

08.03.25

Genesis

Chapter 12 - God Chooses for Blessing Moving Toward the Promises (vs. 4-9)

Genesis 12:4-9: So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. Then he proceeded from there to the mountain 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 upon the name of the LORD. Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.

Abraham is such a significant character to us, isn't he? And to so many nations, really. Why is that, and how can he really relate to me, or how can I relate to him? When you consider that we're so far apart and the things that happen in our life seem to be so various and different. Nevertheless, Scripture says that no temptation, no trial, has come upon man, that such as is common to man, and we realize that the very things that Abraham was going through are the very things that God brings us through. He is working in our lives the very same things that He was working in the life of Abraham. What are those things? Well, ultimately, he becomes the father of faith, and as you read in the New Testament, we have multiple references to Abraham and his example to us. That Abraham's life and walk with God parallels that to the Christian walk is an understatement. As you go through

the New Testament, you see over and over again the examples of how Abraham is really not only our paragon, but really our path to those blessings that God has in store for us.

You read a passage such as Romans 4, that actually begins to convey that he is the father of faith and describes his faith being so strong that in hope against hope, he actually believed, and that in the midst of the trials and in the impossible situations and scenarios, his faith doesn't wane. It actually goes stronger, Romans 4 tells us.

In Hebrews 11, we have that wonderful example of him leaving as God tells him to leave his country and his family to go into this country which he didn't know anything about, but by faith he did that. Once again, in Hebrews 11 he becomes our paragon example for what faith looks like. As we go through Scripture, you begin to realize that we identify with him in so many ways, because all of what we believe is based on our simple trust in God's goodness. Peter will actually use the analogy in 1 Peter 2 that we are strangers and aliens, that we were once not a country, but now we are and we are a chosen race and a holy

nation just like Abraham. So, there are wonderful and marvelous parallels as you go through the New Testament that really remind us of the connection between Abraham and our faith.

But none says it's so great as the Book of Galatians and in Galatians 3 in particular, you begin to read that, and the reason why Abraham becomes such a significant example to us because he is not motivated by law, he's not motivated by fear of a flood. But what he is motivated by is a promise, and the promise is what keeps him longing for more. In other words, he begins to believe totally that God is good, and He will fulfill the promises that He has given him. This will be his motivation for his life.

Ultimately, as Paul will write in Galatians 3 and Chapter 4, this should be our motivation of life that we believe in the promises of God.

Jesus will say in John 14 that "I go and prepare a place for you." I'm motivated by that and that He's going to come again. He's going to receive me to Himself. That where He is, I'm going to be there also. It is the motivation of our hearts. We believe that God loves us. We believe that He

so loved us, that He gave himself for us and that He has forgiven us of all of our sins. We walk in that guilt free life, and we claim these promises of God.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1 that in Christ, all the promises are yes. In fact, at the end of Galatians, Chapter 3 tells us that we are inheritors of Abraham's promise through Christ. So, when we see the promises of God in the Old Testament and we see them directed to Abraham, it's easy to maybe detach ourselves from them, because we go, "Well, that's the Old Testament, and it really doesn't have anything to do with us." But those promises are our promises. So, when He turns to Abraham and He says, "I'm going to bless you, and I'm going to make you a blessing." Guess who He's talking to? He's talking to you and me.

What's interesting about the way that this now unfolds as the narrative goes, is you begin to see God molding him to receive the blessings. My thought used to be, "Ok, God, here I am. I'm saved. Just pour them down." And God says, "You have to be ready for them." It's just like a child, maybe 2-3 years old, have all the inheritance of his father

stacked up for him, but he's too young to receive it. In fact, if you were to give him the keys to the car, it wouldn't work out well, and you begin to realize that there are a lot of difficulties that would ensue for him to have all those things that God has given.

Ephesians 1 tells us that we are not only those that receive the blessings of God here on this earth as Jesus so clearly put it to the disciples, "You're going to have many times here on earth, and then heaven too," but He begins to convey of all the spiritual blessings as well, and you and I understand that as being not only peace and joy and all of the wonderful things that we have in that, but the celebration of eternal life with our Heavenly Father. Great and marvelous blessings are ours. However, in order to begin to inherit these blessings, we have to be found worthy to receive them, or ready to receive them. So, as we watch Abraham, he goes on this journey, and as we're going to be looking at the passage in particular here in Genesis 12:4-9, we're going to be moving toward the promises that God has for us. In other words, here are the promises; they're there for you, but you have to move

towards them, and certainly, he begins to do that. Of course, ultimately all promises begin with obedience. So, that when God says, "You have to go." You go, "I'm going." And you read not only with Abraham, but with Noah, God said, "Build an ark." He built an ark. God says, "Go" and Abraham goes.

