

God's Call to Abram

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Preacher: Mike Loosa

[0 : 00] Please turn to your Bibles, to Genesis 12.1, our sermon text for today. If you need a Bible, you're welcome to take one off the back table and keep it as a gift to you.

Genesis 12.1 Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great.

So that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

So Abram went as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sari, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran.

And they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Jechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

[1 : 14] Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring I will give this land. So he built there an altar to the Lord, who appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of the Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai in the east.

And there he built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negev. This is the word of the Lord. God, we just pray one more time.

As we come to this text this morning, that you would speak to us. God, that we would have hearts that are softened by your Spirit to receive this word. Lord, plant this truth deep into our hearts.

And use it, Father, by your Spirit to bear fruit. Making us more like Christ. Increasing our faith. Helping us to cling to the promises that we just sang about.

And heard, already read from your word. God, do this all for your everlasting glory, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, good morning, church. Seems extra full in here this morning.

[2 : 28] So if you're new here, I just want to welcome you to Shoreline Community Bible Church. I pray that you've already been ministered to by the reading of the word and the singing of the word.

I know I've been ministered to already. So I just want to welcome you this morning. I've been going through Scripture in my devotions this year. And I came to 2 Peter just yesterday.

And Peter says in 2 Peter 1 verse 4 that God has granted to us his precious and very great promises. If you were here last week, we ended last week rehearsing some of these glorious promises.

Some that we've sung about this morning. Like how God is working all things for the good of those who love him. Romans 8.28. Like how he will never leave us or forsake us.

Hebrews 13.15. Like how Christ is coming again to renew all things as we see in Revelation 21. But if you're like me, you need continual reminders of these things.

[3 : 29] Because the thing is that our hearts, amid the difficulties of life, lose sight of or lose hope in these promises. Now perhaps you left last week greatly encouraged by the point that God remains committed and able to fulfill his promises.

But then Monday came. And with it, the toils of work, the stress of responsibility, trials of health, conflict in relationships, unmet expectations, uncertainties in your future, national and international unrest, and on and on we could go.

And by Tuesday, those promises seemed distant and difficult to believe. The righteous, Paul says in Romans 1.17, shall live by faith.

By faith. I hope that today as we consider God's call of Abram, that you and I this morning will be stirred up in our spirits to renewed faith in light of the grandeur and the certainty of God's promises.

So if you haven't already, please turn in your Bibles to Genesis 12, 1 through 9 as we consider today. And here's the main point for today. How God calls us, like Abram, to a life of faith in his word and promises, which find their fulfillment in Jesus.

[4 : 51] God calls us, like Abram, to a life of faith in his word and promises, which find their fulfillment in Jesus. Now we have arrived, we've been walking through the book of Genesis this year, we arrive today at a great pivot in the narrative of Genesis, and really in all of redemptive history.

God's call of Abram, God's covenant that he establishes with Abram, which we'll see expounded on over the next many weeks in this book. Now the significance of these events is seen pretty readily, just simply in the sheer amount of material given to them.

Consider this, Genesis chapter 1 through 11, it covers around 2,000 years of history. Genesis 12 through 22, the next 11 chapters, covers 25.

25 years of history in these next grouping of chapters. Now in many ways, Genesis 1 through 11, it's a prologue to what follows in all of the Bible. It's laid the foundation of so much theology.

We've seen the foundation of God being the very good creator, who has made a very good creation by the word of his power. We've seen mankind, our worth and our purpose before God.

[6 : 04] We saw the fall of man in the garden. The devastating effects of sin, which incurred the curse and the wrath of God. And yet alongside God's judgment for sin, we've seen his unthinkable mercy to commit himself to redeem what fallen man lost through sin.

Now this was seen in an epic proportion in the global flood. But now following the flood, we've seen how the earth has been once again repopulated. The nations have spread abroad, but humanity stands in as great a need as ever of salvation.

And so we come to Genesis 12 verse 1. Now the Lord said to Abram. Here's the first thing in today's text.

It's the call. It's the call. Now does anyone know the last time in Genesis that God spoke to men?

The last time. It was ten generations ago when God spoke to Noah.

