

# From Shem to Abram: Unlikely Beginnings

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[ 0 : 00 ] These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arphaxad two years after the flood. And Shem lived after his father Arphaxad 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shelah. And Arphaxad lived after he fathered Shelah 403 years and had other sons and daughters. When Shelah had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber.

And Shelah lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters. When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg. And Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Rhuah. And Peleg lived after he fathered Rhuah 209 years and had other sons and daughters. When Rhuah had lived 32 years, he fathered Sarug. And Rhuah lived after he fathered Sarug 207 years and had other sons and daughters. When Sarug had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor. And Sarug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

[ 1 : 08 ] When Nahor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah. And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters. When Terah lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred in Ur of the Chaldeans.

And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, and the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Ishka.

Now Sarai was barren. She had no children. Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, and his son, Abram's wife. And they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan.

But when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran. This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Heavenly Father, as we come to another genealogy, and what seems like words that would bear no fruit in our lives, God, we hold this as the divine word of God, and it's profitable for us.

[ 2 : 33 ] So Lord, I pray that you would speak through your word, through this word, this particular passage in Genesis. Speak to us today, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Good morning, church. My name is Mike, one of the pastors here at Shoreline, and I'm glad that you've joined us, or that those are back from a long journey like the Moynihan's, traveled like 4,000 miles recently or something like that.

So it's just good to be together. Well, if you've been in Connecticut for much time, and if you've ever had to dig a hole here in Connecticut, there's a decent chance that you hit rock at some point.

How many of you have been digging like a fence post hole or something and hit rock? Yeah. The state is filled with rocks. So if you dig, you're going to find something.

And that is what it's like with Scripture. If you read and study the Bible, if you dig into it, you're going to find rock. And not just rock, but gold.

So here we are, looking at 23 verses in Scripture, including yet another genealogy that, as I was just praying, on the surface, they don't seem to offer a whole lot.

[ 3 : 45 ] Like, Mike, why didn't we just skip over this? You know what happens in Genesis 12. It's the call of Abraham. That's a significant passage. So why didn't we just get to there? Now, I'm here to tell you that there is gold to be found in this passage if we're willing to dig a little bit.

So I just want to ask, are you willing to dig with me? Some of you are. Awesome. At least to some of you that are, we're going to carry it. Max, he's ready to dig.

All right. Let's do this, okay? So if you haven't already, please open up to Genesis 11, 10 through 32. The title of today's passage is, From Shem to Abram, Unlikely Beginnings.

And the point that I want to argue today from today's text is this. Even when hope seems lost, God remains committed and able to fulfill his promises.

Okay. Even when hope seems lost, God remains committed and able to fulfill his promises. You're like, how in the world did you get that out of this text? Well, we're going to look at this passage today in its two sections.

[ 4 : 55 ] So first, the genealogy from Shem to Terah in verse 10 through 26. And then second, the details we see here regarding Terah's family in verse 27 to 32.

And in both, I think this message is being communicated to God's people. And so, let's dig into this, okay? You guys ready? Okay. So here's the first thing.

From Shem to Terah, line preserved. Okay. Line preserved. Now, as with the prior two genealogies we've covered, we did Genesis, Brad preached through Genesis 5 several weeks ago.

Or months ago now. Last week we did Genesis 10. So we saw two different genealogies. What I want to do today is similar. And that is I want to start with just making, we're not going to go name by name through this genealogy.

I want to make some key observations about, that will help us understand why this genealogy is here. Okay. So we're going to hit up some key observations here.

[ 5 : 51 ] And here is the first one. Okay. We look at chapter 5 and say, okay, this is a very similar genealogy to chapter 5. So there's some similarities and yet differences at the same time.

So the first observation is a comparison to chapter 5. Now, both of them are linear genealogies. That is, as opposed to the chapter 10 genealogy, which is like a map.

It was like a family tree. It talked about all the nations of the earth. 5 and 10 are tracing one line of people, one family. And so it's a linear genealogy.

I wish you could keep that in mind as we compare to chapter 5. And the second thing, which is related, is they're both tracing the line of promise. They're both tracing the line of promise.

Now, if you recall Brad's three analogies, I mentioned them last week, but they apply more to this week. The first analogy Brad gave us in Genesis 5 was that it's like a telescope, right?

