



There was a time I was talking with someone who was despairing of their life, thinking back on ways in which they felt it had been destroyed. And in talking with them, they said to me that they felt they were so broken, they were beyond healing. They couldn't be fixed. They couldn't fix themselves. In the midst of this conversation, I said to them, "What did God have to work with to make this creation?" They said, "nothing." And I said, "If he can make all this out of nothing, then he can certainly heal you because the point is not whether or not you can fix yourself. The point is whether God can."

I've had conversations that have felt like that with others, and it seems we humans have this nasty tendency to think that if things get too bad, not only is it our fault, but God tells us that we have to fix our problem. And unless we fix ourselves, God won't hear us. But that's not God's will. God doesn't want us to prove ourselves to him. He delights in revealing himself and how we need *him*. He wants us to stop from our self-salvation projects and turn to him for salvation, restoration, healing, and rescue. Isn't that what we've seen in Genesis thus far? From Genesis 1:2, we see that God is the God over the cosmos, and he brings order from chaos. We've already seen a lot of chaos in Genesis that God has proven he is sovereign over. From Adam and Eve's sin – and God promising One who will crush the serpent – to Cain and Abel and Lamech and the flood. In all of this, we remember God brings order from chaos! He's miracle-working and he cares to bring people back to himself.

Then we enter Genesis 10, and there was a genealogy of nations that revealed that God is over all the nations – not just the Israelites. But then these nations wander from God and build their own tower in order to make a name for themselves. It sure seems as though the serpent is winning. If God is really over the nations, why are the nations spurning him? This looks like chaos. And God reveals the chaos of their intentions by confusing their languages and scattering them around the world.

Now we see the chaos. But we see that God is over all of this. He is the Judge. He has all the power. And so we anticipate more of God's work. We enter into chapter 11, and read another genealogy (that Caique preached on last week), and here we're ready to trace God's plan of the seed of the woman that's going to crush the serpent. We're anticipating. We're getting excited! What's God going to do? And then we see in the writing of the genealogy that the emphasis is on Sarai and her barrenness.

Wait, what?! That's too broken! You can't get a seed of the woman from a woman who can't conceive! "God, have you forgotten your promise?!" But I loved how Caique brought out the point of this genealogy. He asked us a question last week: **Will we trust the God who brings order from chaos?** If we do trust God, then that means that in precisely the moments where it seems too broken, too chaotic, we don't turn from him, we cling to him. That means that if we trust God, we echo the apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 that say: **Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.** <sup>10</sup> **For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses,**

**insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.** <sup>1</sup> Paul says that because of God's grace, he is *content* with weaknesses. How many of you are content in God in the midst of your weaknesses or are you trying to self-save and self-protect instead of trusting the Lord? Do you boast gladly in your weaknesses or hide those and try to put your best foot forward?

God's glory is put on display when we are transparent before him and others because it's then that we see God is the One who is at work – not just ourselves. When we look at our lives and say "We're too broken to be fixed," that's precisely the moment for us to see God shine – if we would simply trust him and cling to him. And that's what we see in the narrative today with God calling Abram. Is Abram going to listen to God or is he going to say, "That's impossible. Too broken. No way. I'll do my own thing"? Will Abram boast in his weakness? Or, to put it another way, **will Abram be like the people at Babel in trusting his own schemes for success or will he trust the God who is over the chaos?**

By the way, this would be an important message for the wandering Israelites to hear. Remember, they're the original audience for the book of Genesis. They often didn't trust God. During the plagues, they complained and didn't trust. After being rescued from Egypt and facing the Red Sea, they complained. When they didn't have any meat to eat, they complained. (And, by the way, don't think you wouldn't act similarly! I'm sure you and I can look at our lives and see ways in which we feel stuck between a rock and a hard place, and we quickly begin to doubt God and/or we just turn to ourselves for man-made solutions to the apparent problem.) Israel needs to read this because as they're wandering in the wilderness, on their way to the Promised Land that's first mentioned in the text we're looking at today, God is putting them through difficulties that are intended to reveal their weakness and cause them to cling to the Lord. Will they boast in weakness and cling to the Lord who is over the chaos or will they doubt God and trust their ways?

