

Genesis 12 – Abraham Our Great Example of Faith, Failure and Future

Genesis 12:1-20 The Whole Chapter

❖ Recap

- Creation to the Wickedness of Man
- Noah and the Flood
- The Tower of Babel

❖ Introduction

- **You could almost divide the Bible into two parts...**
 - Everything before Genesis 12... Then we have Genesis 12:1-3 and then the rest of the Bible...
 - Before Abraham... we have a world created by God
 - We have man made in His image... We have man sinning against their creator...
 - Then we have man looking to make a name for Himself...
 - Then God comes and divides the nations... making them speak different languages...
- **What is going on?**
 - How is the world God created in such chaos and seemingly without much direction?
 - What is the plan here?
 - Well... God is going to give us the plan right here...
- **God's Covenant with Abraham is a pivotal point in the Bible...**
 - God let's us in on what He is doing...
 - He let's His chosen man Abram in on what He is doing...
 - **Right here in these three verses we see a general idea...**
 - Of how God is going to bless all the nations...
 - All the nations that He has just dispersed all over the World...
- **As a Matter of Fact... the Gospel is preached right here... Did you know that?**
 - Galatians 3:8-9 ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
 - The gospel is preached to Abraham!!!
- **Another thing to see here... And I want you to see it right to begin with...**
 - God's promise to Abram... includes Jesus...
 - This is how God is going to bless all the nations...
 - This is how God is letting Abram in on His plan...
 - This is why Paul can say in Galatians that the gospel was preached here...
 - Notice also what we learn from Paul about the Promise...
 - Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.
- **Now... there are a lot of ways to expound on these verses here in Genesis 12...**
 - I do want to teach you what is happening here...
 - But I want to take a very personal approach this morning...
 - Not simply to give you the background and how it was all fulfilled...
 - Rather... I want you to see how your life of faith, failure and future mimics that of Abraham...

❖ What is a Covenant? And why should you be concerned?

- **Why you should be concerned.... Because without a covenant with God...**

- You would be on the outside of his family looking in!
- Your existence and inclusion in the family of God is dependent on this covenant
- So... you should concern yourself with such things... Are you in covenant with God above?

➤ **What is a Covenant?**

- **Just by definition we could say:** Literally, a contract. In the Bible, an agreement between God and his people, in which God makes promises to his people and, usually, requires certain conduct from them.
- **The Law is given to Israel...** they are told they must obey... then they will be blessed in the land
 - Also... Marriage is a Covenant between two people... and I would argue... God also
- **Today we will see the Abrahamic Covenant... God makes promises...**
 - **And Abraham is given conditions to meet...**
 - ◆ He has to leave the land of his father... and go to a new land...
 - ◆ He has to trust in the promises of God...
 - **And there will be times where Abraham's unbelief will be noticeable...**
 - ◆ And it will endanger the covenant... But God in His Sovereignty...
 - Will secure the Promises of the covenant... even in Abraham's unfaithfulness...
 - **So... we will see amazingly... that the covenant b/w Abraham and God was conditional...**
 - ◆ Yet it was also **unconditional** b/c the God of the covenant would make sure...
 - ◆ That the conditions are met... by Abraham
 - ◆ **That is grace!**
- **The New Covenant of Jesus... which is THE covenant of God and His people...**
 - All others have been **gradual revelations** of what God would do with Jesus
 - **This is in a sense... a conditional covenant...**
 - ◆ It is conditional on our Believing isn't it?
 - ◆ But there is more to this... as you will see at the end... Praise God!
 - ◆ That even here... God will make sure the conditions are met!

❖ **Abraham is our great example of faith, failure and future...**

- And we get a glimpse of all of these here in chapter 12
- **And I think we can apply them all directly to our own lives today...**
 - If you are a follower of Jesus... you are like your father in the faith Abraham...
 - **Galatians 4:16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,**
 - **Galatians 3:7-9 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.**

❖ **1) Abraham a Man of Faith**

➤ **God Appears to Abram**

- **Genesis 12:1-4 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." ⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.**

➤ **Abram had lived in a place called UR... in the land of the Chaldeans...**

- And this is the area of modern day Iraq... it was the area of ancient Mesopotamia
- It was the area of ancient Babylon...
- And they were a people who worshipped false gods...

