

Genesis Ch11v10-12v9 - Gracious Blessing

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[0 : 00] Genesis chapter 11.

We come to the end of our series in Genesis, these foundational chapters. If we want to understand the story of the Bible, we really need to start at the beginning, and we've been looking at these first foundational chapters, which really shape and help us understand the whole of the story.

So if you've missed any of the talks, maybe you've been teaching on Sunday School and you've missed them, they're all recorded for you, they're all online, and they're there for you to follow up and to go over.

So we're going to read this morning our last part of the beginning of Genesis. We're going to start chapter 11, verse 27, through to chapter 12 and verse 5.

Let's read, let's hear God's Word. This is the account of Terah's family line. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Aaron, and Aaron became the father of Lot.

[1 : 30] While his father Terah was still alive, Aaron died in Ur of the Chaldeans in the land of his birth. Terah, Abram, and Nahor, both married.

The name of Abram's wife was Sarai. The name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah.

Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive. Terah took his son Abram, his grandson, Lot of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the father of his son Abram.

And together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Aaron, they settled there. Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

And the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country, your people, and from your father's household to the land I will show you.

[2 : 41] I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. And 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 blessed through you. So Abram went as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he set out from Aaron.

He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, All the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Aaron. And they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

Well, great words. Let's pray and ask for God's help. Father, we thank you for this account of beginnings.

The beginnings of the true story about God our Creator, God our Redeemer. Father, we pray that as we look at these words together, they would shape us afresh to understand who you are, and the people you have called us to be.

[4 : 12] Would you open up our hearts and our minds to receive your word? Make us attentive. And may we be obedient to what we hear.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, little Johnny sat down for his art class.

And in his excitement, he accidentally put a streak of paint across his page. So he put up his hand, and he asked teacher for a clean new page.

You can have another sheet of paper, but you must be more careful. Johnny took the page, promising that he was going to do better.

Well, it wasn't long into his painting that Johnny got distracted again, and he used green paint instead of blue paint for his sky. So once again, he put up his hand, and he asked teacher for a new clean page.

[5 : 22] Teacher came down. This is not good. I warned you. I told you to be careful. I'm going to give you another sheet of paper, but this is the last one.

Johnny was grateful, and he promised teacher that he wouldn't make any more mistakes again. So being extra careful, Johnny painted away, and he was just putting his finishing touches to his picture when he knocked the water for cleaning the brushes all over the page.

Poor Johnny didn't even bother putting his hand up. Can you relate with little Johnny? I can.

We promise, don't we, that we're going to do better. I promise I'm going to be more careful. I'm going to try harder.

But we just keep messing up. Using up all our chances, we blow it again, and again, and again.

[6 : 33] Well, that's been the story of Genesis, hasn't it? New beginnings and failure. Fresh starts and falling.

Of course, there's always the hope that the next son, the next generation, is going to be better than the one before. But it seems, no matter how many times there's a restart, it ends up the same.

Humanity, individually and collectively, insist on living their own way. Instead of representing God's goodness and reflecting his greatness, we've replaced God with self.

We've put our self at the centre of the universe. How is God going to respond? Is he going to give up?

Is he like a teacher who comes down wagging his finger and says, I've given you your last chance, that's it, no more? Well, thankfully, God does as he always does.

[7 : 47] He responds in grace. He gives us a clean, fresh start. A fresh start that lasts for an eternity.

Follow on screen. No matter how drastic human sin becomes, destroying what God has made good and bringing the world to the brink of uncreation, God's grace never fails to deliver humankind from the consequences of their sin.

That summarises the story of Genesis. Let me read it again. No matter how drastic human sin becomes, destroying what God has made good and bringing the world to the brink of uncreation, God's grace never fails to deliver mankind from the consequences of their sin.

So in our text this morning we're going to see that God acts through one man, through Abraham, later to become Abraham, to show us that God does not give up.