With this backdrop, let's get the main idea of the sermon today: **God's Word of blessing to broken people compels faith, obedience, and worship.** Let's begin with the first part of this main idea:

### **1. God's Word of blessing to broken people. . . (vv. 1-3).**

Let's read verses 1-3 again: 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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." <sup>2</sup>

Don't miss the first word "Now." This is in the midst of what was previously stated in chapter 11 – that Abram's father, and family traveled to Haran and lived there. At some point in time while Abram was in Haran, the Lord spoke to Abram. Now, this speaking of God here is almost reminiscent of Genesis 1 because in these 9 verses, we have God speak and Abram responds positively to God. We don't hear any words from Abram – just God-honoring responses. It's quite fascinating when you think about it because Abram here is contrasting with the sinful people of Babel and other ancestors. In addition, these verses mirror Genesis 1 because when God spoke in Genesis 1, creation came about. God said "Let there be light," and what happened? There was light. We don't hear things like, "And light resisted to show up but eventually was willing to obey." We don't read, "And the sun rebelled and said, 'No way, I'm not lighting that planet!'" Similarly here, Moses is writing to reveal something amazing. We might be tempted to think God isn't powerful over the serpent, but we see here that God is so gloriously powerful

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 12:9–10.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 12:1–3.

that when his Word really sinks into the heart of someone, they *will* respond. That's the miracle of grace, isn't it? Without God's grace, we would be just like the people of Babel. But God can turn a heart of stone and give life. Or, as we read in Titus, grace teaches to live lives that honor him! This is what's taking place in Abram right here. God's grace is at work. And his grace is given through his Word of blessing. God spoke blessing. If God didn't speak blessing, Abram would be rightly condemned.

Oh, praise God for mercy! The God of the nations wills to bless people. He longs to bless. How do we know this? Well, notice all the statements of promise he makes here. There are 7 promises. And, I say that because we all know the number 7 matters in Hebrew literature. God is making a promise of promises! I cannot emphasize enough how important these 9 verses are to the entire storyline of Genesis and even to the whole Bible! Abram becomes the father of Israel and the ancestor of the Christian faith! But it's not because Abram is so great. Abram is from a pagan land. Abram is part of an idol-worshipping world – and God shows up in the midst of that rebellious world and plucks Abram out. This reveals that God is so great, amen?!

And then we read that God makes a seven-fold promise. He commands Abram to leave Haran and go to a country God will show him. Now, some people say, "This is a conditional promise, so actually Abram's blessing comes to him because he obeys." But the verbiage here is not conditional. God doesn't say "If you go, I will show." God says "Go, and I will show." Actually, the more precise Hebrew is "Having gone. . . ." God knows Abram will heed his Word because his Word of blessing is that powerful. God transforms Abram's heart to obey, and God then says he will show Abram the land. There's no question about it. So, **God will show him the land. God will make him a great nation. God will bless and make his name great. Abram will be a blessing. God will bless those who bless Abram, and curse those who curse him. All the families of the earth will be blessed through Abram.**

This is tremendous blessing because Babel thought they could make themselves a great nation. They sought the land apart from God. They sought to emphasize themselves apart from God. Yet, God scattered them all. You cannot have blessing apart from God because he is in himself *the* blessing! So, God is giving himself to Abram, and promising land, nation and – notice here – all the families of the world being blessed. The God of the nations desires to bless all nations. Not just Abram and his family line, but all the nations of the world.

This is God's promise. So, I have a question for you: If God makes a promise, will he keep it? Yes! But we just read that Abram's wife is barren! That's a problem for a great nation, isn't it? But do we see Abram giving any response of negativity? No. When we really come to the reality of the God who is over the chaos, we recognize he's worthy to be trusted even when things make no sense! And this moves us to actually read of Abram's response:

## 2. . . .compels obedience. . . (vv. 4-6).

Let's read verses 4-6 again: <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, <sup>6</sup>Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 12:4–6.

