

SERMON GUIDE

Genesis: Genesis: The Faithfulness of God

Genesis 13



2.11.2024

SERMON NOTES:

If you are new with us or new to the Bible, the book of Genesis is an origins story. It not only tells us where we come from but tells us what went wrong. But then we see God's redemptive plan laid out through the calling of one man named Abram (Abraham). He will become the father of the Jewish people, and from him the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles (Jesus, the Christ) would come. Abraham is called "the father of the faith." The reason is he believed God's promise and God counted his belief/faith as righteousness. But Abraham was far from perfect. This is one of the reasons I love the Bible so much. It is not a book filled with perfect role models. It's usually the opposite. It's filled with people that look like us. And what we read in the Scriptures is not just a historical account of what happened, but a pattern and model of what always happens. The Bible isn't an old book, because when something is old it becomes outdated. The Bible is eternal, which means it's timeless, and therefore it is always timely. There is something for us to learn from the Lord today. So before I get into the passage for today, let me set up the context for what we're going to be looking at.

To be a person of faith doesn't require wearing cheesy Christian t-shirts, listening to K-Love, or having a Bible verse attached to your text message signature, social media profile, or email signature. If you do those things, great. But being a person of faith doesn't necessarily come with a lot of the religious trappings often associated in our culture.

The bottom line is this: A person of faith is someone that has trusted Christ's finished work for the forgiveness of their sins and now lives to please God. This living to please God part not only includes obeying His Word, but clinging to His promises and loving what is good, beautiful and true. A person of faith believes God and follows Him wherever He leads or directs.

If you are a person of faith, you have probably experienced the see-saw reality of faith. Sometimes you feel like you are doing it right and truly believing God at His Word. Other times you feel like a failure. Sometimes you are able to fight off sin and temptation because you believe what God has for you is better, and other times you don't. Sometimes you hold your tongue instead of popping off in anger, and other times you say things you regret. Sometimes we rehearse the promises of God to ourselves and overcome that anxiety we feel creeping up, and other times we give ourselves over and become complete wrecks. This is the life of faith.

Maybe you're not in the faith or are new to faith. Perhaps you feel like you get it wrong more times than right in your life. Today is going to be an encouragement to you, because you're going to see that Abraham, the father of the faith, not only gets it wrong a lot, but that God's faithfulness to Him never wavers. And it never wavers towards us either.

Exegesis of Genesis 13

The fiasco in Egypt is not evidence that Abraham isn't a man of faith. In fact, it is the accurate portrayal of what the walk of faith often looks like for us. Sometimes we get it right, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we are strong and make wise decisions because of our faith. Sometimes we lack trust, let fear take control, and operate from unbelief. That's the life of faith in reality versus some imaginary depiction.

Abraham left everything and took God at His word when he left Ur. He also believed God when He told him that he and Sara would have children and have offspring as numerous as the stars. But in Egypt he lets fear and unbelief take hold of him and he portrays Sarah as his sister instead of wife. He is just like us: a walking paradox of faith and unbelief, trust and distrust.

VS 1-11

Abraham came up out of Egypt. What is interesting about this is we see God call Abraham out of Ur and to the land that He will show him. But we never see God tell Abraham to go to Egypt. Yes, the famine led him to go, but we know this isn't where God has called him. He goes down there, and because of fear of Pharaoh, he passes off Sarah as his sister, not his wife. Abraham waivers in his faith. But God steps in to protect and guard.

It is estimated that Abraham and Sarah are there at least a few years. But now we see them coming out. This is in some ways a picture of repentance. Down to Egypt and back up to land God told him to go. Back to the place God led him. This also foreshadows Jacob's family (Israel) going into Egypt when Joseph is there and then the Exodus hundreds of years later.

We read that Abraham is very rich. He has attained great wealth while in Egypt (livestock, silver, and gold). This is the first mention in the Bible about wealth. And this description of Abraham's wealth and riches is connected to the promise of blessing. This is without a doubt presented as God's blessing on him. What is interesting about that is that it happens while he is in Egypt despite the fact that there is famine, that he's gone there on his own accord, and the whole deception of Pharaoh deal. In other words, God's blessing in spite of Abraham.