When we read in the New Testament, how do you receive the wonderful blessings of God? He says, "Believe." You remember in particular in John 6, the multitudes were coming to Jesus and they go, "What is it the Father wants us to do?" And He says, "Believe. This is the command of God that you believe." I think sometimes we perceive faith as an optional thing, but it's actually always given as a command. "Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." In the imperative; there's this emphasis, "In order for you to have life, you must believe." This is the command that God has given us. So, the beginning of all the promises really begins, and this is where we're birthed into the promises. As Jesus would say to Nicodemus, "You're born again." You're actually

born into the promises of God, and you become joint heir with Christ of all these wonderful things.

How do I then participate in these promises, and how do I actually make them a part of my life? Well, we're going to go on a journey and as we go on the journey, we're going to be seeing that as these promises are clearly all realized in Christ, that God is going to bless you and that He's going to make you a blessing. Making you a blessing is probably the hardest part of this, because by nature we're selfish and we're self-centered and egotistic in the way that we pursue things. So, to get us to the point of thinking like God, how does He mold us and how does He do this? So, as we go through the passage, what we're going to see is the process of this.

If you pick up with me, in particular, in verse 4, I like how matter of fact it is,

(Genesis 12:4) “So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him...”

I've oftentimes reflected upon these passages. I'm going, “He actually spoke to him?” When you consider the different passages of the Old Testament, I mean,

obviously, at the very beginning, Adam was walking with God in the garden and then we have other pictures of God even closing the door of Noah's ark. How God revealed himself is a magnificent thing. We realize that Abraham takes that same relationship, that very personal relationship, in particular in the Old Testament, and God will visit him while he's sitting by the Oaks. In this particular passage, we're going to have a similar situation. It won't go into the details of God in man form, but it will actually say that God appeared to Abraham. It'll use the word "*rā'â*" in the Hebrew, which makes reference to actually seeing. So, he's going to actually see God at this time as he goes into the promised land, and Stephen makes reference to it in Acts 7 and will actually use the word that describes the eye. So, God is going to appear to Abraham at this particular point in time. Abraham's going to leave, and we've seen within the text a process of this in the process of him leaving. He was first in Ur of the Chaldeans. Now, Ur is kind of close to the Persian Gulf area and so you've got a quite a trek to go from Ur of the Chaldeans up to Haran, up at the northern part. So, we think of the trek of, "Well, he just went from one

neighborhood to the next. He just went to jump to the next one.” But you might want to figure that he's walking, and you might want to figure that walking 600 miles is a long way. So, you're looking at a trek of 600 miles. Now, in all fairness, you have the Euphrates kind of going through and making a valley, and the possibility of maybe taking the Euphrates in certain calm spots because you have to remember the Euphrates is actually flowing south and he's going north. So, that's going to be a little bit more difficult, but there are some certain spots that it's a little bit calmer and he could take the Euphrates. But I also want to mention too that he has quite an entourage, He and his wife and Lot. Scripture makes reference to this, and it will actually go into a little bit more detail in this passage. But as you read a little bit further, you realize that he has 318 soldiers or men that are fighting machines that are with them. 318. I mean, they'll go in to help rescue Lot. So, you figure families with those men, he's got a little nation moving with them, and he's moving with quite a group of people. So, you're looking at 600 miles moving, and at first, he's with his father and his father's going with him from Ur of the Chaldeans up to

Haran, and at that particular place, if you remember right, the name "Haran" has the inference of crossroad. So, his father stays at Haran and doesn't go any further. Now, what's also interesting is that it goes on to say that his father, Terah, actually stayed there, would abide there, and we know that he stayed another 60 years in that particular area until he died. Abraham will not stay that long. Once again, we won't go into the details of the mathematics in all of this, but the passage is giving us reference to here, his father stayed and there's an influence there and we know according to the Book of Joshua, that his father was a worshipper of other gods. It states that in the Book of Joshua. So, there is that pull as well, but what's interesting is, of course, Terah's name makes reference to delay. His name actually makes reference to a place that you would sit, maybe, or perhaps an oasis in which you would sit and relax, but it literally means to delay and you kind of begin to perceive that his father was a source of influence and delay in his life. We also know that his brother had passed away and that was highly influential on him. Nevertheless, God called him; he begins to move. You can't help but feel that