[ 6 : 47 ] This genealogy. It's zooming past lots of history to focus on one person. Now, we know the narrative is leading us to Abraham, okay? This genealogy gets us almost all the way to him, Terah and Terah's three sons, which includes Abraham.

But we have this telescope. It's also like a road trip, Brad said, right? There's pit stops along the way that make the story a little bit richer, but it's still like we're headed somewhere.

And the third thing he said, it's like a countdown. There's this growing anticipation as the countdown gets closer to blast off. So they're both tracing this line of promise kind of in those three ways.

Now, another observation here is this time, so in comparison to chapter five, we're moving even faster, which I call light speed. Okay, there are some phrases in chapter five that don't appear here in chapter 10, and the effect is that we're just like, we're blitzing straight through this genealogy with an even faster countdown, no extended pit stops on this road trip, right?

And so this gives us this heightened sense that we're actually trying to go somewhere really fast. Now, the next thing that I want to say here is that they both contain 10 generations.

[ 8 : 01 ] And the reason that I have a question mark on there is because if you count the number of generations in chapter five, there are 10 from Seth to Noah. And then Noah's sons are mentioned.

So Seth to Noah is 10 generations, and then Noah's sons. Here in chapter 11, if you count, there are nine generations from Shem to Terah, and then Terah's three sons are mentioned.

But the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which is the Septuagint, it actually inserts another generation. Arpachshad fathers a man named Canaan, who then fathers Shelah.

So there's an inserted name here. Canaan is also included in the genealogy from Adam to Christ in Luke 3. So if you go to Luke 3, you can see the whole genealogy from Adam all the way to Jesus Christ.

Canaan is included in that line. And so if Canaan is added, then you have 10 generations from Shem to Terah. Now that leaves us with two possibilities as we consider, like how do we resolve this difference?

[ 9 : 06 ] Well, the first possibility is that Moses intentionally left Canaan out so that Abram becomes a 10th generation. So he's actually helping us to point to Abram. A second possibility is that perhaps this was a scribal error that somehow led to Canaan getting removed from the Hebrew Old Testament.

Now, okay, why am I even talking about any of this? Because is this actually that important? The reason that I'm talking about, I'm taking the opportunity here to talk about this, is because some see things like this as a reason to discredit the Word of God.

as if the possibility of human error in copying Scripture disproves that there is a divine author who breathed out his authoritative word to mankind.

Now, what I want to say is that what this actually demonstrates is not that the Word of God is not the Word of God. It actually demonstrates that humans are fallible, something that we know well. Humans are able to make mistakes even in copying the sacred writings. And I think this highlights all the more the sheer awesomeness, the brilliance, and the fact that the Word of God has been preserved over millennia, thousands and thousands of years, passed down to today.

[ 10 : 23 ] Now, just a little bit when it comes to how do we know that this is the Word of God? This is an aside from the passage, but I think it's an important aside here. There are literally thousands of manuscripts, both of the Old Testament and of the New Testament.

And so we can look at those manuscripts and we can compare them to one another and there's differences between the manuscripts. And scholars will call this variants. And the thing is, though, that the vast majority of variants are simply spelling or nonsense errors, like mixing up A and N in English.

God has divinely governed the preservation of His Word in the pages of Scripture and the places where there is uncertainty, like, okay, ten generations, nine generations, it doesn't at all affect the message or the doctrines of Scripture.

And so I just want to speak a specific word to the kids that are here. Kids, I want you to listen up for a second. Adults, you should still listen, but kids, I want you to listen. You're being raised in a church that believes that the Bibles that we read and study actually contain, listen to this, we believe they actually contain the true words of God given to humanity for our eternal life and joy in Christ.

Like, that's what we believe. And you need to know something. Most of the world doesn't believe this. Most of the world doesn't believe this. I mean, we know the numbers in New England. We're actually on the rise in Connecticut, but when I moved here, they were about two to three percent evangelical.

[ 11 : 55 ] Okay, that's a pretty small percentage. By God's grace, the gospel is moving in this state. But most of the world doesn't believe this. And some people specifically make it their aim to discredit and disprove the reliability of Scripture.

