

Genesis 12:1-20

"Called Out, Forging Your Faith"

Genesis 1-11 is the equivalency of flying down the "autobahn" of human history! We have creation, the fall, the flood, repopulation, the tower of babel & the scattering of the nations... Some 2,000 yrs of world history are contained in the 1st 11 Ch's of your bible.

As we come to Ch 12 God's going to "slow our roll" significantly. Because as dramatic & dynamic as the 1st 11 Ch's are; as far as the narrative is concerned they're simply (though anything but simple) *introductory* in nature, God gives 11 Ch's to some 2,000 yrs but over the next 400 yrs (give or take) we have the remaining 38 Ch's of the book!

It's as though God wanted us to hurry up & get to this point so that we might slow down & focus *in* on the unfolding of His plan; how it is that He determined to bring salvation to the nations.

Because Ch 11 ends w/mankind hopelessly scattered and in need of a solution. Mankind had sinned in seeking to settle so God compelled them to scatter across the face of the earth. But there was no rainbow in the clouds, no ray of hope or token of grace... we're just left looking for a solution...

It's toward the end of Ch 11 & more specifically in Ch 12 that that solution begins to come into focus. Out of the scattered nations God would *find one man, form one nation* & through that nation bless all of humanity throughout all of human history. From it's very inception the plan of salvation wouldn't be about man's goodness, but about God's grace, God wouldn't call the qualified, but He would qualify the called... *That's what He's always done & continues to do, God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called. Which is to say that there is none who are qualified; there are none that are righteous, no not one.*

Jesus said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*¹

Therefore if God is going to use man in the accomplishing of His plan He can't choose to move through perfect people because there are none, therefore it's not of man's merit, but it's all of God's grace.

Joshua (24:2) tells us that that when God called Abe, he belonged to a family of idolaters. They worshiped idols, in Ur of the Chaldeans & Haran, the people worshiped the moon god... Perhaps when you hear that you think, "That's crazy, God just decided to call an idolater & save him, do a great work through him!?"

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Mk 2:17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Let's look at it from another angle. What kind of person were *you* when God called you? Think about that, God just revealed Himself to a drug addict, or an alcoholic, or someone addicted to pornography, or someone engaging continually in immorality or adultery. Perhaps on the other side of the coin God just revealed Himself to a self righteous hypocrite who was always condemning other people but couldn't see the sin in their own life. Or thought they were a little better than everyone else because they had money & were filled w/the most offensive sin of pride...

Kinda reigns in the perspective doesn't it? It's not about our goodness, it wasn't about Abe's goodness, it *was* about & will *always be about*, God's grace.

Vs 1-3

Now look carefully at Vs 1. It doesn't say that the Lord "said" this to Abram, but that the Lord *had* said this to him. It was something already in place. Question, when did God say this to Abram? ...It's in Acts Ch 7; there we find Stephen on trial for some trumped up charges brought on by false witnesses, & as he begins to make his defense before the Sanhedrin he says this; *"Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell."*²

Or to understand that another way, the call of God came to Abe years earlier while he was still dwelling in Ur of Chaldeans, yet Abe didn't completely comply; but he fell short, he faltered in his faith by stopping at Haran rather than journeying on to Canaan. Now as ironic as it may sound, Abrams failing serves to encourage me. You say, "Why is that?" I'm glad you asked ☺.

When you get to the NT, it holds Abraham up as the father of faith. He's heralded as the quintessential example of what it means to walk by faith, to believe God & have that imputed to him as righteousness (Rom 4, Gal 3, Heb 11, etc).

Yet when you study his life, you find that as his faith was being forged it wasn't altogether uncommon for him to falter in his faith. He wasn't perfect, yet that didn't cause God to give up on him & find someone else. God had a plan for his life, now his faltering may've *delayed* God's plan, but it didn't *derail* God's plan...