So Abram went. God spoke. Abram goes. He leaves as the Lord had told him. Don't miss the shocking faith that Abram is exhibiting here! He is leaving an area he's used to. He's leaving home. He's leaving people. And he doesn't know where he's going to end up. I don't know about you, but when I make plans to go somewhere, I like to know details. How long is the trip? What do I need to bring? Where are we actually going to end up? What's it going to be like while there? These are all things Abram could have felt and could have used to resist God's summons to him. But he doesn't. So Abram went.

Abram trusted the Lord. The author of Hebrews speaks of this act of Abram and says this: **<sup>8</sup> 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.**<sup>4</sup> He didn't know where he was going! He listened to the Lord and believed the Lord. Now, at this point, some of you studious Bible scholars might say, "Wait. Did Abram have saving faith here? I thought he didn't have it until chapter 15 when we read that Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness." So, when was Abraham declared righteous by God? You see, we western readers often think in terms of timelines whereas Hebrew writers often think in terms of concepts and truths. Moses is unveiling realities that go alongside of faith. As Hebrews helps us to understand, Abraham exercised faith right here in chapter 12 – a faith that pleases the Lord because it's a faith that says, "I'm too broken. There's no way I can save myself and bring a nation that glorifies you. My wife is barren!" To add to this, Abram is 75 years old. Abram's not a likely candidate to be the leader of a nation if we use worldly metrics. He's a perfect candidate if we remember God is the God over the chaos and brings order!

So Abram went. And then we read that Sarai goes with him. His nephew, Lot, goes with him. Their possessions go with them. And they go into another pagan-land. The "oak of Moreh" is probably mentioned here to emphasize the idol-worship. **God enlivened a pagan, Abram, and is taking Abram to a pagan-land. And from that pagan land, God is going to create a nation that will glory in God, and go out and bless the entire world!**

And then we have an odd-sounding phrase: and the people that they had acquired in Haran.<sup>5</sup> Who are these people? You might be tempted to think slaves, but the verbiage really doesn't allow the probability of that. I agree with a couple commentators who say that the verbiage really emphasizes people who were essentially evangelized and those people joined Abram in his journey. God spoke to Abram. Abram shared the news of God to people. Those people joined Abram in his journey. These people are following the Lord to the land of promise, trusting God to make a nation – to bring them to a home that is greater than what we humans can create.

So Abram went. I keep saying this because I want this to sink into our hearts. Has God's glory melted your heart and compelled your obedience? When you hear God speak, do you trust him or do you generally resist him? Do you spend your days arguing with him or obeying him? Now, I know it's more complicated than that. In my own life, I've spend time wrestling with him and then obeying him. But my point in asking these questions is, Do you believe, at a basic level, that God's Word is more trustworthy than your own schemes? **Do you realize disobedience is Babel-like, and that God and his promises are worthy of your immediate obedience?** I'm reminded of Jesus' example prayer that we are to pray: Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. May his will be done on earth like it is done in Heaven. How is it done in Heaven? Immediately. The angels are swift to do everything the Lord commands. As followers of Jesus, may we be the same way right now on this earth! Let's continue to pray to this end for all of us! But the only way we can obey in a way that honors the Lord is through

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<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:8.

<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 12:5.

### 3. . . .faith. . .(vv. 7-8).

Read verses 7-8 with me: <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>

Where is faith evident here? It’s in the phrase “called upon the name of the Lord.” As you travel through Scripture, whenever you read that people began to call upon the name of the Lord, it emphasizes a heart of faith behind it. And, that’s what we find explicitly in Romans 10, for example: <sup>13</sup>**For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** <sup>7</sup> Abram calls out to the Lord. He believes the promise of God. To Abram’s offspring, God will give this land.

Now, as we read this, though, I think we might be tempted to only interpret this phrase in one way. To Abram’s offspring, God will give the land. Who’s Abram’s offspring? And what land is God talking about? Well, clearly God is talking about the future Israelites and this land is Canaan. But did you know that Abram didn’t interpret this in only that way? In Hebrews 11, we’re told this: <sup>10</sup>**For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.**<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes we can be tempted to think that the theology of people in Abram’s day was extremely primitive. But Abram clearly believed in a greater kingdom than what could be built in this fallen world. Abram seems to hope for a full redemption that would come from the serpent-crusher. This reminds me of Job’s words – Job, who was alive during Abram’s time as well – who said, <sup>25</sup>“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.”<sup>26</sup> And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God. . . .”<sup>9</sup> Abram didn’t just believe the promise of God applied to what he could see in a physical land of Canaan. He believed God’s promise was bigger, broader, vaster. It was beyond what he could ask or think. God’s seven-fold promise had eternal ramifications. And, as a result, Abram responded to God with