And God established his covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. And with all the living creatures. Which, by the way, is our next group of memory verses. Genesis 9, 12 through 15. So take a look at that in the weekly email.

[7 : 17] The speaking forth of God. Is God choosing to graciously reveal himself to humanity?

Okay? And before the fall, we saw that before the fall of man, Adam and Eve enjoyed this ongoing fellowship with the Lord.

God continually revealing himself to them. Communicating to them. Walking with them in the garden. And then sin drove a wedge between that relationship. Right? Between God and man. But we saw how God in grace, he remained committed to humanity.

Committed to continue to reveal himself even to fallen creatures. And so, as we consider this call of Abraham, we need to first see this as a sign of grace.

This is a call of grace. Now, it's grace all the more because it's not only God choosing to reveal himself. It's God taking divine initiative to advance redemptive history.

If you were here in November walking through our vision for the church, the first E of our vision is that we have been established by God, who we said is the great initiator of creation and redemption.

[8 : 29] And repeatedly throughout Genesis, we've seen how God, under absolutely no obligation whatsoever, a phrase I keep using, he created all things. And then under no obligation whatsoever, God acted in mercy and in grace to redeem what fallen man lost through sin.

And we've seen evidence of that divine mercy in every, literally every single chapter of this book. But there's one more aspect of this grace that I want to point out.

This isn't just grace and redemption on a grand scale. It's also grace specifically towards Abram. Now, the Lord said to Abram, God in grace is revealing himself to Abram.

He's calling Abram. He's offering Abram these lofty and amazing promises. A call of grace. And what is the nature of this call? Look in your Bibles.

God says, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. Notice how God is calling Abram away from something and also towards something else.

[9 : 40] It's a call, as Derek Kidner observes, both to forsake and to follow. To forsake and to follow. So first, the next thing we see here is a call to forsake.

A call to forsake. Now, we learned last week that Abram was from Ur of the Chaldeans. It was a city in Mesopotamia, a pagan city. And we saw how Abram's father, Terah, and his family, they leave Ur, and they journey towards Canaan on this long journey, and they stop and settle in Haran. And so, chapter 12 is actually a flashback. This is God's call of Abram that he receives while still in his homeland, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And God is calling Abram to abandon everything that he's known.

Think about this. His home city, his home country, his family if necessary, and most certainly his family's pagan gods. All the things in which Abram found his identity formerly, right?

The security and the safety of his home and his country and the protection that he had there. The people and the places that he knows and that he loves. He's calling him to forsake all.

[10:48] Leave them behind. But this is also a call to follow. Abram isn't just leaving everything to go nowhere, right? He's leaving everything to go to the land that I will show you.

God is calling Abram to forsake the things in which he's rooted his identity and instead to root his identity in the Lord and to follow where God is leading in faith.

Now, I don't know about you, but I think those are pretty vague directions that God gives to Abram. Go to the land that I will show you. When I'm going somewhere, I really like to know where I'm going and exactly how I'm getting there.

Now, my wife is in Shorley and kids, so she can't vouch for this, but if we're in the car and I'm driving, I really don't like it if she has the Google Maps on her phone and I can't see where I'm going.

I mean, it's like some trust exercise in our marriage, I guess, and I fail the test, but I like to have the directions up in front of me so I can see what turns to make and when.

[11:52] Imagine this here. God is calling Abram away from his land, to the land that I will show you. Abram doesn't actually know exactly where he's going. This would take great faith for Abram to respond obediently to this call.

Great surrender. Friends, God has placed a similar call on each of your lives this morning. It's not necessarily a call to leave your place of origin and go to a foreign land, but it indeed is a call to forsake the things of this world, the things in which we naturally root our identities and to instead root our identity in Christ, in God, and to follow him in faith.

And you might say, yeah, okay, Mike, I'm not sure what voices you're hearing, but God certainly hasn't spoken to me like that. But friends, he has. He has.

He has spoken decisively in his word, the Bible, in which he calls each one of us to the same call. When you might say, well, Mike, that's well and good, but I want more proof than that.

And friends, one of the greatest miracles of all time was that the eternal word of God became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth, John 1.14.