And some of them can sound very convincing. They're very smart. They're smarter than you, probably. They're smarter than me. They're convincing. But I want to say something to you. Being a faithful Christian, this is for kids and adults, being a faithful Christian does not mean simply ignoring those voices and then sweeping things under the rug that we can't explain.

Okay? It doesn't mean turning off the rational part of our brain so we can turn up the faith part of us as if those two things are mutually exclusive.

Now, to be sure, there are times we have to say, we don't know. This is a divine mystery. Right? Because we humans are limited. We're fallible. We have a small perspective.

We're bound in time and space. And God is the infinite God. There are times we have to say that. But that doesn't mean that we have to suppress our rationality, our ability to think logically.

[ 13 : 01 ] God made us in His image to be able to do that. And so all of that, I say to say this, if you have questions or doubts, if you ever have questions or doubts about the Bible or about Christianity, one, that's normal.

Okay? Normal people have questions and doubts. Normal everyday Christians, even Christians with lots of faith, often or sometimes have questions or doubts. Don't suppress those. Bring them up to a parent.

Bring them up to a mentor, a pastor. And the chances are there are good answers to your questions. Okay? In the end, it still takes faith to believe in God and His Word.

Okay? It still takes faith. And that faith has to be granted by the Holy Spirit who opens up our eyes to see and believe the truth. But what I want to say is this isn't a blind faith.

This is actually a reasoned faith. In a God who is the God of truth. All truth is God's. Okay? And God has proven Himself eminently trustworthy in Scripture.

[14:00] Okay, that was a total aside from the passage. I hope a worthy one. And there's another instance where we aren't sure later on in this text about a number, which I'll point that out.

So I'm just taking the opportunity to speak these things to us today. But let's return to the text itself and what God has to say through it. So what are we doing here? We've been talking about key observations regarding this genealogy from Shem to Terah.

And the first being the similarities and differences from chapter 5. Now here's another key observation. Okay? The second key observation, chosen out of the nations. Chosen out of the nations.

Now what do I mean here? Anytime we're seeking to understand Scripture, a particular passage, we want to see what comes before it and what comes after it, right? What is the context of this passage? Well, we saw what comes before this chapter last week, right?

You'll remember it was the table of nations in Genesis 10. Moses giving Israel a map. These are all of the nations that have come from Noah. Okay? We had that. We had the Tower of Babel right after that.

[15:05] And so these chapters highlighted, we said last week, how from one man God made every nation, but that to a large degree those nations had defied God. They had chosen self-glory over the glory of God, worshiping and serving gods of their own making.

Okay? So that was what came before. What comes after is the call of Abraham, right? The great patriarch of Israel. God establishing his covenant with Abraham. So in light of that context, this genealogy is in the middle of that.

It's showing us how God preserved a line of promise. We've been tracing the line of promise since Genesis 3. God has preserved a line of promise even in the midst of a whole bunch of pagan nations that had rejected God as Lord.

It's showing us the family that was sovereignly chosen by God out of the nations to, as we'll see next week, become a conduit of blessing for those nations.

Hey, this family line is chosen out of the nations by God. And here's one more key observation. Decreasing life spans. As compared to Genesis 5, this genealogy eliminates the phrase, thus all the days of blank were blank years and he died.

[16:22] Remember, that was the drumbeat of chapter 5, interrupted by Enoch, but that phrase isn't here. But, that doesn't mean we're not supposed to look at the years and do some simple addition, right?

I think we are able to do that and we're able to notice decreasing life spans. Noah had lived 950 years. His son Shem here, we see in the text, if you do some math, lived 600 years.

That's a huge reduction. 950 to 600. Then his son Arpachshad, he lives 438 years. That's another huge reduction. And by the time we get to Nahor in verse 25, we're down to 148 years.

950 to 148, right? Now at this, we recall God's words in Genesis 6, verse 3. In light of the pervasive corruption of humanity before the flood, God says, so it said, the text says, then the Lord said, my spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh.

His days shall be 120 years. Now we talked about then, how God could have been referring to the timing of the impending flood but it sure also seems to correlate with an upper bound on the lifespan of men.

[17:45] I don't know anybody personally that's lived beyond 120 years. There is someone, I think in the 1900s, oldest person on record, 122 years old, I think. I think right now the oldest person is 116.