Abraham had some sense of obligation, and so there was that this pulling away was not an easy thing. We think of, “Well, Abraham just pulled away. He just did what God told him. Why wouldn't anybody do that?” Ok, put yourself in a situation where you have influence as a family and then you have a catastrophic event happen. You feel obligated in certain situations, and God will oftentimes call you under those kinds of conditions. It's not always easy to leave. Scripture will tell us, as was clearly quoted there in 2 Timothy, “in season, out of season”. I think sometimes we perceive that in order to follow God and do what He tells us to do, the planets have to align, “Let me first bury my father. Let me get my inheritance. Let me have some money in my pockets. Then I can go serve You. I'll serve You a lot better when all these things are taken care of.” And God goes go, “Go.” With Peter, when all the nets were full, “Go.” So, it's not always the most convenient time, and it doesn't seem to be always the most advantageous time. Nevertheless, Scripture says that he went, and from Haran, now, he's got another trek, and he's got to head south. So, he actually has to go north to go south because the fact that

he's got desert and mountains in between. So, he's got to go up to go down. So, by the time he goes up to Haran, now, he leaves from that place, and he's got another trek to Shechem of 500 miles. So, you just imagine this group, mass of humanity, moving from one section to another, and you would know if they moved through your neighborhood as these people were moving to your neighborhood. So, as they go, he's obeying God. It starts with obedience.

If you look in Genesis 12:4,

(Genesis 12:4) “So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him...”

Very interesting point. Scripture is letting us know that he wasn't necessarily taking Lot with him. Now, it will actually go on to say that he will take Lot with him as time goes, but obviously, Lot already went with him. There will be times in your life where you influence others, and they want to be a part of that. In this particular passage, it seems as if God's saying, “Let them be a part of it.” Now, there's going to be problems, and we are going to understand that Lot's not going to be as committed as he

should have been. Nevertheless, he doesn't refuse him. It's also letting us know, too, that by the very way that Abraham lived his life, he seemed to draw people. You have to remember that he's 75 years old, and actually the text will go on to say this, and he doesn't have any children. This is a significant point that we're going to hound on because not only does he not have any children, but what's interesting is that he has all of this following despite that. You would think that, "Ok, maybe we're going to have a little kingdom here; we're going to start a new nation. We're going to start a new country." There's more people than came over on the Mayflower. So, here we have this group of people, but where's his progeny? Where are the kids that's going to come from this? And Scripture begins to reveal to us that by virtue of his character, he seemed to be able to draw so many people. It's an interesting passage.

(Genesis 12:4) "So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran."

Scripture is letting us know this. Once again, I don't want to go into the mathematics of it, but his father was 70 years old when he has him. So, now, 75 years later, he's 145 years, and then his father lives 205 years all together. So, that's another 60 years.

As we come into this passage, I want you to back up into Chapter 11, and I want you to see what has been happening up to this point as far as the heritage, having children, and we'll just pick up in verse 10.

It says,

(Genesis 11:10) "These are the records of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood."

Now, things are going to change rapidly in verse 12.

(Genesis 11:12) "Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah."

See that?

Then drop on down to verse 14,

(Genesis 11:14) "Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber."

And then if you look in verse 16,

(Genesis 11:16) “Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg.”

(Genesis 11:18) “Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu.”

(Genesis 11:20) “Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug.”

(Genesis 11:22) “Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor.”

I guess you're seeing the pattern.

Then in verse 29, what you're seeing the pattern is they were having children quite a bit younger. Scripture is letting us know something. Somethings awry. Abraham is not having children, and it's already told us at the end of Chapter 11, that his wife couldn't have children, but it just wants to remind us of he's now 75. Now, there's a reason for that, and the reason is that He's fundamentally giving us this picture of God moving him to receive the promise.

Now, I want you to go back in Chapter 12 and I want you to see the promise that God has given as far as Him calling

him out which is found in verse 1, and then he says in verse 2,

(Genesis 12:2) “And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;

(Genesis 12:3) And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Now, when He states what He's stating here, He is actually saying that “From you will come a great nation.” Abraham is probably working this around in his head how this is going to happen. Of course, we know that a little bit later on, he says, “I just kind of took it for granted that You meant this servant of mine is going to have a child and through him You're going to make a great nation.” So, maybe through his servants, and God goes, “No, no, no. Through you.” So, as we go through, what we're going to see is step one after faith and after obedience kicks in, in the sense of the going out, coming out and being separate as God has called us all to do. The very next step that I

believe that God's going to put in your life is this step called “wait”. It's a very interesting step. It is actually the step of faith. Once again, I want to remind you the necessity of you taking this walk.

