

The Life of Abraham: A Journey of Faith – Part 7

Critical Catch – Genesis 17:1-27

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Feb. 20th, 2022

Intro:

- I appreciate Lee filling in last week, which allowed me to attend a pastor's conference and to see family. I appreciated his emphasis on the God who "sees us," which gives us encouragement and hope, and we continue to wait for and walk in God's promise to us. I also hope that today you will receive instruction from the word of the Lord that will give insight into what is true and what to do so that your knowledge and faith will increase, that you will be encouraged and have hope.
- Here is the sermon in a sentence: **God makes His covenant promises to us, we are to receive His promises and walk in them.** Which gives us our three main points: Remember His promises, Receive His promises, Walk in His promises.
- Before we jump into our text for this week, I want to point out a couple of things from our passage last week that leads us into this week.
 - God does not need your help to fulfill His promises. Unfortunately, every time we do so, we get off track and get into trouble.
 - God does not ask for our ideas, He asks for our obedience. Often, we ask God to bless our ideas rather than follow His plan.
 - God's grace covers our mistakes. Just because you make a mistake does not mean you have missed out on the plan and purpose of God. You will have to deal with the consequences. Understand that God is a great redeemer and extends His grace to us.

Remember His promises

Gen 17:1-2 NIV

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. 2 Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

- Remember, chapter 16 ended with "**Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael**" (Gen 16:16 NIV). God waited 13 long years before He reached out to Abram again.
- I believe God waited so long to make a point that there is no natural way for Abram and Sarai to have a baby. Both Romans (4:19) and Hebrews (11:12) record that Abraham's body "was as good as dead" at that time as well. God's timing is based upon His plan to maximize our maturity and magnify His glory.
- When God is silent, live in the truth you know, trust His timing and His plan.
- Remember what you have seen in the light when you are walking through the darkness.
- Remember God's delays are not God's denials.
- When God reached out to Abram again, He gave him an instruction to "walk before me faithfully and be blameless." The last time God interacted with Abram, He made a covenant with him (see chapter 15). In this covenant, God did not require anything of Abram besides to trust Him. God made the covenant based on what He would do. When God connected with Abram this time, He

required something from Abram to make a covenant complete. God reiterates to Abram what He was going to do:

Gen 17:3-8 NIV

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

- When we walk with God, He gives us a new identity. Abram means "exalted father," and Abraham means "father of a multitude." Once you were, but now you are (Col. 1:21, 1 Peter 2:10). God will also give you a new name (see Rev. 2:17).
- God will tell you what you need to know when you need to know it.
- God will often tell us what will happen, but He does not always tell us how it will happen or when it will happen.
- God will give you more details as you go along (**slides**).
- God does not always give the details, but He guarantees the destination.
- God will do what He says He is going to do.
- God extends an invitation to us, and then we are responsible for receiving His promises.

Receive His promises

Gen 17:9-14 NIV

Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. 10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. 13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

- Those who had received God's covenant were to be distinct and set apart from the people around them. The "sign of the covenant" was to be a cutting away of the flesh from the male body. This would be a "sign" that they were the ones who received God's promises. And this was a serious deal. If they did not do what was required of them, they would be "cut off" from God's people for breaking off their side of the covenant. The men of Israel continued to do this, even to this day.

- After Jesus ascended and the gospel was being preached all around, this became a big issue in the NT church, and it was a big issue with the Jews. Non-Jewish people were coming to faith in Christ, and some of the Jewish converts were arguing that these new Gentile converts needed to be circumcised (see Acts 15). Paul and Peter argued that there was no need for them to be circumcised because God "made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9-10 ESV).
- Later in Paul's letters to the churches, he pointed out that Abraham, because of his faith, was declared righteous before he was circumcised, not afterward (see Rom 4:9-12). The whole book of Galatians is a letter addressing this issue. He also wrote:

Gal 5:6 ESV

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Gal 6:15 ESV

For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Rom 2:28-29 ESV

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Col 2:11 ESV

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ

- The sign before Christ that one was in a covenant relationship with God, the people who received the promises of God, was a cutting away of the flesh. The sign now is not a circumcision of the flesh but a "circumcision of the heart" because of our belief in Christ. That the spirit "cuts away" our sin (flesh) nature and gives us a new heart and a new identity. It is identified by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives and that we would "walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised" (Rom 4:12 ESV).
- God offers us an invitation to be a part of His family and partake in His promises and inheritance. We are to receive His invitation through faith, having our hearts circumcised, and follow after Him. Ill. of being a part of a football team. **(Slide)**

Gen 17:15-22 NIV

God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. 21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." 22 When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

- God also changed Sarai's name from Sarai "princess" to Sarah, "my princess." God has made her His, and she would produce from herself only what God could do through her. God's grace did cover their mistake, and God would use that as well, but the real blessing comes from God's promise displayed by God's power.
- God's blessing to you is God's blessing through you – and from His work, in us, others will be born into the kingdom and be blessed eternally.

Walk in His promises

Gen 17:23-27 NIV

On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, 25 and his son Ishmael was thirteen; 26 Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very day. 27 And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

- Abraham obeyed God and did as he was directed because he believed God and followed through on his belief with action. Those who have received the invitation of God must follow in the footsteps of faith, follow in the way of the master and becoming like Him in our heart, evidence in our actions. The "cutting away" of our flesh may be painful, however, it means we are walking in step with the Spirit in life and fruitfulness (see Galatians 5).

Conclusion and Communion

- Remind yourself of God's promises, receive His Spirit in your heart through faith, and walk before Him. Know Him, trust Him, follow Him, serve Him and receive the promises of God for this life and the life to come.

John 1:11-13 ESV

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- Prayer and transition to communion.