So it does seem to be kind of a cap and perhaps then what God said in Genesis 6, maybe it had the double meaning. It's predicting the flood, it's also showing us the decreasing lifespans but regardless, those decreasing lifespans which we see here in Genesis 11, they're an indication that sin and curse are still wreaking havoc on Adam's race.

We are very far removed at this point from the Garden of Eden with its tree of life. Paul says in Romans 5, 12, therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

So I just want to, I want to step back here and I want to consider the message of this genealogy in light of the observations we just made. What is the message? Now on the one hand, Jason, if you can go to the next slide, on the one hand, we see a very bleak situation.

Right? Even after God reduced humanity down to only eight people in the ark, mankind since then has multiplied following the flood. They've become nations that have spread throughout the earth but largely, as we said, ones that defy God and exalt self.

[ 19 : 17 ] And so we see that sin's pervasive corruption remains. Not only that, but death continues to reign. It's the second thing here. Death continues to reign.

It's reign with an iron fist. Right? It's not taking any prisoners. And so we need to ask here, where is the promised seed to crush the serpent from Eve?

Where is he? Where is the prophesied one who's going to bring humanity rest from its toil?

Because that's what Lamech prophesied over Noah. And that came about kind of, but not really.

And so it seems here like all hope is lost. And yet, on the other hand, this genealogy, this line of promise, it is the assurance that God's providence also remains.

God's providence. Now, in the midst of pagan nations, God has been preserving a line through the generations according to his sovereign grace, according to his sovereign choice.

[ 20 : 19 ] Through that line, he is indeed going to bring his promises to pass. And so this brings us back to our main point. Even when hope seems lost. So when we look at the details and we go digging a little bit, it's telling us that even when hope seems lost, the line doesn't seem like God's bringing Genesis 3 to pass.

He remains committed. He remains able to fulfill his promises. Alright, so we've just traveled at light speed from Shem to Terah. And then in verse 27 through 32, we sort of come out of light speed and we slow way down.

As Moses is now, he's setting the stage for the call of Abraham in chapter 12. So, second half of this, Terah's family setting the stage.

I want to re-read these verses with you. So verses 27 through 32 of Genesis 11. Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

And Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai and the name of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.

[ 21 : 33 ] Now Sarai was barren. She had no child. Terah took Abram, his son, and Lot, the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife.

And they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Okay, as in the last section, I want to start by making a few key observations. Okay, here's the first key observation I want to make. They're from Ur of the Chaldeans. That name is mentioned twice. Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram, because we know the story is getting to Abraham. Okay, and Israel receiving this from the first time from Moses, they already know their own family history. So they know what's coming. It's not like it's a big surprise.

We're getting to Abraham. Abraham, his place of origin, is Ur of the Chaldeans. Now you might, if you've read through the Old Testament, you might recognize Chaldeans as a name that would later become somewhat synonymous with Babylonians.

[ 22 : 38 ] We talked about the Babylonians a lot last week. Ur was located in Babylonia, which is ancient Mesopotamia. And it was a center, and we know this now from excavations and digging, it was a center of pagan worship.

In fact, the names Terah, Milcah, and Sarai are probably all related to the names of pagan gods and goddesses. And so it's for this reason that Joshua, when he's charging Israel later, in Joshua 24, he says, long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates.

Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor, and they served other gods. And then later he charges Israel, now therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness.

Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the river, which is the Euphrates, and in Egypt and serve the Lord. So just think about this. This is the great patriarch Abraham, his origin.

He's from a place and a family of pagan idolatry. Okay, to compound this now, we see in verse 31 that after leaving Ur of the Chaldeans, they settle in a city named Haran.

[ 23 : 54 ] So this is the second thing. They settle in Haran. Now we're not told yet why they begin a journey from Ur to the land of Canaan, but we find out in the next chapter that the Lord appears to Abraham while he's still in his home country.

So it's kind of like another flashback. God appears to Abraham while they're in Ur of the Chaldeans and he calls him to go to Canaan. And so perhaps Abraham has convinced his family to make this journey to Canaan with him.

But they don't quite make it all the way there, right? They stop short. They settle in Haran, which is another city of pagan worship to the same gods that Ur of the Chaldeans was.

