

The Life of Abraham: A Journey of Faith – Part 1

Providence and Obedience – Genesis 11:27 - 12:9

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Jan. 9th, 2022

Intro:

- This morning we launch into our new series on the life of Abraham, a journey of faith. We will walk step-by-step with Abraham for thirteen weeks, following and learning from his journey of faith and his story. You will gain perspective on your journey of faith, and you will gain hope and find encouragement as you wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.
- At least four thousand years after these events took place, the Holy Spirit, through the writings of Paul, tells us the primary reason these things were written:

Rom 15:4 NLT

Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.

- So we will learn from the Scriptures, the living and active Word of God, which was written long ago, to have hope and encouragement as *we wait* patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled. There are many precious promises today that we continue to hold onto.

Congregational Participation: "What is one of God's promises that have been significant to you?"

- Abraham was given some precious promises that he held onto as well. Because he believed them, it was credited to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). Abraham is a very significant person in history. All three major world religions (Jews, Muslims, Christians) trace their faiths back to him. Abraham is mentioned 234 times in the Bible, and significant foundational doctrines are found in his story.
- We run into Abraham (first called Abram) early in the Bible in Genesis chapter eleven. Before him, we have creation, Adam and Eve and the fall (Gen. 1-3), Cain and Able (Gen. 4), genealogy from Adam to Noah (Gen. 5), the story of Noah and the flood (Gen. 6-9), the descendants of Noah and his sons (Gen. 10), the tower of Babel (Gen. 11), the naming of the descendants of Shem, which leads us to a guy named Terah, who fathered three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Abram married Sarai (who was barren), Haran fathered Milcah, Iscah, and Lot. At some point, Haran died, and Nahor married Milcah (which was allowed until the time of Moses).

Gen 11:31-32 NIV

Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.

32 Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

- At this point, Abram had a decision to make. Would he go back the way they came, stay where they were, or continue on the journey? It is at this point that God speaks directly to Abram. Often, you will see God's intervention and interaction at major decision points in your life.
- This is where we come to the main point of this message and the main takeaway from this series: ***Trust God's promises by living a life of faith.*** (Slide) You will see, as we continue to walk with Abraham, that he does not do this perfectly. There are ups and downs and missteps and miscalculations, but he continues to persevere in faith, following God's direction and receiving God's promises. From this passage today, we will see what is produced from the life of those who believe and have faith.

Genesis 12:1-3 NIV

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

- This was the choice, to go back to all the things he was familiar with, the safety and security of family and friends, in the culture and pace he knew. Or, he could believe God to find someplace better and to become someone different and someone more. Abram chose to believe God. And everyone who believes God puts their faith in Him.

Heb 11:6-7 ESV

And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

- This is the essence of faith, and this is what the ancients were commended for.

Genesis 12:4-5 NIV

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

Faith produces obedience

- If we believe, then we obey. In our journey of faith, there is a believing and a leaving. There is a letting go of our old nature, our old way of life and way of thinking. Sometimes it requires us to leave people and places and even family behind to obtain and live in the promises and blessings of God. We have to let go of a land, a people, and a nation, our old ways of thinking and being and doing in the hope of receiving a better land, a better people, a better nation (see Hebrews

11:13-16). Sometimes, some of the people we have relationships with no longer run with us, and at times don't understand us as we move forward and invite them to follow.

- Faith produces, is evidenced by, and is seen in our following and obeying God.
- We are the ones who choose to draw near to Him, believing that He exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him. We follow, and He rewards. Our part is to believe and follow Him, and His part is to bless and follow through. *In so doing, He is glorified in us, and we are satisfied in Him.*
- In this story of Abraham, we will see that he is reminded and reminded and reminded again of these promises, and as he continues to follow in faith he sees the promises unfold. In Abraham's story, he is reminded seven times of God's promise. And as time goes on, there are greater details and confirmations. Just like Abraham, we need to be reminded again and again of the promises of God.

Genesis 12:6-7a NIV

Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."

- As we go through life, the promises of God become clearer and clearer, and we get nearer and nearer to the time when He makes all things new. Abram's faith produced obedience, and all those who are of the faith of Abraham are children of Abraham. We will walk in the footsteps of faith and are heirs of the blessing given to him and fulfilled in Christ, and the new kingdom and land and people are established and fully enjoyed for eternity.
- Faith produces obedience. Faith also produces something else.

Genesis 12:7b NIV

So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Faith produces worship

- The closer we draw to God, the more we know of Him and walk with Him, the greater His goodness, and wisdom, and power and strength and love and faithfulness we see. This causes us to praise and worship Him. Those who have faith will draw near Him, and when we draw near Him, we will worship Him. Where there is faith, there will be worship.
- Abram built an altar, established a place to worship the Lord. His faith resulted in worship. In the same way, those who have faith express it in worship because worship is an act of faith. Those of us who have faith gather together to worship. We do this to glorify God and remind ourselves of His goodness. It is a gift and a joy and right for us to do this, and in so doing, God is honored, and we are blessed. It is a way to express our faith. To focus together on giving God praise and thanks for who He is and what He does. In Abram's journey of faith, worship was a good and right response. As for him, so it has been for those of the faith, for our time and for those who come after us. Faith produces worship.

- Faith also produces something else; we see this expressed in the life of Abram as he continues to move forward following the directives and promises of God.

Genesis 12:8 NIV

From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Faith produces prayer

- As he continued to move forward in his journey of faith, worship and praise of the Lord led to calling on the name of the Lord. Our faith continues in obedience and worship, and from worship, we are led to "calling on the name of the Lord." We do this because He invites us to. We do this because He listens and responds to prayer. He is an alive and active God who interacts and responds to those who call on Him.
- Now, remember that He does not *answer* to us, but that He does *respond* to us. Ultimately, we answer to Him. Calling on the name of the Lord invites Him into our situation, and He will act according to His will so that when we call on Him, we know it is He who does the acting.
- Those who have faith pray because faith produces prayer and is built on relationship and deepens and shapes the relationship.
- Abram continues to move forward, and this is where we find our last principle from this passage.

Genesis 12:9 NIV

Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Faith produces perseverance

- If you have genuine faith, then you will persevere in it. This means you will keep moving forward in following God and in trusting Him on His promises. Yes, you will be tried and tested. Yes, you will at times make mistakes and have misfires, but keep moving forward. We are promised:

Gal 6:9 NIV

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

- At times you may become weary. When we are weak, then we are strong (2 Cor. 12:10). At times you may want to quit. Instead, fix your eyes on Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). At times you may have people tell you to curse God and die. Remember that the Lord gives and takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 2:10). The one who perseveres to the end, will be saved (Matt. 24:13). We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15). Fight the fight, finish the race, keep the faith for what is in store for you in the crown of righteousness, what the Lord will award to you on that day (2 Tim. 4:7-8)

Conclusion

- *Trust God's promises by living a life of faith.* Faith is letting go so you can hold on. Faith produces obedience. Faith produces worship. Faith produces prayer. Faith produces perseverance. Remind yourselves of the promises of God and continue to move forward in faith, trusting the promises of God. Take hope and be encouraged as we wait patiently for the promises of the Lord to be fulfilled.
- We will continue our series next week as we see Abram, even after these things, takes a step back in fear as God continues to show His faithfulness to Abram and to us.