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Ac 7:2-4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Here's my point. God has a plan for you, a reason for which He's called you. However I suspect that along the way you've faltered in your faith, you've fallen, you've failed & perhaps you think God is finished. **Be encouraged, just because you've faltered as your faith is being forged, that doesn't mean that God is finished w/you. The gifts & callings of God are irrevocable (Rom 11:29), God may've called you years ago & through situations, circumstances, perhaps certain people in your life, that plan has been delayed. But hear me, God's not done w/you.**

It's interesting that the name "Terah" Abe's dad, mean's "delay". We've got to leave behind the "Terahs" of our lives. Those things that are causing delay. You see God called Abe when he was in Ur of the Chaldeans. **Said to him, "Get out of your country, from your family, & from your father's house." Evidently, initially Abram began to obey. Said, "Hey, I can't do this 'idolatry' thing anymore, I've met the True & Living God & I gotta get out of this place."**

Perhaps his dad was all, "I'm proud of you son, I'm glad that you've found a "god" who's making a difference in your life, I'll go w/you." That's what we find in Vs 31 of Ch 11 right? Terah took the lead in Abe's life, went out some 600 miles to Haran & decided they would dwell there. **He may've meant well, but he brought about delay in his son's life. Because God didn't call Abe to dwell in Haran. Now it wasn't Terah's fault (per say), Abe was given God's word, but he didn't follow through. He didn't leave his father's house.**

Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, **"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."**³ By trying to hang on to our lives we lose true life, but in surrendering our life to Christ, we find true life, everlasting, age abiding life. Abram, initially wasn't willing to comply completely, wouldn't leave his family & it stalled God's plan for his life.

When God calls you out, He calls you to leave your old life behind. He wasn't calling Abram to isolation, but to separation, total consecration to the Living God. **"Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty."**⁴ Abe stumbled, staggered & it stalled out God's plan for his life.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Mt 10:37-39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). (2 Co 6:17-18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But take heart, God didn't set him aside, He waited patiently for Abram to come to the place of willing surrender, then He picked up where they left off. If God's plan for your life has been put on hold because of some sin, some faltering of your faith, some sorta of situation; "Terah", there's been delay, don't be discouraged; God's willing to pick it up where you left off; return to obedience today. You've been sidetracked (perhaps for years) you've been living in Haran. Don't be a ½ hearted disciple that will only go part of the way. Go all the way. Separate yourself unto the Lord today, & God will use your life. God was getting Abram away from familiarity that he might walk by faith.

The drug addict that keeps a stash around "just in case" he might need it; will need it. The alcoholic that keeps the bottle there "just in case"; will drink it. The immoral person that refuses to delete contacts from their phone, Facebook or twitter, just in case they really need companionship; will need the companionship... You belong to J.C. separate yourself from those things, consecrate yourself to the Lord, begin to walk once again in that way when God 1st called you out. Paul the apostle said it like this, "...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."⁵(Rom 13:11-14).

Notice also in the 1st Vs that God didn't tell Abram where He was leading him. Simply that he was to leave & that He would lead him. This is a big deal because sometimes we want to know "where" before we'll "go". We want comfort, security & assurance. This was certainly a test of faith.

& That's how faith is forged isn't it? How can faith be forged apart from trials & testings? Faith comes by hearing, & hearing by the word of God. But if you're never brought to a place in which you actually have to *trust* in God's word, how genuine is your faith? God gave Abram His word, now the question was, would he trust it? God has given you His word, the question is, will you *trust* it? You *will be* tested, will you trust God's promises to you?

Having said that I should say this; you won't pass every test (Abram certainly didn't). It's the forging of your faith in the furnace of testing; your faith will be refined & *ultimately* you'll come forth as gold, however *occasionally* you'll falter, God's not finished w/you, He will follow through on His plan for you, pick up where you left off, return to obedience...

Now look at the difference between the plans of man & the plans of God. In Ch 11 the world was depending on big #'s & powerful pe2le to accomplish great things.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). (Ro 13:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God chose one man, one woman & through them formed a nation. The people of Babel wanted to make a name for themselves, God promised to make Abraham's name great. The people of Babel were following the collective intelligence/wisdom of this world; Abraham & Sarah trusted in God's word. Babel was built by the efforts of the flesh, motivated by pride; the nation of Israel was built by the grace/power of God, in spite of human weakness. Babel is man's "Let us", Israel is God's "I will".

God didn't give Abram reasons or explanations, just promises. He promised that He would make him a great nation, that He would make his name great (Muslim, Jew, Christian) there's probably no name honored more in history outside the name of Abraham; that He would bless those who bless him & curse those who curse him. Empires have risen & fallen in accord w/their relationship to Israel (this gives us great incentive to want to support & stand by Israel, God has attached a promise to them that directly affects us). & Finally God told Abram that in him *all the families of the earth shall be blessed*.

