

Genesis 25: 1-11; “The Mighty God of Abraham”, Sermon # 72 in the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 12th, 2017, in the Morning Worship Service.

I want to speak to you this morning about the end of Abraham’s earthly journey. And I cannot help but observe that, often in the Scriptures, when a man’s life is being described, there are no more than several verses that are given to us. But here in the book of Genesis, God through the Holy Spirit’s working through Moses’ words, in describing Abraham’s life we find that we have been given 13 chapters to examine and to think about. Truly the life of Abraham is one of the most significant in all the Bible and in all of human history. But this morning I want us to understand that it is God who is to be praised for the life of any man, especially great and godly men. The only reason that any man is great is because God has worked in him, or by him, to make him so. And so, as we focus our attention this morning, on the latter years of Abraham’s life, it will be good for us to praise to our God who gave so much grace and strength to Abraham that we are to think of him as “the father of all the faithful”. He is the same faithful God who gives strength and grace to us who believe in Him, through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that we should praise the God of Abraham for the following reasons:

1st, then – Let us praise God that He gave Abraham strength to become the father of many nations. (Verses 1-4)

It says here in verse 1 that “Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah.” “And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.” This is truly an amazing statement. And many commentators even, cannot believe that it could possibly be so, that a man as old as Abraham was, whose body was considered by himself as good as dead at 99 years old, should have more children after Isaac, six more children to be exact, after Sarah had died and he was at this point about 140 years old. Commentators like John Calvin, Adam Clarke, and others believe that Abraham married Keturah many years before, even before Sarah died, and that she was a concubine wife in the same way that Hagar was, so many years before, when Abraham and Sarah fell into unbelief in regard to the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to them.

I object to their conclusions based upon what we find written in Galatians 4: 22 where it says, “For it is written that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman.” It does not say that Abraham had 8 sons, 7 by the bondwomen and 1 by the free. But I would object to it further based upon the repentance of Abraham which no doubt did take place. Abraham cast Hagar and Ishmael out of the house so that they would not inherit with his son Isaac. If he had taken Keturah sometime either before or after this, He would still have been showing God that he really thought that he needed to have a concubine wife to fulfill God’s promise in order to become “the father of many nations”. God would not have been pleased with this because the promise had already been given him and the requirement of faith in that promise would have been violated in just the same way as it was with Hagar.

I am also quite sure that he would not have done that while Sarah was still alive. How would he have explained it to her? No, I am quite certain that from the Holy Spirit’s placement of this information at this point in the narrative that Abraham was properly fulfilling the expectation of God that he would be the father of many nations when he took Keturah as his wife. Sarah was dead and he was free to remarry. She was indeed a concubine wife, as is mentioned in verse 6, and in 1 Chronicles 1: 32; not a free woman as Sarah was. Luther thinks that she was probably the daughter of one of the godly servants of Abraham, perhaps even of Eliezar. But there was nothing improper or wrong with his remarrying in order to fulfill the expectation which God Himself had given him that he would be the father of many nations.

Let me walk you through what was happening to Abraham in this late stage of his life. Turn with me to Hebrews 11: 11 and 12. It was by the acting of faith that both Sarah and Abraham received the strength to conceive seed in the case of Isaac being born. In verse 11 it says, "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." "Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude-innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore." Now certainly the fulfillment of this verse refers specifically to Isaac and all the descendants which would come through him. But the principle of strength and help to Abraham, the one who was "as good as dead" continued on with him way past the time when Isaac was born and being raised and even after Sarah died. This was in order to fulfill the purpose of God. And it has spiritual lessons for us as well.

Turn with me to Romans 4: 16 and let us read a few verses. "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." "As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations' in the presence of Him who he believed – God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be'. "And not being weak in faith, did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb." "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."

This is what God is to be praised for this morning. It is that by faith, Abraham as he grew older, did not waver at the promise of God. He did not waver in unbelief at the promise of God to he and Sarah when Isaac was to be conceived, and he did not waver here when he was 140 either. He was not walking in the flesh here in this marriage with Keturah, he was walking in the Spirit. This principle of life continued even after Sarah had died. He could have said after Sarah died: My life is now over, because all is fulfilled with regard to the child of promise that Sarah and I have had, namely Isaac. He is now married and there is no further need for me to have strength to conceive seed. But there was need in the purpose of God. And God gave him this strength that we read of here, and Abraham used it in a way that was pleasing to God.

We need to live by this same principle as well. In Psalm 71 we find it enunciated. In verse 16 it says, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only." "O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works." "Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come." The strength to be a fruitful Christian comes from Almighty God. It does not come from ourselves. Oh I hope that you will not look at things outwardly as you grow older in the faith. You see your body growing older and you think that you will be less and less useful and fruitful in Christ's service. But I want to try and convince you that this is not necessarily true at all.

Sometimes Christians are found to be most fruitful when they are very old. Listen to Psalm 92, verses 12-15. "The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon." "Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God." "They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." (NAS) You see, this is how Abraham was, in terms of his having children, and this is also how it is with the Christian man or woman who perseveres in faith as they grow older. When a Christian is "planted in the house of the Lord" which is Christ's Church, they come to see that God's plan is the church and they want

to serve Christ there. They want to knit their lives together with others of the Lord's people and they pray to see His kingdom flourish in holiness and truth.

They are full of "sap", that is they are full of grace from Christ's life in them, and they are very green. They are green, when as older Christians, they pray often and much for the progress of God's Word in the hearts of all the believers in the local church that they attend. Even when they are "old and gray", they are still declaring the strength of Christ's grace to all that are around them. I think of my dear father as I describe these things. He was more active in prayer and service to Christ and the local church after he retired than he was before he retired. He kept prayer journals. He supported missionaries and missionary endeavor. He did not seek his own interests but those of Christ.