### 4. . . .worship. . . (vv. 7-8).

In two different places, he erects altars of worship to the Lord. And his worship happens while he’s journeying. He doesn’t experience the fullness of God’s promise, but he trusts the Lord, obeys the Lord, and worships the Lord. Even though Abram is sojourning, he worships the Lord.

This is all very powerful because remember that the Israelites are journeying in the wilderness. The cities Abram goes through are the precise cities Israel goes through in opposite order. In addition, according to Exodus, we’re told that other people journeyed with the Israelites after the exodus. So, I think Moses is being specific here. Just as Abram trusted, obeyed, and worshipped the Lord in his sojourning, so too Israel ought to follow Father Abraham’s example. The Israelites aren’t experiencing the fullness of the promises, but they too could worship the Lord and not turn to the gods of the nations around them. They too ought to worship and obey out of hearts of faith. Will they hear and believe God’s Word of blessing?

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<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 12:7–8.

<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 10:13.

<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:10.

<sup>9</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 19:25–26.

And what about us here this morning? As I thought about Abram's call and God's promises to him, I couldn't help but see the fulfillment in Jesus himself. We're told in Philippians 2 that Jesus left the glories of Heaven – leaving the Father – to come to this pagan world! And then in Galatians 3:16, we're told that the "offspring" of Abraham is ultimate Jesus himself. Look at the verse with me: <sup>16</sup> **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.** <sup>10</sup>

Why is this important to note? Because God ultimately was speaking of the serpent crusher when talking to Abraham. God is going to give Jesus the land. And when Jesus came into the land of Canaan, it was essentially just like the rest of the world. Israel, for the most part, wasn't yearning for the Messiah. Yet, Jesus came anyway, leaving his Father's throne. And in coming to this earth, he humbled himself. He loved people. And then in speaking to people, some followed him. They believed his message. He's the greater Abraham. Because of him, all nations will be blessed. Then, when Jesus speaks to his disciples, he says they are to leave father, mother, brother, sister. And they are to trust him.

But how will people be able to trust Jesus? Philippians 2 goes on: <sup>8</sup> **And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.** <sup>11</sup> On the cross, Jesus took the curse humanity deserved. Remember, God will bless those who bless Abram and curse those who curse. And Jesus, the offspring, is cursed by humans. But instead of Jesus saying, "Curse them, Father," he says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus took sinful humanity's curse on himself so that for anyone who trusts – like Abram trusted – will be blessed in him! Have you trusted Jesus? And you might say, "But I don't have a strong trust." But that's not the point. It's not about how strong your trust is. It's about the object of your trust! Do you realize your need for his saving? Will you boast in your weakness? Will you trust the God who brings order from chaos?

If so, then there's one more piece I want to add here. If you know Jesus, like Abram, tell others! God says that once the offspring has the land, from that land, blessing will go out from it to the entire world. And isn't that what has happened after Jesus' resurrection even? Jesus speaks to his disciples and says, <sup>19</sup> **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** <sup>20</sup> **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.** <sup>12</sup> The Greek can be translated the same way the Hebrew to Abram was written: Having gone, make disciples. Jesus is *the* offspring. Through Jesus, all the families of the earth – all people groups – will experience the blessedness of God. They can be reconciled to him! Now that you know Jesus, will you go out and share the amazing news of Jesus' reconciliation and also how to live for and honor him in all of life? Jesus is with us til the end of the age – meaning he is with us all the way until we make it to the city whose builder and maker is God!

**God's Word of blessing compels faith, obedience, and worship. Have you forgotten his beautiful word and glory? What are you trusting in? Who are you obeying? Where's your worship? Come [back] to Christ today and find healing and restoration, and then share this news to others. Truly, we are blessed to bless.**

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<sup>10</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 3:16.

<sup>11</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 2:8.

<sup>12</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 28:19–20.