This (of course) has both present & prophetic implications. God was telling Abram that the Messiah would come forth from him, the Savior of the world. Jew, Gentile, all the families of the earth would be blessed in him. Salvation would spring forth from what God was going to do through Abram. Jesus said we're to go into *all the world*. We read in the book of Rev Ch 5 that they sang a new song unto the Lamb saying, "*You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,*"⁶... all the families of the earth shall be blessed. It's happening presently, it's also going to happen prophetically when J.C. rules & reigns the earth in righteousness for 1,000 yrs during His millennial kingdom. Isaiah (11:9) tells us that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; all the families of the earth will literally be blessed.

Vs 4

Faith is based upon the word of God & true faith always leads to obedience. God told him to go, it took some time, but he went. However his obedience is still in complete isn't it? He took Lot (his nephew) w/him. He was told to leave his family, he still hasn't made the break completely, & it will wind up costing him, incomplete obedience always does.

Faith demands *commitment*, something of a disappearing commodity in our culture. People don't like commitment, they like convenience, they don't like to commit to their job, their marriage, to their church.

⁶ The New King James Version. (1982). [Re 5:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

If it get's rough, I get out. Faith will cause me to commit. Something Abram will learn as his faith continues to be forged.

Vs 5-9

Notice a few things here. #1 God did not appear nor speak to Abram until he reoriented himself on the path of obedience. The entire time he was in Haran we don't read of God speaking to him. However, once he made the decision to press on in God's call upon his life, moving on to Canaan God began to reaffirm Himself to him.

Maybe you're in a place where you feel like God hasn't been communicating to you for awhile. Now I'm not saying that's because of disobedience necessarily, however don't rule it out unless you know that to be a reality. We talk regularly about walking on the premise & promise of God's word, not how we feel. **Yet that doesn't mean that there aren't times when it's not that the Lord's hand is short that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear, but our sin separates us from God. If God has spoken to you & you haven't obeyed His direction, it could be that He has nothing more to say until you're prepared to obey...**

The 2nd thing we see here is that Abram himself never owned any of this land (outside of a grave plot). But God told him that He would give this land to his descendants & that was all the assurance that Abram needed that it was his & his descendants after him. He took God at His word & trusted Him.

3^{rdly} we note 2 things that will surface as a pattern in his life. Tents being pitched & altars being built. Last week I made mention of the fact that Abram realized he was a pilgrim, a sojourner, just passing through. The city he was looking for was the one whose builder & maker is God. He realized that this world wasn't his home; but that he was a citizen of heaven. That's where the altar comes in, right? Abram was a worshiper of the 1 True Living God. W/the tent his witness was that he was *separated* from the world, through the altar his witness was that he was *consecrated* to the Lord.

It was at the altar that he *worshipped* God, showed himself *submitted* to God, it's where he *sacrificed* to God. The book of Hebrews (13:10) reminds us that we have an altar to which we go as well, a place where we meet w/God to remember the sacrifice of J.C. for our sins (Eph 5:2), where we offer ourselves fresh to God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1), surrendered & submitted to Him, offering to Him the sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15).

When it comes to this planet... we're just passing through.

One has said that if your feet are going, than your faith is growing. We're to press on to maturity, press on, to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of us. We're to keep going.

Vs 10

Here we have another falter in the forging of Abram's faith. Did God tell Abe to go down to Egypt? Last time God spoke to Abram he was in the land of Canaan & God said, "This is it, I'm going to bless you here, this is the place I've given you & your descendants after you." But now that dry times have visited him he decides to make a change.

Question, did he seek the Lord on this? No, did he pray & say, "God would you have me move from here?" No. It's been said that "Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; it's obeying in spite of consequence."

It doesn't matter how dry it gets, if God has given me His word, than I wait upon Him, I worship Him, I trust in Him, yes? In the scriptures "Egypt" is a type of the flesh, a picture of the world, & anytime someone goes to Egypt you read just we did here, they go "down" to Egypt. The whole time Abram is in Egypt we don't read of God speaking to him, or him pitching a tent, or building an altar. It was a little dry back where God had him so he took off for what seemed to be the well-watered plains of this world. Decided to change his circumstances. Now it's not wrong to be concerned for your family, but it's wrong to think that God wouldn't provide for him in the place to which He'd called him. God didn't call him to Egypt, he was called to Canaan. But maybe Abram was a lot like you are & I am. He found it easier to trust God in the far-off promises than in the right-now needs...