In our society today, we like to think about wealth in two categories: rich and poor. And with socialist ideas creeping into society more and more we frame the rich as bad/wicked and the poor as good. But the Bible doesn't operate with two categories, it's four categories.

Godly rich/Ungodly rich & Godly poor/Ungodly poor

The question isn't are you rich or poor, the question is: are you godly or ungodly?

We are told that Lot (Abraham's nephew) is with them. We don't know for sure why. Abraham was told to leave his family in Ur, but for some reason Lot goes too. Lot prospers through his association with

Abraham. This springs directly from the promise God made to Abraham that whoever blesses him will be blessed. Now, Lot is not some exemplary example for us in Scripture. We are told that he was a person of faith, but he is far from some model citizen we should pattern our lives after. Lot has great wealth too (because of Abraham), but there is conflict over the land between herdsmen. They have so much livestock that there are turf battles happening.

Abraham meets with Lot and tells him he doesn't want there to be strife between them. They are kin. They are family. So he tells Lot to survey the land and choose the portion he wants. Let me mention here that this is putting both of them at risk. Dividing from one another makes them more vulnerable to the attacks of the Canaanites and Perizzites that still dwell in the land. So Lot surveys the land and chooses the best portion. He chooses the Jordan Valley because it was well watered and like the garden of the LORD. Lot doesn't defer to Abraham, who is the very reason why he's been blessed. Instead, he chooses the best land.

Why does Abraham do this? Is he being generous? Is he operating by faith that God will take care of him? Maybe. But I think the greater likelihood is cowardice. He's avoiding conflict. He's avoided conflict with Pharaoh over Sarah, now he is avoiding conflict with Lot by telling him he can have the best land. God told Abraham (12:7) this land would belong to his offspring, but he's giving portions to Lot.

I want to highlight a few things here real quick. Notice that the prosperity of both Abraham and Lot is the root issue of their conflict. The conflict revolves around who has what land for their livestock. This isn't proof that wealth is bad, but it is a lesson about the importance of wisdom and character. This is why people often say don't do business with family or get involved with money with family. I want to tell you, it's not because it's family, but because of the lack of wisdom and character. You see this with families when someone dies and an inheritance is coming (even if it's not much). Families often start fighting over how to divide the inheritance. Wisdom and character. Many of you want to make more money and earn more wealth, and there's nothing wrong with that. But let me give you a really important reminder: without wisdom and character, you can lose it. And if you don't lose it, it can become a source of curse to you. Success is often more difficult to manage than failure. I would argue the lack of wisdom and character ultimately lead to the split of Abraham and Lot. Abraham's generations would continue to be wealthy. Lot's generation would go bankrupt. This is why the majority of lottery winners end up broke soon after (lack of wisdom or character).

Also recognize that God's blessings must be stewarded faithfully. We are called to be faithful stewards of everything God gives us. God is promising Abraham the land, but Abraham is giving Lot the prized portion. This is not great stewardship of God's blessing.

VS 12-18

We get a hint of problems to come. Lot chose his land and moved his tent as far as Sodom. We get the commentary that Sodom was wicked and filled with great sinners against the LORD. This is where Lot settles to raise his family. Boy oh boy. There is a lot I could say here. But I'll simply say this: if we raise our kids in Sodom, we shouldn't be surprised if they end up looking like the people of Sodom. This

doesn't mean we should isolate ourselves from the world. It does mean we shouldn't carelessly ignore the power and influence of who we associate ourselves with.

1 Corinthians 15:33 -- *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*

The influence of Sodom on Lot and family will arise later in Genesis.

The LORD speaks to Abraham. He calls out to him and tells him to lift his eyes and look at where he is. He tells him to look in every direction, as far as the eye can see, and recognize that all of that land the LORD will give to him. Abraham has given land to Lot, just as he gave his wife to Pharaoh. But the LORD tells Abraham that the land is his. God will ensure it.

He then reminds him of the promised offspring as numerous as the dust of the earth. Abraham and Sarah do not have a child in their old age, but God is going to do it. And ultimately, one of those offspring down the line will be Jesus, the Christ. Through him, we who are not children of Abraham by birth or lineage are counted so by faith. God tells Abraham to walk the land and remember the promise: it's his.

This last part is crucial. Abraham moved his tent and settled at Hebron and built an altar to the LORD. There he worshiped the LORD. We get no word that Lot settled and built an altar. But Abraham does.