And I want to ask this question. It seems to come up. There are so many connections in Genesis so I think I'll probably be asking this question every single week or something like it. Does this remind you of another group of people earlier in Genesis?

Maybe even in the same chapter that we're in who settled somewhere against God's word?

Anybody? They settle and they weren't supposed to settle.

[ 25 : 02 ] the people of Babel. Some people are saying Babel. The people of Babel. Look at verse 2 of chapter 11. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

They settled there. Do you think Moses is trying to make a link here? I do. Just like Cain in Genesis 4 had settled.

He wasn't supposed to. People of Babel, now we have Abram's family settling. Guys, this is the origin of the great patriarch of Israel, Abraham.

Abraham would later be known as a friend of God, highly revered throughout Israel's history. This is the patriarch, the beginning of the nation of Israel and all the promises and all the covenants.

This is him. He's born into a pagan family who moves from one pagan city to another pagan city.

And so we see here, I think we're supposed to see Abram is slow to trust the Lord.

[ 26 : 05 ] Abram, Abraham, great man. If you didn't know, if you haven't been around the Bible a lot, Abram has his name changed to Abraham. We're going to see that later. So I'm using both names here.

Here's the third observation. The line is fading. The line is fading. In verse 28, we see that one of Terah's sons, Haran, dies in Ur of the Chaldeans.

In verse 31, we're able to deduce that for whatever reason, Terah's other son, Nahor, stays behind in Ur and doesn't join Terah, Lot, Abram, and Sarai on the journey to Canaan.

So he's staying behind. He'll come back into the story or his family line later, but right now, he stays behind. Haran dies. In verse 32, we learn that Terah also dies. Now on that, real briefly, if you look at verse 32, Terah's age at death actually poses another problem in the text.

I hinted to this before. If according to verse 26, Terah is 70 when he fathers his sons, and if he dies according to verse 32 at 205, if you do the math, that makes Abram 135 years old when he leaves Haran for Canaan.

[ 27 : 19 ] But that does not jive with the narrative to follow, which says that he's 75. And so we have, again, we have another textual problem, and different solutions have been proposed, and the one that seems most logical is that this was another scribal error.

Okay, the Hebrew scriptures were copied meticulously, year after, or generation after generation, but they made errors. And it's possible that Terah's age at death was actually 145 years, which then makes Abram 75.

And that age is contained in the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch. But, okay, I say all that just to say again, to point back to what I said earlier. This is another one of those examples where people might, you know, point and laugh and say, ha, see, like, you can't trust the Bible, you can't trust that it's truly the divinely inspired word of God, and we Christians can look at it and say, how incredible that the only errors that we find in scripture have logical explanations and in no way alter the message of the book.

How incredible that a book written by 40 different authors spanning 1,500 years can be so consistent, so coherent, and so preserved over millennia.

Okay, this is the divinely inspired word of God. Back to the text here. So, Haran dies, Nahor stays behind, Terah dies, and to further compound things, we learn right in the center of this passage, now this passage is another chiasmic structure, and the center point is, now Sarai was barren, she had no child.

[ 28 : 55 ] Now Sarai was barren, she had no child. The repetition, it's saying the same thing twice, the repetition is underscoring the reality of Sarai's barrenness, which as one commentator writes, is effectively a metaphor for hopelessness.

The promise is a seed through a line that line comes to an end, where is the promise? Sarai's inability to have children, as we'll see, it's going to drive the whole narrative after this.

And so, it seems like a coffin, it seems like a nail in the coffin on God's promises. Okay, so let's step back again, and just consider what is the message of this little story here, verses 27 to 32, that on the surface kind of seem meaningless.

What's the message? We again have at our hands a very bleak situation. The family of promise is steeped in pagan idolatry.

People are dying. Sarai is barren. Right? Like, all hope seems lost. And yet, Israel, again, who is receiving this message from Moses, that story had been passed down from generations, they already know how the story goes.

[ 30 : 07 ] They already know what's about to happen in Genesis 12. And so when they read this, they see that this bleak, seemingly hopeless situation becomes the context for God working His power to continue on that line of promise.

Okay, if you could put those next two things up there. This bleak situation is the context. And so again, they know that even when hope seems lost, God remains committed and able.