- And we know this was true of Abram and his father... Joshua teaches this...
 - Joshua 24:2 And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.
 - Oral Jewish tradition went as far to say that Terah even made idols to sell...
- **At some point we know that God appears to Abram**
 - Genesis 12:7 ⁷ Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.
 - We do not know how He saw and how He heard from God...
 - But it is apparent that God came to Abram...
- **Abram obeyed God...**
 - And this is a big deal... He grew up on a land littered with false gods...
 - Their big god that they worshipped was the Moon god... from what we gather from ancient records
 - All of his friends and family likely worshipped false gods...
- **Noah and his sons were still alive at this time...**
 - And I would assume it possible that Abram had heard of the One True God...
 - But the overwhelming majority of the people around him were idol worshippers
 - And it is estimated that there could have been as many as 11 million people scattered throughout the earth at this time...
- **God tells him to go into the land of Canaan... and Canaan was the son of Ham...**
 - And they were a rough people... a very very sinful people...
 - And God is going to give their land over to Abram’s descendants one day...
 - But not yet...
- **So Abram... Listens to God... He believes God and goes...**
 - God made some significant promises to Abram...
 - And they aren’t all that believable... I don’t think it was easy for Abram to go
 - I think we see 6 promises here in these verses...
- **God’s Covenantal Promises to Abram...**
 - 1) Make Abram a great nation
 - 2) I will bless you
 - 3) Make your name great
 - 4) Bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you
 - 5) all families will be blessed
 - 6) Give him a land
 - But... He had no child... He had no land... He was not a nation...
- **Notice this Church: This Covenant of Grace with Abraham begins with a Call to Separate**
 - Is this not also what we are called to do?
 - God calls us to repent... to turn from the ways of this world
 - To set ourselves apart...
 - And Abram does this in leaving from the idol worshipping land...
- **Abram continues to set himself apart and take a stand for God in a new land...**
 - We see this in his actions in Canaan...
 - Genesis 12:6-7 ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.... So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.
 - This place Shechem was a place of great idol worship
 - There was likely a shrine here... that is probably what the text is saying...
 - The place at Shechem... or the site at shechem...

- **What does Abram do?**
 - He builds and alter to the One God... and He worships Him...
 - **Hebrews 11:8-9** By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents....
- **Paul says of him:**
 - **Romans 4:20** No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.
 - ◆ So we see he was a man of very great faith...
 - But notice the words of Paul... **“He grew strong in his faith”**
 - Abram was not a perfect man....

❖ 2) Abraham a Man of Failure

- **This story comforts me in my own many failings.... And they are many...**
 - Abram was 75 years old when God called him... yet we learn... he still had much growth to do
 - And the fact that the Bible puts a spotlight on the failures of the Father of our Faith...
 - Helps assure me that this is God’s Word... and not just from man!
- **It really doesn’t take much time for Abram’s faith and character to be tested does it?**
 - Oh how we can learn so much from this!
 - Abram leaves his home... and he sojourns in Canaan... then there is a famine...
 - So he goes to Egypt. **(Does this sound familiar?... it gets even more so!)**
- **But Egypt was going to be a problem...**
 - Abram was married to a beautiful woman... (I felt his pain... I really do!)
 - Abram had married Sarai... (who was actually his half sister... I don’t know anything about that!)
 - Apparently in Ur... it was a status symbol to marry one’s half sister...
 - And Abram had done that...
 - **So... when he gets to Egypt... he tells his wife to lie and say she was his sister...**
 - Which was kinda HALF true...
 - And he did this because he was afraid of what the Pharaoh... king of Egypt would do...
- **The Pharaoh had what was called a Harem... and it had lots of women in it...**
 - And they were darker skinned people... but they wanted lighter skinned women
 - And Sarai was a lighter skinned woman... and apparently very beautiful...
 - And it plays out just like Abram thought...
 - They come and take her... to be in the Harem... (we won’t even get into how bad this is)
 - **But to make it worse... They pay Abram for her...**
 - He essentially sells his wife off as his sister... and gets rewarded handsomely...
 - **Don’t get any ideas MEN!!!!**
 - **Look at the text:**
 - **Genesis 12:14-16** When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. ¹⁶And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.
- **But... God intervenes doesn’t He?**
 - Doesn’t God do this a lot? God is a God of Grace...
 - **The covenant promises were in jeopardy...**
 - The wife of his chosen servant was now in the house of a Pagan King...
 - It is a good thing the covenant was not dependent on Abram...