Just as Genesis opened up the words with the words of, and God said, and brought about the creation of the world, this new beginning, so God now speaks again, chapter 12 verse 1, the Lord said to Abraham.

[9 : 23] God's word to Abraham signals a restart, a new beginning, but not just to Abraham and his family, but to all humanity, to all nations, to all people, including you and I.

And together we're going to see that God saves by grace through faith in God's promise. God saves by grace through faith in God's promise. So let's look at each of those in turn. First, called by God's grace.

God's act of salvation always starts with grace. In other words, salvation begins with God's initiative. Look at verse 1. The Lord said to Abraham, go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I'm going to show you.

Now, why would God choose and call Abraham? Of all the people that there are from the family line of terror, why would God choose Abraham?

[10 : 43] Well, the answer to that is both surprising and shocking. Keep your finger in Genesis 12 and go forward to the book of Joshua.

So it's Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua. Joshua chapter 24.

Joshua. Joshua. And here at the end of Joshua, he's reminding God's people of the account of Abraham.

We're giving an insight into his calling. So chapter 24, and we're going to pick it up in verse 2. Joshua said to all the people, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel said, Long ago your ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the river Euphrates and worshipped other gods.

But I took your father Abraham from the land of the Euphrates and led them throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. Now just from these couple of verses we learn three things about Abraham.

[12 : 12] Here's the first one. He was from a family, verse 2, who worshipped other gods. They had replaced the one true creator god with their own gods.

Gods whom they could manipulate and control, gods who weren't going to interfere with them and tell them what to do. They set up their own gods. But not only that, second, Abraham was not seeking the one true god.

As we saw back in Genesis 11 as the people increased, they settled down. They were meant to scatter, but they settled down building their own life, seeking to establish a name for themselves.

And that's what Abraham and his family were doing. They were settling down. building a name for themselves. He's not looking for God. He's not seeking God.

He's not calling out for God. But yet, third, he's confronted by God and called by God.

[13 : 23] Look at verse 3. God took Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates.

I took him. Literally, God is saying, I turned his heart towards me. I intervened into his life in such a way that he was compelled to follow me.

It wasn't Abraham's will, but it was God's will to change his heart and to turn him around so that he would follow God.

You see, the thing is, there was nothing special about Abraham. There was nothing in his family background, nothing in his religious practice.

The only thing that he had going for him was that he was a rebellious sinner who was neither looking for God nor wanting God and yet God intervened into his life.

[14 : 26] Doesn't that surprise you and doesn't it shock you? You see, we work and we live on the basis of merit.

It's all about our past performance. It's all about our family pedigree. It's all about your looks and your success. Everything that we have is earned and deserved.

Merit, merit, merit. God works on the basis of grace. It's got nothing to do with anything we do or anyone who we are.

In fact, it's not even based on our future performance because if we were to take time to read through the life of Abraham, we will discover he's a liar, he's a coward, he's a cheat, he's a doubter.

He's a failure just like you and I. But God's grace to Abraham is one of God intervening by his love, giving to him what he doesn't deserve.

[15 : 36] It's God's action to save sinners who cannot even save themselves. You see, the account of Abraham reminds us that our salvation, the new beginning and the fresh start that we receive is all by grace.

It's not your past action, it's not your present behavior, it's not even your promise of future goodness. God calls us and God chooses to show grace towards us simply because he delights and he takes great pleasure in saving broken, messed up people like you and I.

God saves by grace through faith in God's promises. Isn't that wonderful? wonderful. It's amazing.

So, first, God calls by grace. Second, he does it to receive God's promise.

God calls Abraham by grace, let's go back to Genesis chapter 12, God calls Abraham by grace so that he might know and experience God's great promises.

[17 : 08] And what are those promises? Well, let's read again chapter 12, verse 1. The Lord said to Abraham, go from your country, your people, and from your father's household to the land I will show you.

And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and 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 blessed through you. Now, there's different ways we can approach these promises, different ways we can divide them up or look at them.