[13:16] You might say, well, that sounds nice and all, Mike, but I want evidence today. I want God to speak to me today. Friends, not only is the word and the gospel speaking today, but you also have the evidence of the church, the body of Christ, which is a living, breathing testimony and has been for the last 2,000 years to the reality of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus tells a parable in Luke 16 of a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus. Maybe you remember this parable. The rich man dies and goes to hell. The poor man goes to heaven after he dies.

And the rich man begs Abraham in heaven to send the poor man Lazarus to bring something to cool his tongue. And Abraham says, I'm sorry, but a great chasm has been fixed between me and you.

And so the rich man pleads then with Abraham and says, well then, can you please send Lazarus to warn my living brothers of the torments of hell? He reasons that if someone goes to them from the dead, they would repent, surely.

And Abraham says, they have Moses and the prophets. In other words, they have the word of God. They have the word of God. If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

[14:40] Friends, hear and heed the word of God that has been preserved in the pages of scripture, that has come to us in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, that is still visible today in the body of Christ, his church, hear and answer that call this morning to forsake the ways of this world and to instead follow Christ.

And brothers and sisters, I want to say many of you have forsaken the fleeting pleasures of this world and continue to do so in order to follow Christ. Some of you have given up former lifestyles of addiction or of sexual indulgence.

Some of you are mocked and ridiculed by your family and by your friends for your faith in Jesus. Some of you have given up job opportunities, promotions, the potential for sports success because of your governing commitment to pursue Christ.

And each and every day, new opportunities arise for us to forsake the things of this world and to follow the Savior who for our sakes died and was raised to life.

And friends, he's calling us each new day, saints, to follow him in faith. Right? He's holding the phone, so to speak, with the Google Maps.

[15:57] He's asking us to trust him as he tells us step by step where to go. Right? None of us in this room knows what will happen even tomorrow.

And some of us in this room right now, some people here are in greater seasons of uncertainty in which the unknown future, it's a scary thing.

But church, we follow in faith because we know that the one who calls is faithful. He's faithful. And we follow in faith because we know that even though we have no clue what our lives hold even two days from now, we have an eternal destination.

This is the same one that Abraham was looking forward to. As we're told in Hebrews 11, verse 10, he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

God has called us saints to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus. It requires us to forsake and to follow, but it is so worth it. And this becomes even more clear in the next verses of our passage.

[17:06] So we come to, secondly, the promises. We had the call. Now, the promises. So look there in your Bibles at verses 2 and 3. God speaking to Abram, The vastness and grandeur of these promises is astounding.

It's astounding. Symbolizing completeness, there are seven distinct promises in these two verses. We're going to look briefly at each of them. But before we do that, I want us to notice, who is doing all the action in these promises?

I will make. I will bless. I will bless. I will curse. It's God. And so the first thing we again see is divine initiative. These are promises of divine initiative.

We again see God is the great initiator of redemption. God is sovereignly, providentially advancing history according, Ephesians 3.11, to the gracious purposes of his will.

But also notice all the you's and the yours. All right, every one of these seven promises contains a you or a your. These promises are indeed as wide as the families, all the families of the earth, and yet, they are centered on this one man, Abram, and his offspring.

[18:42] This is a significant step change in God's redemptive program for the world. Now, in one sense, ever since the promise of Genesis 3.15, we've been following the line of Eve's offspring, right?

We've been tracing this one line. But in another sense, there is this divine narrowing that's taking place. So that's the second thing. These are promises of divine narrowing. This great focusing in on Abram is taking place here in Genesis 12.

The promises and the blessing of God will from now on be found only in and through, only in connection with this one man, Abram, and his offspring.

So I want us to look at each of these seven promises in turn. We come third to the divine promises. The first one, I will make of you a great nation.

Can you imagine for a second, Abram, we don't know exactly how old he is when he receives this call, but we do know that he's 75 years old when he leaves Haran and goes down to the land of Canaan.

[19:46] Imagine that. You're old, you have no children, your wife is barren, and God is promising to turn you into a great nation.

Second, he says, I will bless you. I will bless you. Now, if you've been with us in our time in Genesis, that word bless, it ought to stand out.