You remember Jacob and Esau, and you remember the problem with Esau. Esau despised the blessing. In other words, he wasn't willing to wait. He wasn't willing to suffer. He wasn't willing to work for the blessing. In other words, it would be like giving an inheritance to a person that's going to squander everything and not perceive it as valuable. It's like giving a diamond ring to a kid that thinks it's just a rock. I mean, there are certain things you don't want to give them.

One of the greatest passages that remind us of the necessity of the preparation for these things is found in Proverbs 2, and in Proverbs 2, it starts off by saying, “Look, we've got treasures for you, but here's the deal, you have to desire it. You have to long for it. You have to hunger for it. You have to thirst for it. You have to go after it like you would go after buried treasure. If you would cry after it, then I'll give it to you. I'll give you the treasures of

this wisdom from above, but I'm not going to give it to you until you want it." So, there's this process of actually stirring the heart to be prepared to value the very things that God has given you and one of the first things on the list is "wait". Now, when I talk about "wait," what I'm talking about is, you know those things that you feel like you should have and seems like everybody else has it, but you don't have it? It's an interesting phenomenon and you'll see it continually throughout Scripture. Obviously, David is the last guy to be chosen to be the one that is anointed because they're going through all these other brothers that are older than him and he's taking care of the sheep. But that fundamental principle is seen all the way through.

For instance, in Psalm 37, he says, "Wait on the Lord, you need to cultivate faithfulness. Wait on the Lord." And then he talks about the fact that people have things, and you're looking around going, "Yeah, but they have this. They have this." He goes, "Yeah, but not you." And then you go into Psalm 73, and he says the same thing. I mean, the psalmist says, "You know, I almost tripped up on this

one. Because I'm looking around and all these other people have all these blessings, and here I am and I don't have anything." And God goes, "This is proof positive that you're chosen." If you feel that you're kind of left out and you're the latecomer of being a recipient of the blessings, this is God saying, "You're one of Mine" because God causes us to wait for things in the sense of an appreciation and understanding and a valuing. Whereas the world, if they want something, they just go after it, and they'll bulldoze anybody else in their way in order to get it. It doesn't matter how they get it. They're just going to get it. But that's proof positive.

I mean, you go into Hebrews 12, "Who the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every child." And if you feel like, "I'm being a little short changed here," it's like a father turned to his son and his friend already has money because his dad just gave him the money to go do something, and your dad looks at you and goes, "You've got to work for it. You want to mow the lawn?" "Why can't you be as nice as that other father?" He goes, "Because I care about you, and I care about your integrity,

and I care about your morals. So, I'm going to make you work for it.”

I always watch car shows, and so I was watching this car show and they were interviewing this guy that was good in body work. He's supposed to be one of the greatest people that could just mold body work. It's just perfection. He says, “How did you get so good?” He says, “Well, let me tell you a story.” He says, “When I was 16, I got in my dad's car and I wrecked it.” He said, “It was literally totaled by the insurance company. My dad turned to me, and he said, ‘You're going to fix it.’” And he said, “I learned to fix it to perfection because my father wouldn't let me not, and that's how I own this body shop.” What you begin to realize is that it's a little bit more difficult road, but God is causing you to become appreciative, and He's causing you to wait. Remember, Isaiah 40 says, “Those who wait on the Lord.” Isn't that how it begins? Ok. “So, you're going to be walking and you're going to be running and you're not going to grow tired because We're going to actually give you strength and We're going to cause you to mount up with wings like eagles. But you

know what the requisite is? “Wait.” All the way through Scripture, you fundamentally see that theme, whether it's Psalm 4, where it's dealing with your emotions. When somebody does something wrong to you, well, you want to take care of it right away, right? I mean, they did something wrong to you, and God goes, “Wait.” And you go, “Wait? What do you mean, wait? We need to take care of this guy.” And God goes, “Wait. Rest. Go to sleep. I'll handle it.” What are we actually producing? Trust. See, if you get what you want right away, where's the faith? Where's the trust? So, God says, “You go to sleep. I'll handle it. You wake up, you'll be happy.” An interesting passage, and really all the way through the Old Testament, you see this.

