

The Call of Abraham

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[0 : 00] Before the summer, we looked at Genesis chapters 1 to 11, and we just feel kind of led to pick up that series again and go from chapter 12 and just take another chunk of chapters, and we're basically going to be looking at the life of Abraham. And this morning, just to start that off, we're going to be looking at Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 to 9. We're going to be looking at a passage that is widely known as the call of Abraham. So that's where we're going this morning. And just to recap, in chapter 11, of course, we had the Tower of Babel, where the Lord scattered people throughout the earth. Well, from that scattered people, the Lord would continue to call out a people of his own, a people whose line would lead to Jesus, our Savior. And that is really what is happening here at the beginning of chapter 12. The Lord is continuing to call out a people of his own. And from the scattered people of Babel, the Lord is calling out Abraham to follow him and to be his people going forward. And these verses tell us this morning about that calling. So Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 to 9. Let's look at these verses together.

So the Lord had said to Abraham, Abraham, Abraham, and continue toward the Negev. Lord, as we look at these verses this morning, we just pray that you would help us and you would bless our time in your word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Well, as I was saying maybe a couple of weeks ago, towards the end of July, we had an opportunity to spend a week in Germany. Well, we spent that week in Germany with different families, mostly from the States, who have recently moved to different European countries to serve as missionaries, to share the gospel and to share the heart of Jesus with people in Europe. And just over that week, just listening to these different families, just how much these different families, kind of share how they were getting on, it really blew me away just how much these people have given up or gave up to come to Europe to share Jesus with people in Europe.

Now this is coming from someone who moved one field away from where I grew up. So this really kind of blew me away. Just how much these families with young children have given up in order to come to Europe to share Jesus in some of the most needy countries in the world.

Some of the places that they went, there isn't a church for hundreds of miles. And just over this week we were meant to kind of, you know, take notes and we were meant to analyze this.

[4 : 48] And it just really struck me. There was kind of three common things that struck me in relation to what these people gave up in order to come to Europe.

To follow the Lord's call on their life, they gave up their country, their people, and their family. As I said, these things just kind of stood out to me.

They gave up their own country, their home, their land, where they are citizens, and just all that that means. They gave up their own people.

They gave up their own people's language, their own people's culture, their own people's food, their own people's way in doing things, schooling, medical systems, and just all of what that means.

And they gave up their own family. Many of them, due to costs and due to other issues, won't see many of their family or close friends in person, much at all going forward, if ever again.

[5 : 55] And in terms of giving up family, I think that also touches on giving up things like family inheritance, family houses, family businesses, and things like that.

Now, if you're kind of looking at these things, and you're thinking, well, these things don't seem that bad. You know, these things don't seem like too much to leave behind.

These things don't seem like too much to give up. Well, I would say that if we tried it, we wouldn't be long changing our minds. Because these things are far from easy to leave behind.

And some of you here this morning know that firsthand. Because some of you here this morning have left some of these things behind, if not all of these things behind, to follow the Lord's leading

on your life to come to West Cork.

Some of you have left these things behind, to follow the Lord's leading, to come to West Cork, to even be part of this church. And we can see, I can see, that these things are far from easy to leave behind.

[7 : 17] These things are very difficult to leave behind. Leaving these things behind brings up so much challenge that you wouldn't even think of until you're in it, so to speak.

Well then, fast forward a little bit, coming to Genesis chapter 12 for this morning, I was kind of amazed when I was looking at verse 1, when I realized that it really is these same three things that the Lord asked Abraham to leave all of those years ago to follow the call that the Lord had on his life.

Looking at Genesis chapter 12, verse 1, the Lord said to Abraham, go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I will show you.

God called Abraham to leave his country, called him to leave his people, called him to leave his father's household. Granted, that's a little bit different than the word family, but it kind of captures the same thing, his inheritance, his security, and things like that.

These three things might have looked like a little bit different in Abraham's day than it might look for people today, but nevertheless, in whatever age we are in, these things are extremely hard to leave.

[8 : 36] So looking at verse 1, I think we need to grasp just how much Abraham, a human being, was asked to leave behind.

It was a massive ask. It was far from easy. The cost was big. The families that we were talking to were in a different time, but yet somehow they were a testament to that.