It's an all-important word. Now, remember how we've defined blessing in the past. Blessing is the bestowing of God's divine favor and goodness upon mankind for our ultimate well-being.

That's what blessing means in Scripture. We were made to live under God's blessing. Right? We saw this in the creation account. In the presence of God, under his blessing and his favor, living in

right relation to him, but then we lost that.

We lost that blessing in the garden. And yet, in grace, God has continued to make a way for us to enjoy that blessing. Now, most recently, we saw the blessing forfeited again at Babel.

[20 : 54] Right? The people of Babel wanted to do their own thing, make a name for themselves, and they largely severed themselves. The nations of the earth have largely been severed from God and his blessing. But now, here in Genesis 12, God is choosing to once again bestow his blessing upon mankind and specifically upon Abram.

That word bless or blessing, it has shown up five times in Genesis. It shows up five times right here in verses 2 and 3. I will, this is the third promise, I will make your name great.

I will make your name great. Now, a great name, what does that signify? It signifies fame. It signifies being well regarded. Do you recall who only a chapter ago was after a great name?

I just quoted it. The people of Babel. Right? They said, come let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens and let us make a name for ourselves.

The people of Babel sought after a great name in their own way and yet, we don't remember any of their names today. All we remember is their legacy of pride and of shame.

[22 : 03] If Abram's name is to be great, Victor Hamilton writes, it will not be because of any self-initiated effort. The great name will be a gift, not an achievement.

And God says that he will make his name great so that, number four, you will be a blessing. Abram will not only be blessed by God, but he will be blessed by God for a purpose.

Right? To pass on God's blessing to others. He is to multiply the blessing. Right? The life-giving goodness of God that is poured on him. He is to spread that to mankind.

Was that not our creation intent? In Genesis chapter 1, it will now be realized in Abram. As Bruce Waltke states, God blesses Abraham to be his blessing bearer.

Number five, I will bless those who bless you. I will bless those who bless you. Now again, notice this divine focusing in, this narrowing on Abram.

[23 : 08] Previously, blessing was to be found in connection only with God. And now, blessing is also found in connection with Abraham. Just as a side note, I've been using Abram and Abraham.

Abram's name is going to get changed to Abraham. So if I use both of those, it's because it's the same person, just so you know. Number six, him who dishonors you, I will curse. So we see the opposite is also true.

Those who bless you will be blessed. Him who dishonors you, I will curse. Now that's another key word in the book of Genesis. The word curse. It began with God's declaration to the serpent in the garden.

Cursed are you, he said, God said to the serpent. To be cursed, it's to receive the wrath and the judgment of God rather than his blessing. Cain too was also cursed in Genesis 4.

Then Ham's son, Canaan, in Genesis 9. So we've seen this curse, the curse of God, it falls on those who reject God, who rebel against God's ways and his word.

[24 : 12] And we've seen that it identifies someone as being part of the seed of the serpent. You're aligning yourself not with God but with the devil and that's what this curse shows. And so what's going on here though in Genesis 12, God's curse will also fall on those who dishonor Abram.

Those who treat Abram with contempt will be cursed. And so in these two promises we see these great themes of blessing and of cursing are now finding their locusts in a person, in God's representative on earth, Abram.

Then comes the seventh and the most sweeping of the promises. In you, Abraham, in you, all families of the earth shall be blessed.

Now remember the map that Moses drew back in chapter 10. We saw all the families of the earth representatively. This family tree of the human race and so we're supposed to be thinking about that chapter and all those nations that we saw.

And actually the Hebrew word rendered here as families, it's the same one that was rendered as clans five different times back in chapter 10. God is here promising that all those peoples, all those nations, the ones that are now scattered abroad to the ends of the earth because of the rebellion at Babel.

[25 : 37] Those nations shall experience the blessing of God in Abram that is in connection with Abram. I mean, what a lofty promise that is.

So those are the seven divine promises given to Abraham in God's initial call here in verses 2 and 3. But I do want to mention one more promise. Now it was sort of implied in verse 1 but it's made explicit down in verse 7.