Let us learn to think this way; to declare that the Lord is upright. Let us not think that our older Christians in the church have to be put out to pasture in our thinking; that somehow they need to retire just because they look older and can't do great physical exploits. Let us understand that much can still be done by them. Their outer man may be decaying but the inner man is being renewed day by day. Let us think, each one of us of what we can do to serve Christ and to promote His glorious kingdom. God gave strength to Abraham that seems beyond belief. But He is the God of all grace and strength.

2nd - We praise the mighty God who gave Abraham the ability to give a rich inheritance to his son and gifts to the sons of his concubines.

(Verses 5 and 6)

"And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac." "But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east." It is truly an amazing thing that even though Abraham had been promised the whole land of Canaan for his descendants, that he didn't actually possess any portion of it for himself. And yet, he is able to give a rich inheritance to Isaac. He had become great, it says in chapter 24, verse 35. And the Lord had blessed him greatly. The Lord gave him "flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys." What a great blessing it is when we come to realize that it is the Lord who is the One who gives us the ability to make whatever progress that can financially, and to be able to have something to pass on to our children. "Wealth and an inheritance are a gift of fathers," it says in Proverbs 19: 14, but it is of the Lord that we are given the ability to make and save money and then to be able to pass it on to our children and to settle our estate before we die. I suppose there is not a worse testimony to be found than a man's children fighting over his estate after he is gone; fighting over what is to be done with the house and possessions. All of this can be avoided when you have a written will or when you do what Abraham did and made known his will before he died.

He gave all that he had to Isaac, not because he was man given to having favorites or showing partiality. It was because of what God had said to him earlier by his wife Sarah in chapter 21, verse 12. When Ishmael was mocking Isaac at the feast given for him at his weaning, she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac." Abraham had wanted Ishmael to be an heir together with Isaac of all that he had. But God said to him, "Whatever Sarah said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called." "Yet I will make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed." It is good for us to understand this in terms of God's purpose according to Election, the Election of grace. God makes these sovereign distinctions among men, not because He is unfair or prejudiced, but because He has a sovereign purpose which is greater than our conception of what we would think would be the right thing to do. This involves both individual people and nations.

Listen to Psalm 47. "Oh clap your hands all you peoples!" "Shout to God with the voice of triumph!" "For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth." "He will

subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet.” “He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loves.” God chooses our inheritance for the person who believes in Jesus Christ. He is the One and the only one who can subdue our sins, forgive the guilt of them, and change the nature and the heart of a person to serve Him and to love Him. He will then bestow upon the believer all of the riches of His free grace and favor to him at Christ’s expense. He lavishes this grace upon believers in His Son, but he does not lavish it upon those who are not called according to His purpose. He gives everything to those who believe in His Son, but “no man will come to the Son unless the Father who sent Him draws him.”

Is this unfair in God? By no means. God could have justly left all men to perish in their sin which they love more than God. He could have left all men in that awful condition but He did not. He could have punished every man born of Adam with His wrath, but instead He designed to have a people who He would purchase through the righteous life and sacrificial death of His Son. Abraham gave all to Isaac. God the Father has given all to His Son Jesus Christ. In Psalm 2, verses 7 and 8 it says, “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are my Son, Today I have begotten You.’” “Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.” Abraham became the father of many nations. The nations have been given to Christ. He is Lord of the nations.

The Elect have been given to Christ. “All that the Father has given to Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to me I will not cast out.” What could be more right then, than this; a free offer to the one who wants to come and find an eternal inheritance? There is the certainty of an eternal inheritance through Jesus Christ for the one who will trust in Him. Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines, just as God the Father gives gifts in many ways to those who never trust in Christ. They are not slighted or unloved in the gospel, and they are doing and becoming everything that they want to apart from God’s saving grace. But their inheritance of good things is for this life only. They are sent off by Abraham “to the eastward, away from Isaac.” But Isaac will inherit all that is lasting. You too will find that you will have an everlasting inheritance if you will trust in Jesus Christ, God’s only and dear son. If you trust in Him you will find that you are a child of the free woman Sarah who is a type of the church who is being gathered to Christ above; Who is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. “But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” (Galatians 4: 26) This is why we praise the mighty God of Abraham. And it ties in together with our final point which is this.

3rd – We praise the Mighty God of Abraham for making him a trophy of His grace.

(Verses 7-11)

“Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.” He was gathered to the Jerusalem above, gathered to the congregation of others that had gone before him who were “his people”. I believe that this means all those who godly people who had gone before him. These are “his people”. He died “in a good old age, an old man and full of years,” it says in verse 8. What a great testimony that God Himself gave to Abraham. He was a trophy of grace, even as all whom God saves are trophies of His grace. He simply made Abraham the father of all those who believe. He fulfilled every good word that He had spoken to Abraham in Chapter 12, verse 2. “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.” He was so great a blessing to his sons Isaac and Ishmael that they were evidently reconciled to each other and are mentioned as together burying their dear father.

Could it be that the testimony of Abraham led Ishmael to saving faith in the promise of God that salvation would come through the Messiah whom God would send in the future? We are not told, but perhaps we shall see the man in heaven who was once described as a “wild donkey of a man, whose hand was against every man and every man’s hand against him.” Only the Day of Judgment and resurrection will reveal the truth. But Abraham had lived long enough to know

that God had blessed him mightily and he would continue his blessing upon Isaac in the days to come. Abraham had seen and came to know the blessing of God to let him live by faith in a promise the substance of which was to be fulfilled many years later to the nation of Israel after they came out of Egypt. And in that nation God would in the fullness of time, bring forth the Christ who would be the Lord of the Nations. His name and his memory are enthroned forever because of the Mighty God of Abraham. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and blessed forever; you and your household.