God who is, as we've been saying, the life-giving, promise-keeping God, that God, He remains committed and able to fulfill His promises. And so I just want to ask this morning, brothers and sisters, do you believe that this morning?

Does this reality, which has been etched in stone over history, does that impact the way that you live your life today? Does it make a difference even in your own circumstances of life that God, even in unlikely circumstances, remains graciously committed and powerfully able to fulfill His promises to His people?

This is a timeless truth that is relevant to the people of God in every age and in every generation. God is going to foretell to Abraham in just a few chapters how His descendants will be afflicted for 400 years in a land not theirs, Genesis 15, 13.

[ 31 : 35 ] Israel's going to be enslaved in Egypt for generations, 400 years. All hope is going to seem lost to that enslaved Israelite people.

And they will need to be reminded of this truth over and over again. God had not abandoned His promises to Israel. God had not even been thwarted by men, including Pharaoh.

He remained committed. He remained able to fulfill His promises. And in His timing, we read in the book of Exodus, God worked a mighty salvation for the people of Israel. Hundreds of years later, the people of God find themselves back in Babylon.

Right? They go into exile because of their sin. Jerusalem is ravaged. The people of God are carried away. And then decade after decade pass by. They're in exile.

It seems as though God's promises are ended. Right? It seems as though all hope is lost. But God reminds Israel through the prophetic writing, through the prophets that minister, that He actually remains committed to them.

[ 32 : 41 ] He actually remains able to deliver them. And He brings about another great deliverance. And the people of God return back to the city of Jerusalem and they rebuild the city walls and they rebuild the temple.

But then hundreds of years go by after that. many of the promises spoken in the prophets remain unfulfilled. And Israel remains almost constantly in subjection under foreign rulers.

And so again, they're forced to ask, has God forsaken us? Has He forgotten His promises? Or are these powerful empires of men thwarting His plan?

God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

God was not outmatched by men nor by the devil. God had not abandoned His promises promises to His people. In His perfect timing, He came down.

[ 33 : 56 ] And He came down in order to bring His promises from of old to fulfillment in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. All hope had seemed lost for the people of God.

But it was never lost. It was never lost. And friends, as Jesus hung on the cross and breathed His last and was buried in the tomb, all hope seemed forever lost again.

The plot of the Jews, the betrayal of Judas, the spinelessness of Pilate, all of those things seemed to be wielded by Satan to stop God's plan dead in its tracks.

But when you go up against God, you lose ten times out of ten. God wielded the wicked schemes of men and of the devil to bring about salvation for the world.

And that was proven beyond a shadow of a doubt when Jesus Christ victoriously rose from the grave three days later. Brothers and sisters, even when hope seems lost, God remains committed and able to fulfill His promises.

[ 35 : 03 ] And we have this truth made more sure in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And you know, what's more is that every believer in Jesus has a story to tell that further underscores this truth.

And it goes something like this. There I was, living in Ur of the Chaldeans, worshiping foreign gods. I didn't know it, but from an outside perspective, all hope seemed lost.

I was living in defiance of the one true God. I was living for self-glory rather than His. I was blindly headed towards hell. But God. Every testimony has a But God moment.

He called my name. He cured me of my blindness. For the first time, I was able to see the depth of my sin and how I needed a Savior and how Jesus Christ is that Savior.

Jesus, for whom my sake died and was raised. So I repented of my sin. And I believed in His name. And now I'm a child of God by grace, forgiven, redeemed, adopted, destined for an eternity in heaven.

[ 36 : 15 ] Brothers and sisters, that is your story and mine. Is it not? For each of us, humanly speaking, all hope was lost. But the God who had set us apart by grace from eternity past, He would not fail to call us to Himself and to raise our dead hearts to life in Christ.

Christ. And so here, here's the first of a few practical points of application. Remember, saints, remember your call in the gospel. Remember your call in the gospel.

Now, I don't mean what God has called you to. I mean how God called you by grace out of sin and into righteousness by faith. I mean how God transferred you from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son, Colossians 1.13.

I mean how you were once far off but have now been brought near by the blood of Christ, Ephesians 2.12 and 13. Friends, I mean remember continually amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. Saints, we need to remind ourselves of our calling in the gospel.