But broadly speaking, there are two great promises from God to Abram. We're going to look at them each in turn. Here's the first one. Here's the first promise.

Blessing instead of curse. blessing instead of curse. Remember Adam and Eve, right back at the very beginning, living life with God in the garden, a perfect life, a good life, enjoying his presence, living under God's rule.

[18 : 20] But all that changed when they followed the desires of their own heart, and they believed the lie of Satan, when Satan came to them and said, you can be like God.

And they started living as if they were God. And by taking God's place, everything broke. Everything went out of sync. Disorder and chaos.

And God's response was to curse the world and its people. They were removed from the land of the garden, where everything was beautiful and good, and brought into a land that produced thorns and thistles.

Not only that, they would suffer conflict. Conflict with each other, husband and wife, siblings, and child bearing would become hard and difficult.

And now God comes to Abraham and he says to him, I am now going to bless you, not curse you. God promises a new land, verse 1 of chapter 12, go to the land that I will show you.

[19 : 35] I am going to bring you into a new place to live, a place where you can enjoy God's presence, where he will dwell with you once again.

And God promises to Abraham, verse 2, I am going to make you into a great nation, I am going to give you a great name, you are going to have many children, your family is going to grow and to expand.

God is going to undo what is broken and he is going to put it right, he is going to reverse the curse and bring the blessing. Because knowing God's grace is to receive unnumbered, countless blessings from God.

so that's the first promise, I am going to bring blessing instead of curse. And here is the second big promise, this blessing is going to be for all nations.

Look at verse 3, I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

[20 : 53] God's desire, God's intention is not just to bless this one man Abram and his family but he is going to bless all the nations of the world through Abram.

All the peoples of China, all the peoples of Russia and Afghanistan, Iran and Sudan and Fiji and Ireland and all the nations, they are to be blessed.

All peoples, every language, every culture, every tribe, God will pour out his goodness and his kindness and his love on all peoples.

No nation is to be excluded or barred or forgotten. What amazing great big promises that God makes.

But you know what, if we've been attentive to reading Genesis, promises, we'll know that these are not new promises. These are promises from God that he had stated and he had given right from the beginning and they are beginning to be worked out.

[22 : 05] Let's have a look back at Genesis chapter 3. Genesis chapter 3 recounts how the curse came, the disobedience of Adam and Eve and how God responded.

And in the middle of all the cursing that God does, God makes a promise that will shape the history of the entire world for all eternity.

And here's the promise that he makes. The whole Bible is founded on this one promise. Chapter 3 verse 15. God is speaking to Satan and he says to Satan, verse 15, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

And he, that is one of the offspring of the woman, will crush your head Satan and you will strike his heel.

A victorious champion has been promised. Do you see what God says to Satan at the end of verse 15? He will crush your head.

[23 : 18] He, that is a seed from the woman. One of her offspring is going to come. The woman's seed will be one just like Adam, a man, the son of a woman.

But unlike Adam, he will love God and be loyal to God. He's not going to sin and mess up. Instead, he's going to inflict a blow that will ultimately crush Satan's head.

The seed of this woman will be victorious and defeat Satan. He will destroy his hold over humanity. He will take the curse and break the curse and bring the blessing.

That's the promise of God. Go back to chapter 12. So with that in mind, we ask the question, who is this promised seed?

Who is this son who's going to come from the woman to bring the blessings? Well, at first reading, as we get into chapter 12, it seems like, it appears like, that it's Abraham, that he's the long awaited promised son.

[24 : 34] After all, God makes him lots of promises. But as we've seen already, if we're to read on in the story of Abraham, he fails and he sins and he messes up the whole time.

You see, the promises are made not just to Abraham, but to Abraham and his family. Look at the end of verse 3. And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Go down to verse 7. The Lord appeared to Abraham and said, to your offspring, and the note there at the bottom of your page is singular, to your seed, meaning one person, I will give this land.

