their neck into our plans, threatening our hope for a favorable ending to the story we think we're writing.

But what if it isn't life that tries our hope? What if it's God himself?

In the case of Abraham, God had the fulfillment of a big promise in store. He just wanted Abraham to recognize that it was God, not himself, upon which his hopes must rest. So while God had told Abraham that he would be the "father of many nations" and that his offspring would be "as countless as the stars," Abraham and Sarah could not get pregnant. In this matter, they had every reason to give up hope. They even tried an illegitimate workaround through Sarah's servant (Genesis 16).

Yet Paul offered the Romans a Holy Spirit-inspired assessment of what was really going on in Abraham's heart of faith: He kept hoping in the work of God. That's all we've really got, folks. We can dream and plan and prepare with diligence, but God orders the course of events that brings the story's end. Our hope is in him, not in us.

Opening questions As a golf fan, do you prefer the majors or a hearty team event like the Ryder Cup? How about as a player—would you rather go it alone or team up with others?

READING Genesis 18:1-15; Psalm 33:16-22; Romans 4:18-21

What God can do (Genesis 18)

The question God asked Abraham—"Is anything too hard for the LORD?"—becomes a question for all of us. When have you wondered if God could get the job done? How has he proven himself to you over time?

False hopes (Psalm 33)

The psalmist wrote of the false hopes of kings. What lesser hopes do we latch onto in our time? Why will these things often fail us? What's the hardest part about waiting for God to do his work?

Abraham's hope (Romans 4)

Verse 18 tells us that Abraham had hope "against all hope." Have you ever clung to hope when it seemed worthless? Looking back now, what role did God play in bringing you to a favorable outcome?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. An accompanying introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/5xfsHjzW7do>