And so, look in your Bibles of verse 7. After Abram obeys God and he sojourns to the land of Canaan, we read this. Then the Lord appeared to Abram.

Now that's a big theme in Genesis. God's appearing. God appears to Abram. We don't know how but he shows up somehow and God says, to your offspring I will give this land.

This land of Canaan. To your offspring I will give this land. And Moses tells us right before that that at that time the Canaanites were in the land. It's an enemy occupied territory.

[26 : 39] Abram is passing through like an exile and a foreigner but God's declaring that this very land now occupied by the cursed Canaanites will one day belong to him, to his offspring, to his seed.

Now these eight promises can essentially be grouped into three kind of themes. We see land, seed, and blessing. Land, seed, and blessing.

God promises Abram a land, right? The land of Canaan to belong to his descendants. God promises Abram seed that is offspring one day becoming even a nation, a great nation.

God promises Abram blessing. Now this certainly would include the land and the seed but it's more than that. It is, as Brad was praying over us, it's the face and the favor of God we read in Psalm 67. Being ever towards him and his offspring. It's God's presence, God's protection, it's prosperity. Now we're going to see these themes recurring because as we progress through the narrative of Genesis, we're going to see the land, seed, and blessing promises confirmed and then expounded and even beginning to be fulfilled.

[27 : 52] We're going to see people who bless Abram being blessed. People who curse Abram being cursed. We're going to see the promises passed down from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Jacob's 12 sons which eventually after the Exodus becomes the 12 tribes of a great nation.

And in the book of Joshua we will finally see the nation of Israel after hundreds of years of waiting drive out the Canaanites and inherit the promised land.

we'll even see distant nations of the earth being blessed in and through Israel. But as you read through the Old Testament we never really come to an aha!

We've finally arrived kind of moment. Sin and rebellion persist. Death continues to have the final word. Enemies remain in the land.

Faith waxes and wanes. Israel's blessed impact on the nations is modest at best really. More often non-existent. If the whole world is to be blessed through the line of Abraham if the promised seed of Eve come to bruise the serpent and undo the curse if that's supposed to take place by the end of the book of Malachi the end of the Old Testament we're still waiting and hoping for fulfillment.

[29 : 17] But saints for us we know that fulfillment has come in the person and work of Christ. And so Matthew's gospel the very first words of the New Testament say this the book of the genealogy that's how the headers of all of Genesis sound very similar the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David the son of Abraham Matthew 1.1 And what's more he is at the same time the son of God.

He's the son of God who took on flesh becoming like us that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death that is the devil and deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

He is the promised seed of Eve the offspring of Abraham come to crush the serpent undo the curse and bring salvation and blessing to Israel and to the nations.

and the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles that's us that's the nations of the earth that God would justify them by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying and you shall all the nations be blessed so then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith.

It's Galatians 3.8.9 Do you hear what Paul is saying? That's the apostle Paul. Paul is saying that right here in Genesis 12.3 the gospel of Jesus Christ is being preached to Abraham by God.

[30 : 54] God is pointing towards something towards fulfillment the fulfillment of these majestic promises in Jesus. Friends by repenting of your sin and trusting in Christ who again for your sake died and was raised you become part of this gospel fulfillment of God's promises made to Abraham you become among the nations blessed in Abraham's offspring which is Christ.

The gospel doesn't actually stop there. Okay Paul in Galatians takes this even further for he argues that not only are we blessed in Abraham though that is certainly true we also listen to this we become sons of Abraham we become heirs of the promises made to him by faith in Jesus listen to Paul's astounding words Galatians 3 27-29 for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither slave nor free there is no male and female for you are all one in Christ Jesus and if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring heirs according to promise if you believe in Jesus Christ then you are a child of Abraham the offspring of Abraham the true offspring of Abraham there are ethnic offspring the true offspring of Abraham we learn in scripture are those who possess the same saving faith in God that he did and friends this is the great mystery of the Old Testament now revealed in Christ as Paul describes in Ephesians 3-6 this mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel so friends let me say it again if you have not done so