In other words, one from the family line of Abraham would come and bring blessing. The New Testament, of course, makes that abundantly clear to us.

Let's go to Galatians chapter 3. Turn with me to Galatians chapter 3 in the New Testament. Galatians chapter 3 chapter 3.

[25 : 59] And verse 16. Galatians 3 verse 16.

So we're thinking of the promise that God had made that one would come from the woman. Is it Abram? Well, it's certainly one from his family line.

Here we come, chapter 3 verse 16. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say and to seeds, meaning many people, but and to your seed, meaning one person who is Christ.

You see, God uses the family line of Abraham to lead us to the promised son. Because Jesus Christ is the promised seed from the woman that God had said all along, right back from Genesis 3 15.

He is the faithful, obedient son who will live the perfect life for us so that we can receive the blessings from him. Because all the blessings are now in Christ.

[27 : 26] So how do we get to receive all the blessings if they're now in Christ? Well, go to verse 26. Galatians 3 verse 26. So, in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

For all of you were baptized into Christ, have clothed yourself with Christ. there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Anyone who comes to Christ, anyone who trusts in Christ, whatever their nationality, whatever your past might have been, become the children of God, brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus.

So all that now belongs to Christ, now belongs to us. We become co-heirs with Christ.

[28 : 43] We receive the promised blessings because we are now through faith in Christ. Can you see what God is doing?

In Christ, God is bringing about a new nation, a new people who are brought together just as God had promised Abraham.

And in Christ, God is bringing a people together who can know God and who can enjoy his presence forever, just as he promised.

So as we come to Christ, we are united together to be the family of God. There is no superiority, there is no inferiority.

We are children under God who've been forgiven, who are loved, who are treasured. We become co-heirs with Christ, all that is his, now becomes ours.

[29 : 50] Every blessing that belongs to Christ is now ours. God saves by grace through faith in God's promise.

promise. So, number three, we've looked at grace, we've looked at the promise, and it comes through faith in God.

God calls Abraham by grace so that he might receive the great and good promises. But if Abraham is going to know and experience these promises, he's got to believe it.

faith. There's got to be faith. And his faith is seen in three ways. Let's look at it together. We need to go back again to Genesis chapter 12.

Let's see Abraham's faith. Here's the first one. Faith is expressed in obedience.

[31 : 00] Look at verse 1. The Lord said to Abraham, Abraham, go from your country and from your people. Verse 4.

So Abraham went as the Lord told him. You see, faith is not a feeling. It's not an idea. It's not a philosophy.

Faith is obeying what God says. It's active. God said to Abraham, Abraham, go. This is my promise to you. Go.

And he went. It's a call to respond to God's word with obedience. Abraham didn't know where he was going.

God didn't give him the full plan of what the years were going to be like as they unfolded or what the land was going to be. He didn't know what was going on. Scripture even tells us that.

[31 : 58] Look at the screen. By faith, Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went even though he didn't know where he was going.

Now that's what faith is. Faith is expressed in obedience all the time. And throughout Scripture, God continually confronts us with the word of his son.

Jesus says to us, the word comes to us and says, come to me, all you who are weary, and I will give you rest. How are you going to experience that rest?

By obeying the word. Go to Jesus. And Jesus says to us, come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

How are we going to experience that change and direction in our life? By obeying the word and what it says. Go to Jesus.

[33 : 06] Of course we'll have questions. We don't know the plan of our life and all what it's going to entail and what it's going to look like. Yes, we will have fear, but that's what faith is.

It's obeying God's word because God said it. He's the creator. We're the created. Faith is always expressed in obedience.

Second, faith is treasuring God more than anything else. It's treasuring God more than anything else. Look at verse 1 again.

The Lord said to Abraham, go from your country, from your people, and from your father's household, to the land I will show you. Now, that to me sounds a little bit like a call to discipleship, doesn't it?