[ 37 : 34 ] Our story of salvation, our testimony. Do you know your testimony? That's why we have, when people come into membership here, we have them share their testimony with us, the elders, and then we have them share it with the whole church.

And this does three things. This does a lot of, when we remember our calling in the gospel, this does a lot of things but three things I want to highlight. First of all, when we remember our calling in the gospel, it exalts God's grace.

Exalts God's grace. Again, we were just talking in Galatians that the gospel is radical. It says that you were a sinner. You were lost. You were dead. You could do nothing of your own to merit salvation but Jesus Christ paid for your sin on the cross and he called you to his name.

That exalts the grace of God. You have nothing to boast in except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remembering your calling in the gospel it exalts God's grace.

Do you think Abraham went around saying, look at what I've done to establish this? Abraham was called by grace. He was called by grace. Here's the second thing.

[ 38 : 44 ] It humbles us before God and others. Now perhaps this is why Moses was called the most humble man on earth. He did not think that he was capable of leading the nation of Israel.

He wasn't. But God had called him to it and God empowered him to do it. When we remember our calling in the gospel it humbles us before God and before others.

Again, what does Mike Lusa have to boast in? Nothing except Christ. That's it. He's my only boast. That puts us all on the same playing field.

The ground is level at the foot of the cross. It humbles us before God and others. Here's the third thing that it does. It increases our assurance. Think about this.

Just like God called Abraham out of a life of pagan idolatry and then gave him the promises. God has called us out of something.

[ 39 : 44 ] While we were sinners it says Christ died for us. Not while we were pretty good people that mostly did good things and God thought we were worth dying for because of those righteous deeds of ours.

No, no, no. While we were sinners, enemies, weak, ungodly. Romans 5. He died for us. Saints, if God called you in that state he looked at you and said you're a sinner.

You don't deserve this but I love you and I'm going to come die on the cross on your behalf. That gives you assurance. It's not because of anything you did that he called your name and it's not anything that you do that will keep you in his name or take you out of his name.

This increases our assurance when you doubt. Go to the gospel. Remember what Jesus has done to call you from eternity past into his name, into his kingdom. Remember your call in the gospel, saints.

Here's the second thing that we see from this passage. Resist the temptation to settle in Haran. Resist the temptation to settle in Haran.

[ 40 : 53 ] Now faith is the evidence, Josh quoted this this morning, faith is the evidence of things unseen. Hebrews 11.1 But all day, every day, I am seen with my physical eyes.

And you are too, right? We are drawn to pursue the things that we see and we we need to remember the lesson of Babel that we talked about last week. That in the end, proud, self-seeking Babylon will be destroyed.

And so first, I want to offer a call to those here who may have not given their lives to Jesus Christ by faith. Don't settle for worldly pursuits. Don't settle for worldly pursuits.

You know, in Jesus' parable of the sower, he warns that there's going to be those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

Friends, the things of this world, they provide no lasting hope, no lasting fulfillment, no lasting satisfaction. Jesus calls us to seek first his kingdom and then he's going to take care of our earthly physical needs.

[ 42 : 01 ] But lasting hope, lasting fulfillment, lasting satisfaction, those are found only in God through Christ. In him, in him alone, David says, his fullness of joy, pleasures forevermore.

But I also want to offer a call to professing believers because it is, it's so easy for us to be lured to settle in Haran, right, to become distracted with the things of this world.

Jesus says that his disciples are to be in the world but not of the world. And the reality is the more of the world we are, the less useful to Christ we will be in building his kingdom and the more dangerous our position becomes.

What do I mean by that? Well, this danger, I think, is captured very well by C.S. Lewis in his book, The Screwtape Letters. If you haven't read that book, I would highly encourage you, we don't have that one on the back table, but I highly encourage you to read or listen to that book.

It's an imaginative correspondence between an older demon named Screwtape and his nephew, Wormwood. And Screwtape is advising Wormwood basically on how to tempt and to bring to spiritual ruin his human patience.

[ 43 : 21 ] Now, in one of these letters, after describing a myriad of ways that Wormwood can subtly distract his patient towards basically nothing at all, nothing meaningful, he writes this, you will say that these are, remember, this is a demon talking to a demon, okay?

You will say that these are very small sins, and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the enemy.

The enemy of the demon is God, okay? So enemy is God. It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the light and out into the nothing.