I urge you today to repent of your sin to forsake the ways of this world and to trust in and to follow Jesus Christ and if you do then you become a child of Abraham and a partaker of the promises made to him all the promises of God find their yes and amen in Jesus Christ 2 Corinthians 1-10 now for those who have already done that for the saints of God for the children of Abraham be encouraged by the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 10 29-31 Jesus said truly I say to you there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life saints rest assured that if you've forsaken all to follow Christ the blessings promised to Abraham indeed become yours forevermore forevermore now I also want us to consider the so that that we saw in verse 2

God will make Abram's name great so that he would be a blessing even to all the families of the earth now church that is our purpose and calling today still to spread and to multiply the blessing that we've received in Christ to the world around us even unto the ends of the earth now how do we do that first we do that in word we do that by being a people on gospel mission a people who are earnestly engaged in the great commission work that Christ has called us to to evangelize the lost to the ends of the earth we are to be God's coast guard I heard this week that the coast guard really rocks apparently that's what Donald Trump said in his commencement speech but we're to be God's coast guard right sent out to to hold out the lifeline of the gospel to drowning souls that they might receive Christ and be saved and then they themselves become the offspring of Abraham and heirs of the promises and church that work it requires us to go no further than our homes our neighborhoods our workplaces our communities we are right now exiles in a foreign land we are among the nations and God has placed us here God has placed shoreline here sovereignly so that we would be blessing bearers going with the gospel of Jesus Christ you know I'm listening through the biography right now of William Carey William Carey was perhaps the best known Baptist missionary and he's regarded as the father of modern missions he grew up in North Antin England in a small town and I won't tell his whole story because I encourage you to listen to it but God called him he showed him from his word at the time there was this sort of hyper Calvinist idea that God would save the heathen as they called him if God wanted to but

[36 : 22] William Carey studied the word of God and he saw the call of God in the great commission and his life had a calling to go to the nations and so he forsook all everything that he knew in England and he went to India to this foreign land that he knew very little about though he had studied a ton he had no clue what awaited him and he gave up all and he translated the Bible into like six different languages and he set in motion not only the gospel work in India but really spurred on generations since the call of the gospel I encourage you to read and to listen to missionary biographies they're inspiring they're compelling that's what God's called us to do and again you don't have to go to the nations to do that we are among the nations but God might also call some of us to go far and wide for the gospel we do that in word we be blessing bearers in word we also do it in deed we do that by being a church being a people overflowing in mercy people who are extending the same self giving sacrificial love that

Christ showed us extending that to the world around us okay so we've considered the call how we too have been called by God like Abram we've considered the promises how we become partakers and heirs of these promises in Christ and now let's finally consider the journey we've only covered

three of nine verses but these will go faster now as the reformers articulated we are saved by faith alone but faith that saves is never alone now this is what James argues in James 2:17 when he says that by that that faith by itself if it does not have works is dead right genuine faith is always accompanied and proven by our works and so in verses four through nine we see visible tangible evidence of Abram's faith in God's word and promises and this faith primarily looks like two things like worship and so first this is a journey of obedience a journey of obedience in verse one the Lord says go and in verse four it begins so Abram went as the Lord told him and we're reminded of Abram's forefather Noah over and over again God says do this and Noah does it build an ark go into the ark go out from the ark and each time Noah does exactly as God commands and so God says go and Abram goes leaving everything he's ever known Noah was about a 700 mile journey without cars either on foot or camel or something 700 miles from Ur to Haran and then another 700 miles from Haran down to Bethel now for this faith-filled obedience Abram appears in Hebrews 11 I read part of this before but Hebrews 11 who's designer and builder is

God saints just like Abram God is calling us to a life of obedience this is the outworking of our faith in Christ the outworking of our love for Christ the apostle John writes for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome why are they not burdensome commandments because saints we obey them not to we were just talking about this in Galatians we obey them not to earn God's merit not because we have to fulfill the law perfectly to be saved we could never do that Jesus did that for us we obey the law now we follow the commandments of God now because we already have God's approval in Christ and so our obedience is the glad response the joyful response of sinners who have been saved by grace sinners saved by grace who want to please the one who died for them and we have been given a helper we have been given the

Holy Spirit living inside us empowering us to live out this calling and so I just want to ask brothers and sisters is there an area of your life for which faith filled obedience would not be an apt descriptor like the people of Babel is there a section of your heart a section of your life where you are refusing to obey God's commands where you're pursuing self glory or worldly!