- God would make sure the promise was not hindered by Abram's disobedience...
- And make no mistake... this was disobedience... and it was a lack of faith...
- And it was a bad example... it was a moral failure of great proportions...
- **And it was all birthed in the heart of Abram's fear and cowardice...**

➤ **God Plague's the Egyptians... (does this sound familiar?)**

- It doesn't take long for Pharaoh to figure out what had happened...
- And this Pagan king... worshipper of false gods...
- He confronts Abram and says **"What is this you have done to me?"**
- He essentially scolds Abram.... And guess what...?
- Pharaoh says... **"You aint gotta go home but you can't stay here!"**
 - He says... **"Here is your wife; take her and go!"**

➤ **On a side note: God is foreshadowing the deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt...**

- Where that Pharaoh would say after many plagues... **"Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord,"**

➤ **Although Abram was a man of Faith... he was also a man of Failure...**

- This is good news for all of us...
- All of God's men have been sinners... but they were forgiven sinners...
- They were men that believed God and set themselves apart to God...
- To serve Him even though they were not perfect
- God was at work in them as He is in us today....

❖ **3) Abraham a Man of Future**

➤ **What do I mean by this?** Well... there is much that can be said about this...

- Abram would have a child of promise in his old age... Isaac
- Abram's children would have a future land...
- There would be millions and millions of them...
- Many nations would come from Abram... even though at this point he had no children
 - This is not what I am considering...

➤ **Abram's Future is prophesied in the promise of God... When God appears to Abram at Shecem**

- **Genesis 12:7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.**
 - Now... Paul expounds on this verse when writing to the Galatians... (already shared)
 - And I can attest to you... **that in the Hebrew**... it is as Paul says it is...
- **Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.**
 - Paul makes sure we understand the that Climax of the promise to Abram...
 - Would be Jesus Christ...

➤ **Jesus Christ is the Promise...**

- **Jesus is the future for Abram...**
- **Jesus is the reason Abram could be counted righteous simply by faith...**
- **Jesus is the reason you and I can be counted righteous in the court room of God by Faith...**

➤ **All Nations would be blessed through Abram...**

- **Genesis 12:3 and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**
- All of those nations that had been scattered throughout the earth...
- They would be called to God through Jesus Christ...

➤ **Jesus would one day come...**

- **Abram would have that son... Isaac... who would have that son Jacob who would be called Israel**
- **Israel would have a son name Judah... who would have a descendent named David...**

- Who would one day have another descendent born in the town of Bethlehem...
- And His name would be Jesus... His name would be Emmanuel... God with us
- **And He would die and be raised to life and ascend into heaven...**
 - And right before He leaves.... He would tell His disciples...
 - Go into all Nations!.... (Amazing)
- **Yet... it all began with one man living in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans...**
 - And he believed God...
 - And God began to reveal His plan of the reconciliation of man...
- **There is one final thing that must be said this morning...**
 - God is the Sovereign and Gracious God of the Covenant...
 - And this may be hard for some to take... But it is always better to tell the truth of God...
 - Than to misrepresent Him so people will like you....

❖ 4) God is the Sovereign and Gracious God of the Covenant

- **The First thing I want you to know is this:**
 - God does not **have** to save anyone... He does not even have to **offer** salvation to anyone...
 - **Do you hear this? God is Sovereign.... He is free... He can make any decision He wants...**
 - And it will be good because He is God...
 - **It is Just for God to offer no plan of reconciliation for man...**
 - No way of salvation...
 - One: Because He is God creator and owner of all things...
 - Two: Because He created man in perfection and they have proven they will rebel regardless
 - **So... when you read this story in the book of Genesis...**
 - Consider how gracious and kind God is... to offer reconciliation/salvation to rebellious man...
 - **We must understand... We would not come to God on our own...**
 - This is proven over and over again throughout the pages of history...
 - Man would not come to God on their own... EVER...
- **Therefore: God must be gracious for anyone to be Saved!**
 - **Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this,(that the gospel was for them) they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.**
 - We must be humbled this morning... We must remember that our salvation is not our own work
 - God has appointed eternal life to many of us in here... and to all that it is appointed to...
 - **They believe!** Notice what the text says... and don't be afraid of God's Sovereignty...
 - **We can discuss God's universal offer of Salvation to all people at some point...**
 - We can also discuss how we are called by God to choose Jesus... and how we are responsible...
 - **But this morning... I want you to see something very humbling...**
 - **"What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7)**
 - ◆ What room do we have to boast this morning?

❖ Invitation:

- God began to put his plan in place through Abram...
- **To send His Son Jesus into the World... To die for sin and be raised to life...**
 - So that our sins would be forgiven and eternal life granted...
- **Have you like Abram... Repented and left your former ways...?**
 - Have you believed God and followed Him?
- **If you have? How Faithfull are you living right now?**
 - It is important how well you live... Could your faith be found out to be vain?