It's far from easy. But in some ways, taking it a step further than the families that we were talking to, Abraham was asked to leave these things behind, not knowing where he was going.

The families that we were talking to knew before they left where they were going. Some went to very remote parts of Sweden. Some went to parts of Germany, Rome.

Some went to countries close to the Ukraine. They knew where they were going before they left.

But as for Abraham, Abraham, he was asked to leave these things behind, his country, his people, his father's household, without even knowing where he was going.

[9 : 58] And maybe that's some of your story. Maybe some of you came here not really knowing where you're going, but yet following the Lord's call on your life. The Lord didn't tell Abraham where he was going.

The Lord just said, verse 1, I will show you. I think the implication here is Abraham was to go first and then the Lord would show him.

He was to go and then the Lord would show. And so often I think we want it the other way around where we want to be shown first and then we'll go. But here Abraham was told to go and then the Lord would show.

The Lord did promise that he would show Abraham. And with that promise in verses 2 and 3 the Lord added some more promises.

So Abraham mightn't have known where he was going but he had these promises to hold on to.

The Lord said, verses 2 and 3, I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you.

[11 : 04] I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be a blessing through you.

So Abraham was asked to leave all these things behind. He was asked to give all these things up and all he had to hold on to was these promises that the Lord would direct his steps, make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, protect him and make him a blessing to others.

Someone said to sum all of these promises up the Lord promised that he would bless him and make him a blessing. So what did Abraham do?

Well, the beginning of verse 4 really is amazing because we simply read so Abraham went as the Lord had told him.

Considering all that Abraham was asked to give up this really is one of the most stunning verses parts of a verse in scripture.

[12 : 21] He was asked to leave it all behind not knowing where he was going yet he went. The cost was massive, the cost was high, Abraham was a human being just like us but yet he went following the Lord's call on his life.

And for some of you these verses here at the beginning of verse 4 sum up your story. Your circumstance was leaving these things, the Lord's calling was to leave these things, maybe not knowing where you were going but you went as the Lord directed you to do.

But the cost is massive. Well when I think of this and when I kind of think of these verses and when I look at at the call of Abraham I think that the two words that kind of come to my mind are the words faith and dependence.

dependence. I think boiling it all down when we look at these verses I think these are two words that kind of come to the front. Faith and dependence. Abraham in faith he believed the Lord to be real. In faith he believed his word to him to be real. And in total dependence he stepped out trusting that the Lord would provide, protect, lead and guide.

[13:52] Abraham was asked to leave so much behind. He was asked to leave so much of who he was and what he had behind. Yet he stepped out in obedience with dependent faith.

And that's really what we read in Hebrews 11.8 By faith Abraham when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance obeyed and went even though he did not know where he was going.

Isn't that something? God called Abraham to a life of faith and dependence and in obedience what did he do? In obedience he went.

And we see in verses four to nine that he went from there on this journey of faith and dependence on the Lord. the Lord would appear to him again and encourage him again and kind of reaffirm his promise and he would go from place to place until we come down to verse nine where we read he would head towards the Negev and that is a little bit closer to Egypt and of course in the next verses we see Abraham goes down to Egypt.

So he set out on his journey but what about us? What about our journey? Looking at this passage what about us?

[15:19] Well you know all of us from this point might not be called to leave our our country our people our family not all of us might be called to go to a place that we we do not know that could very well happen the Lord the Lord could call any one of us to go somewhere to serve him but I think here is the big thing for all of us and we're all in this category as believers just like Abraham we are all called to a life of faith and and dependence on Jesus wherever he has us whether we live here or there whether we we stay or go just like Abraham we are all called to live a life of faith and and dependence on Jesus wherever he has us now this does not mean that we're going to be perfect living a life of faith and and dependence on Jesus will not mean we will be perfect it will not mean we'll never make mistakes in the very next verses we'll come to them next week

Abraham makes so many mistakes he lies he's deceptive he ends up giving his wife to Pharaoh after he said she was his sister living a life of faith and independence on Jesus will not mean we won't have weakness it will not mean we will not make mistakes it should be our desire not to make mistakes but it just means living a life of faith and independence on Jesus will not mean that we are we are perfect rather living a life of faith and and dependence on Jesus is about looking to him in our weakness and it's really about resting and depending on who he is what he is like what he has said what he has done for us and who we are in him living a life of faith and and dependence on Jesus is not about looking to ourselves it's not about looking at our own mistakes or our own performance rather it's about looking to Jesus it's about depending and relying on who he is on his words on his promises on his leading on his guiding and on his finished work on the cross for us you know in many ways