[41 : 41] pleasures instead or maybe there's an area of sin that you are entrapped in and you're desperately trying to gain victory now if that's you I do want to encourage you this morning that the acknowledgement of sin and the desire for victory is a sign of the Spirit's working those who don't have the Spirit in them don't struggle they just give in your resistance is a sign of the Spirit but I also want to urge you pray earnestly!

Now we're going to see this theme continue on and we're going to see that even though Abram here in Genesis 12 he's sort of pictured as this man of perfect beautiful faith and responding in obedience that's not always the case and even in the next chapter we're going to see him struggling to believe and obey the Lord and so thank God that our salvation rests not on our performance but on Christ Christ who lived a perfect life who nailed our sins to the cross and who gives us his resume of righteousness in these verses we see Abram's journey of obedience and then finally his journey of worship the journey of worship I'm going to reread verses 7-9 here then the Lord appeared to Abram and said to your offspring I will give this land so he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him from there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east and there he built an altar to the Lord and called the land of Canaan which God promises to give to his offspring he builds he erects not one but two altars of worship to the Lord and he's actually going to do that a couple more times in Genesis now as Abram is putting up these altars in remember enemy occupied territory this land belongs to the Canaanites he's effectively staking the land right and he's actually moving here from north to south through the boundaries of the land and he's saying hey this land belongs to Yahweh this land belongs to the Lord God not to the Canaanite deities this is truly an act of faith he's believing God's promise that one day this land will be given to his offspring and that happens during the conquest under

Joshua but even more the thing I want to draw out even more than claiming this land he's offering sacrifices to the Lord in worship and in these acts he's once again identifying himself not with the seed of the serpent but with the seed of promise the godly line of promise Noah before him had built an altar to the Lord following the flood Seth before him had called upon the name of the Lord Abel before him had brought to the mercies of

God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship all of life ought to be worship everything that we think say and do ought to be the glad response of a people called and redeemed by the great mercy and grace of God and so worship worship is our compass it points us in the direction of true north everything as an act of worship to the Lord and it ought to be our unceasing prayer reminded Jesus says to pray our father in heaven hallowed be your name let us regard your name as holy let us worship you with our lives your kingdom come your will be done here's some prayers that we can be praying Lord as I as I parent today as I disciple my kids as I respond to my kids temper tantrums!

[46 : 30] and rebellion help me to do so as an act of worship! Moms dads your parenting can be I need this I'm preaching to myself here it can be worship to the Lord it's made to be as I study for school as I study to pass my exams let it be for your glory as I write a report as I fix a leaky faucet as I do really cool secret stuff that I could never tell Pastor Mike about receive praise these are things that we ought to be praying as I respond to mistreatment as I engage in relational conflict as I persevere in suffering as I endure in a season of waiting and uncertainty let my thoughts and words and deeds and attitudes be themselves an altar of worship to my God and King saints like Abram God has called us to a life of faith in his word and promises those promises we've seen today they find their fulfillment in

Jesus Christ and yet like Abram we're still exiles in a country not our own we're still looking forward to a heavenly city whose designer and builder is God we're awaiting!

the return of Christ and the final fulfillment of these promises which his death and resurrection secured for us eternally and so saints day by day we by faith cling to these promises we cling to the word of God we respond in faith filled obedience in faith filled worship and when Christ returns and all is made new and he's ours forever more and we're standing in his presence with all the saints I have no doubt whatsoever that we will say it was all worth it let's pray heavenly father we thank you lord for this passage of scripture that is in your word that you have given to us spoken through the mouths of prophets long ago for our instruction for our good and we see in this passage your great and majestic grace and your awesome promises that you have given to your people God we want to respond like

Abraham does in this chapter with faith with obedience with worship we want to ourselves be a blessing to the nations which we are able to do as gospel bearers lord stir us up in our hearts to trust you to cling to your word and promises to wait in hope of what's to come lord and would you ever be glorified in everything that we think say and do in Jesus name amen let