Murder is no better than cards, if cards can do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to hell is the gradual one, the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

Now, I'm not at all suggesting that you can lose your salvation. But to be sure, and scripture warns against this, there are those who profess faith in Christ, who attend church every Sunday, yet in reality possess no saving faith.

[ 44 : 43 ] And they're on that gentle, gradual road to hell, distracted by a million nothings that are keeping them from pursuing the Lord. Lord, saints of God, let's instead be those who are diligent to make their calling and election sure.

Let's be those who devote ourselves to the Lord. Let's be those who forsake the fleeting pleasures of this world and make ourselves useful to the Master for the good works that He has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Remember your call in the gospel. Resist the temptation to settle in Haran and finally, trust and hope in the waiting. Trust and hope in the waiting.

Moses was showing Israel here the very unlikely beginnings of their nation. How humanly speaking all hope had seemed lost.

Yet, how God remained committed and able to fulfill His promises. As we saw, they would need to remember that in so many seasons of their history and so do we.

[ 45 : 54 ] So do we. Because we endure seasons in our own lives in which it seems like all hope is lost. Maybe you're in a season like that.

Maybe you're in a trial like that. You're waiting on God for deliverance and you wonder, does God really care? Does God really see me? Is God really able to bring about the things that He's promised?

There's so many promises in Scripture. I sat reflecting, what are some of the key promises that we have in Scripture? And there's so many of them. One that we love, that we cling to, is Romans 8, 28, that God is working all things, all things, all things for the good of those who love Him.

There's a promise that we are tempted to disbelieve when life is hard, when waiting endures on, when there is pain. Is God really working this for my good?

We've talked from 1 Corinthians 1, 9, God promises that He will sustain us faithful to the end. It's God's sustaining power. Can I really get through this?

[ 47 : 04 ] Will He really do that? Here's one that He says over and over again in Scripture, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

That's a promise of God to His people. We could go on and on. There are so many good promises. Maybe one more in Isaiah 41. God says that He will strengthen us, He will help us, He will uphold us with His righteous right hand.

Those promises are for us. We are the people of God. We're tempted to disbelieve in these promises, but we know the truth that God is committed, God is able to fulfill these promises.

Right? And Paul would say that, and the New Testament shows us that in those seasons of waiting and of wondering, what God is trying to do is to strengthen trust. Paul says, again in Romans 5, that in our sufferings, Paul says we can rejoice.

Why can we rejoice? Because God is doing something in our hearts. He's forging something. He's forging endurance and character and hope. That's what He's doing in the pain, in the difficulties of life.

[ 48 : 20 ] God is doing a work in us, and He wants us to cling to His promises, to deepen our trust and our faith in Him. Now on a macro level, all of us, no matter what season that we're in in our lives, are waiting for something.

We're waiting for the ultimate fulfillment of the promises of the hope of righteousness. In Galatians 5, we saw Christ has ascended.

He's promised to return and to make all things new, but it's been 2,000 years since that happened. Romans 8, Paul says, and not only the creation, the creation's groaning, not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies, for in this hope we were saved.

Now hope that is seen is not hope. It's where faith comes in. For who hopes for what he sees, but if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

In the waiting, and I pray, I pray that Christ returns in my lifetime. I pray that he comes back and he ends this life of bondage to the old man and the violence that we see in this world and makes all things new, but until then, we're going to cling to the promises of God.

[ 49 : 51 ] We know that he's coming again. We know he's coming. We cling to that. He's committed to that. He is able to bring about the fulfillment of those promises, even when it doesn't seem like it to us.

Friends, far more than the nation of Israel, we have every reason to trust and to hope in God in our waiting because of the cross and the empty tomb.

Even when hope seems lost, God remains committed and able to fulfill his promises. Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, for this message seen in an unlikely passage, which highlights the message all the more.

Lord, would you fill the people of God in this room with trust and with hope and would you help us, Lord, to revel in your grace that you have brought about the fulfillment of your promises.

We have seen that chiefly in Christ, in the gospel of Christ and you're going to come again and bring all of the promises to full and final fulfillment. We await that day.

[ 51 : 01 ] We long for that day. We say, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. And until then, we wait in hope. We wait in hope, Lord Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.