I think living a life of faith and and dependence on Jesus is about surrendering our lives to him it's about trusting and believing that when we come to him we really are forgiven it's about when we come to him really seeing who we are in him and it's about trusting and believing that because of who we are in him he is working in us and through us transforming us bit by bit into his likeness it's about trusting and resting but that's a lot easier said than done isn't it it's a lot easier to say we're going to rest and trust in him than it is to do it because I think we as people we tend to want to rely on ourselves so just coming close to a finish how do we grow more and more in living a life of faith in and dependence on

Jesus well one thing is for sure we cannot do it on our own strength to live a life of faith in and dependence on Jesus on our own strength just by grit and just by flexing and trying harder would be like watching a group of penguins or ostriches trying to fly and I love that image because watching a group of penguins or ostriches trying to fly would be there would be a lot of commotion there would

be a lot of flapping around the place there would be a lot of effort there would be maybe some feathers in the air but ultimately there would be no take off there would be no lift off and there certainly would be no flying or soaring or maybe it's a little bit like me at home with our basketball hoop we've got a basketball hoop at home and sometimes when we go out with the kids I have this vision of doing a slam dunk now how many people know what a slam dunk is okay a few people well in professional basketball the hoop is so high and these guys can run up to the thing and they can jump so high that they can just slam the ball into the net and have their hands even above the rim as they do it and it's pretty good because it's really hard to defend because if you throw the ball no one can like snatch it out of your hand if you like slam it down into it well I go outside and the thing is way higher than me and I look at it and I think I'm going to give this a slam dunk and I go running at it and I think I leave the ground about an inch and then I come back down and I realize that it is just impossible it's impossible to do it I can't do it but we cannot live a life of faith and dependence on Jesus on our own strength but as believers we can live an ever increasing life of faith and dependence on Jesus in his strength we as believers we are not the same as everyone else in the sense that we as believers we have the Holy Spirit living in us we have Christ in us and in his strength in his power we can live a life of faith and and dependence in him we can be encouraged that in his strength through him working in us and through us and that is what he does in us all he works in us and through us and through him working in us and through us there can be take off there can be lift off and there can be slam dunking in living a life of faith and and dependence on Jesus so how do we walk in his strength well just to close how do we walk in his strength and not our strength well one thing for sure

[22 : 16] I think is this we ask the Lord for his help and when we ask the Lord for his help I am a hundred percent certain that he will help us if it's something that's in line with what he desires for us he will help us well the Lord he wants us to rest and depend on him he wants us to trust in him and walk in his strength so if we ask him for his help in this he will help us that is for certain you know I think that it's always important to remember that we do not have to twist the arm of our Lord so to speak for him to help us he absolutely delights in helping us he absolutely wants to help us he wants what's good for us he wants us to succeed in what is good like the perfect father that he is he longs to help us his children he delights to help us he absolutely 100% wants to help us so just to maybe apply these verses to our hearts let's just all ask the Lord right now to help us as individuals and as a church to live more and more a life of faith and dependence on him and as we pray together let us expectantly look forward to how he will help us and is going to help us in this because he will help us so let's let's pray together

Lord Lord as we come to you this morning we want to acknowledge our need for you Lord we know that we cannot live this life on our own strength we do not want to live it just by trying harder and live it by grit so Lord we come to you and we look to you for your help Lord we simply ask you for your help that we may live an ever increasing life of faith and dependence on you and we know Lord that you will help us bit by bit in your timing you will help us because you desire this for us and we're coming to you asking you for something that you desire for us and you will help us so Lord we just thank you that you're so good thank you for your love thank you for your mercy thank you that you do not leave us just to try to figure things out ourselves we look to you for your help Lord Lord we thank you that at the end of the day it's not us but it's you working in us and through us at the end of the day it's not what we might have done it's what you have done for us so Lord just help us to continually come to you for help help us to worship you now as we close our time together in Jesus name Amen the lamb and gospel can capture the away for God to do you see theistk he