But it's not uncommon for tests to follow triumphs. Abram had heard from the Lord was walking w/& worshiping the Lord, then the dry times hit. His faith is being forged, will he trust God to provide or will he run away from the problem. He chose to deal w/it himself rather than consult w/& trust in the Lord (again it will cost him).

Listen, it's safer to be in a famine *in* the will of God than it is to be in a palace *out* of the will of God. Perhaps you've heard the phrase, "The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you"; a lesson that Abram (& many of us) has yet to learn.

Vs 11-13

What!?! Abe, are you exhorting your wife to lie for you!? You see what happens when we start journeying toward the world; the father of faith is fumbling again. It's not, "Let's speak the truth & trust God to keep us, He's made a promise *to* us."

It's, "Hey, dowry is better than death, so you'll be taken from me, but at least I'll get to live. So if push comes to shove tell them you're my sister." *Hospitality* sounded better than *homicide* to Abram, but this wouldn't have even been an issue if he'd have simply stayed in that place that God brought him, you see when we disobey the word of God it only goes from bad to worse.

Now I'm sure Abe was justifying & rationalizing, Sarai (we'll discover) was a ½ sister, but a ½ truth is a whole lie, he was just seeking to save his skin! He's gone from trusting to scheming. From confidence to fear, God has told Abe "I will" but now he's worried about what "they will", the fear of man brings a snare. As her husband she should've been his 1st concern, but he was thinking of himself. Listen, a husband out of God's will can bring untold troubles to his wife & family.

His lack of spiritual leadership created a major spiritual crisis for his wife- she would have to lie to submit to him...

Vs 14-15

Oh man... She wasn't taken by just any Egyptian, but by Pharaoh himself. This is a serious problem. Messiah is set to come from her womb yet now she's in the possession of a gentile king... This is no small mistake that Abram has made.

Vs 16-20

Remember that whole "You will be a blessing" line back in Vs 2? The context of that is understanding he's doing what God's called him to do. Right now he's being a curse. He's bringing judgment upon the nations, not blessing. If you want your life to be a blessing to others, than stay in the will of God. When Jonah ran from God's will it nearly sank the ship he was on w/everyone on it.

Abe lost his testimony here & inherited embarrassment & rebuke from the world. So much for letting your light so shine... It's shameful when believers mingle w/the world, compromise their faith & bring embarrassment & rebuke upon themselves.

Now again, God protected them, His promise was of grace, not of works. But this action didn't go w/out repercussions. In Vs 16 we see that Pharaoh gave Abram great riches, male & female servants, the name of one... Hagar, through whom Ishmael would come. God was gracious, but having sown to the wind, the whirlwind would be reaped.

Some might say that the pharaoh acted better than Abram. Sometimes people compare the way their lives look to someone who is a Christian & their lives seem to look better or more honorable, yet they're not saved.

Why? Because salvation isn't a matter of comparison, it's a matter of conversion. It's not of man's merit, but of God's grace.

Here's the life lesson we take from this. Don't abandon your altar, stay in fellowship w/the Lord, be a worshiper of the Lord regardless of your circumstances. No matter how "dry" the times may be. If you've fallen out of fellowship w/God, go back, return to your 1st love. Pick up where you left off, begin afresh to obey. He's called you out, He's forging your faith. Walk w/Him, in obedience to Him, you'll be blessed by Him. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we're thankful for Your word. It's transparency, the hope it gives us personally & as a body when we realize that You will take an imperfect people & execute Your perfect plan. We thank You for Your grace that abound toward us, as Your forge our faith so often we fail, but we trust in the Promise of Your word, that having begun a good work in us You will be faithful to complete it. Pick us up, dust us off, help us to walk w/You again.

Perhaps you've not begun that walk w/God. He's calling you out today. Revealing Himself to you & you have a choice. To turn from your sin & trust in Him, or to carry on in the futility of your own ways. It's not about your merit, it's about His grace. We're not saved by making promises to God; but by believing God's promises to us. He's made a promise to you, that if you will confess w/your mouth the Lord Jesus & believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you'll be saved. Believe on the Lord J.C.