Put yourself in Abraham's shoes for a minute. Out of the blue, God says, I want you to leave Ireland.

[34 : 17] I'm going to send you to another country. Say goodbye to your family. Sell your house because you're not coming back here.

Or maybe God comes along and says, I want you to leave Cork because I'm sending you to help in a church plant somewhere else in Ireland.

You're not going to know anyone where you go, and you're going to feel like an outsider. Or maybe God says, I want you to leave your career for another one.

It's going to mean less pay, but it's going to give you more time. You're going to have to downsize your house and move to a new place. Where you're going to go is going to be really strange, but I want you to go.

How are you going to respond? You see, you don't get it, do you? Life is good here right now. I've got my family.

[35 : 29] My family are all around me. And I've got a job. I've just got a promotion. I'm doing quite well. I've got a good salary. We're doing well.

And my kids, they're all settled. They're in a great school. They've got lots of friends. and I mean all the different clubs and all the different activities they go to. We're not going there.

In other words, what we're saying is, I treasure my comfort and my security and my familiarity more than anything else.

That's what's important to me. How did Abram respond? Abram, I want you to go. And he went.

Why? Because he treasured God more than anything else or anyone else. In other words, he trusted that following God and stepping out in faith, whatever the cost, whatever the hardship, whatever the suffering, was nothing compared to walking in obedience and all the blessings that he would receive from God.

[36 : 54] Nothing could compare to it. It's what God continues to say to us. Remember the words of Jesus?

Whoever wants to save their life will lose it. but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul? So let me ask a challenging question to you and to me.

What is it that you treasure more than God? what do you treasure more than God? What comfort and security are you holding on to?

Is it your family? Is it your job? Is it your home? Lord, you can have anything you want, but you are not having you fill in the blank.

[38 : 06] you're not touching it. Faith is treasuring God above anything else.

And third, faith is trusting the one who is faithful. You see, I read this account and I look at the life of Abram and I say, this call of him, go leave your country, go to another place, go do this.

Well, that's great for Abram, but you know what, I just don't have that kind of faith. I'm just not in his category.

He's up there, I'm down here. I'm just not able for this stepping out business. I just can't do it. I try, but I just fail and fall all the time.

Abram's faith was not great because of how big and how strong his faith was.

[39 : 16] His faith is great because his faith is in the faithfulness of God. His faith is in the faithfulness of God.

He was sinful, he was weak, he was disobedient and fearful. He simply trusted in what God said he will do.

And what does God say he will do? Look at the promises, look at verse 2 with me. Listen to what God said to him. Go, I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing and I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you.

I will do it. Don't worry Abraham, I know exactly what your life is like, I know what your faith is like, but I am faithful to you.

Just as God knows Abraham's heart, so God knows your heart and he knows my heart. It's never about the strength of my faith, but God's faithfulness to me.

[40 : 50] I will do it. I will do it. I will bless you. Don't believe me?

Well, listen to the Apostle Paul because he picks it straight up and he applies it right to our heart. Look at what it says. Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be, can you read that word?

Guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring. Guaranteed. It all comes from the guarantee of what God will do for you and for me.

God saved Abraham and through him he would save the nations of the world for all who will turn to him. He has saved me and I know he has saved some of you and maybe you are sitting here today and saying can he save me?

Yes he can. By grace through faith in God's promise I will do it for you.

[42 : 19] Let's pray. Amazing grace incredible promises simple failing faith.

Thank you Father God that you are faithful to us. You are faithful in all that you say and all that you do.

as weak as we are we trust in your faithfulness to keep us to hold us so that we might know your blessing.

Thank you Father for all that we have learned together through this account of Genesis of the almighty God that you are the God who gives new beginnings the God who gives a restart that lasts not just today but for all eternity dealing with every single one of my failures past present and future nothing will hinder what God promises to do.

Help us to walk in obedient faith treasuring you above all else stepping out and doing as you command.

[44 : 16] Amen. We're going to sing. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.