His faith isn't perfect. He covers sometimes. He messes up. But the LORD is faithful to His promises. God blesses Abraham. And we see Abraham built an altar and worshiped. And the assumption here is his whole family and caravan of herdsman and others. He leads them to honor and worship the LORD. While he doesn't always get it right, he keeps repenting and worshiping.

Friends, this should be our lives. It should mark every husband and father, and every wife and mother. Every man and woman and child of faith should seek regularly to live by faith, repenting when we don't measure up. Coming back to worship the God who pours out grace upon grace even in our failures.

Let me close with an incredible reminder for us today.

2 Timothy 2:13 -- *if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.*

If you are in Christ, meaning you have trusted Him completely for the forgiveness of your sins and recognize Him as the true King, then God's promises for you are iron clad. No one can snatch you from God's hands, not even your own boneheaded moments of unbelief and faithlessness. Why is this? Because God cannot and will not deny Himself. He will not go against His own word. He won't undo His promises.

This doesn't lead us toward unholy, faithless living. Quite the opposite. In the wake of such grace and mercy, we are pushed forward to walk by faith in the One who has chosen us, redeemed us, and sustains us.

Let Abraham's failures remind you that you will make mistakes along the journey of faith. But let God's faithfulness remind you that God often blesses you despite you, not because we're awesome, but because He is. And that recognition should lead us to greater commitment to live faithful to Him.

If God can forgive and use Abraham and Sarah, God can forgive and use you. If you've failed your test, God can use it for your testimony. That's why this event is in the Scriptures. If you've made a mess of your life, God can make it into a message of the new life that God gives. That's the story of Abraham and Sarah. If you've lived by sight and we all have, God can open your eyes so that you can now live by faith as Abraham did. If you've made some bad financial decisions, God can still bless you as he did Abraham and Sarah. If God can save this marriage, God can save your marriage. If God can save this family, God can save your family. If God can love these people, God can love all people. If God can have a plan for them, then God has a plan for you. And if you've gone south, the good news is right now you could turn around, and God will give you grace to start heading north. And the good news is this, even when we've done some things that are awful, our God is still willing to meet with us at his altar, just as we see here with Abraham.

LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**
 - Read Genesis 12:10-20 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
 - Additional Scripture:
 - 1 Timothy 6:10
 - Proverbs 28:25
 - Mathew 18:15-17
 - Ephesians 4:26

- Colossians 3:13
- Romans 6:1-4
- 1 John 1:9
- 2 Timothy 2:13
- Lamentations 2:22-23
- 2 Thessalonians 3:3

- **REFLECT:**

- What caused the strife between Abraham and Lot?
- Why do you think Abraham gave land to Lot?
- Why does God remind Abraham of His promise?

- **RESPOND:**

- Have you ever had family strife? What caused it? How did you resolve it?
- Do you feel like you've messed up too much to be used by God?
- How did this message challenge you?
- How did this message encourage you?

- **MEDITATE:**

- Genesis 3:16 -- *I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.*

- **MEMORIZE:**

- 2 Timothy 2:13 -- *If we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.*

SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - Young Adult Director - **Hunter Christian**
 - Ministry - **The Fount**
 - **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
 - **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Afghan Tajik in Afghanistan



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- **Population in country:** 11,670,000
- **Global population:** 12,096,700
- **Christian Adherent:** 0.01%
- **Evangelical:** 0.01%
- **Primary Religion:** Islam
- **Primary Language:** Dari
- **Summary:** When does a Tajik speak Dari instead of Tajik? When he lives in Afghanistan! The Tajiks make up about one-fourth of Afghanistan's population. Originally a tribal group, they abandoned strict organizational structure long ago. However, cultural traditions are guarded and observed—traditions that survived centuries of invasion by forces ranging from ancient Arab hordes to recent Taliban fighters.
- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for followers of Jesus in Afghanistan to be effective in demonstrating how Jesus blesses and heals families and communities. There are a handful of believers among the Tajiks of Afghanistan. Pray for their protection and that they would be full of the fruit of God's Spirit - love, joy and peace. Pray for peace in Afghanistan, for a stable and effective government and for improved living conditions. Pray for a movement to Christ among the Tajiks of Afghanistan that will bless them abundantly.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>