In Psalm 40 and Psalm 62 you begin to see, “Wait on the Lord. Wait patiently for Him.” The psalmist will actually say, “I wait on the Lord only.” It's a fundamental requisite to receive the blessings of God, and if you feel like you've been shortchanged or held back, you're His. It's God's goodness. He's building character. He's building a gratitude. He's building a fortitude in your life. It happens

every single time. Moses is going to have to wait. David is going to have to wait. David's going to come to the point where he goes, "Saul's just going to kill me. I'm never going to become king." And certainly just a few days, maybe weeks after that, he becomes king. So, God is going to test that.

So, in the passage, it's wanting you to know,

(Genesis 12:4) "... Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran."

Why are we waiting so long? That's what God does. He waits.

Verse 5 goes on and reads this way,

(Genesis 12:5) "Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew..."

Now, what's interesting is if you back up into verse 4, "and Lot went with him." See the text? So, this is clearly him latching on to Abraham, not that he was pulling away, but he's latching on to him. Now, the text refers to the fact that Abraham is now taking him under his wing. He now feels responsible for him, which really,

fundamentally, is the second point that we'll be looking at, and that is that God is going to call you and call upon you to cultivate faithfulness. He's going to call upon you to cultivate faithfulness with what He gives you. Look, there are going to be people in your life that are going to attach themselves to you, and you're going to wonder, "Why are you even around me?" And you don't even know why, but you have responsibilities. I don't know the responsibilities that you have. God knows the responsibilities that you have. He's orchestrated as such. You live in a particular family in a particular household. 1 Timothy 5 is very clear. You have responsibilities to your household. In that household, are you fulfilling those responsibilities? It's part of the test of faith. In other words, will you be faithful where you are? Will you cultivate faithfulness where you are?

The passage reads,

(Genesis 12:5) "Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions..."

You're actually responsible for the things that you have.

"... which they had accumulated..."

That's a very interesting way of saying it.

“... and the persons...”

Actually, the way it reads in the Hebrew is “the souls that God has entrusted with him”.

I think of that wonderful passage in the Gospel of Luke, where it fundamentally is telling us that we need to be taking care of the things that God has given us that are small things, and then God will give us the greater things. In that particular passage, the small things were what? Money. So, the possessions that you have, and then God will give you the greater things which would be souls, but you have to be faithful with what God has given you. With Moses, God says, “What's in your hand?” He goes, “A staff.” So, God goes, “We'll use that.” And it's not like God was up in heaven going, “I wonder if there's a stick down there he can use?” It was what was in his hand and what he had. The things that you've accumulated, things that you have, God is calling upon you to use. Those persons that He's given you, those souls He's given you to be responsible for. We want to save the world. God is

fundamentally saying, “Are you saving your family? Are you rescuing them?”

“... the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.”

He was faithful all the way through, and he was faithful to do what God told him do, and that was to go to Canaan. This is where he's heading. He knows the direction he's going. He now finds himself in this particular place. He's cultivated faithfulness. He's been faithful and trustworthy.

As Paul will write in 1 Corinthians 4, it's required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. So, it's part of the training, isn't it? Are you taking care of the things that God has given you?

Verse 6 reads this way,

(Genesis 12:6) “Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.”

This is kind of an ominous parenthetical moment that is being interjected within the text and that is to say that it wasn't a friendly place to go. Nevertheless, it was where God told him to go, and Scripture is letting us know this is not going to be an easy journey. Nevertheless, he's going where God told him to go and he finds himself kind of in the middle of this land where God has told him to go, and he stops by these oaks. There's always something very significant about the trees and we know that Christ, the Christophanies, God, will appear to him by the Oaks of Mamre as we go on a little bit further, and there he will be sitting by the oak trees. This is actually a place that was known for having these big trees. So, I would think that maybe it was summer time, I don't know, but it'd be a perfect place to go if you have all this entourage following you and they need a place of rest. This would be a wonderful place to go. So, here he is at the oak trees, but more specifically, the tree was always seen by the Jews as a place in which he communed with God. Even today, if you look at the menorah, the menorahs are made out of trees. If you look at them, they're not just candlesticks. You have trees or vines, which of course, goes back to the

Garden and the picture of communing with God by the trees. So that when you read in the Gospel of John and you read this guy Nathaniel, and Jesus goes, “Yeah, I saw you reading under the tree.” He realizes that this is God. This is where the Jews would study. This is where they would meet God. So, he gets as far as he knows he needs to go in the area that he needs to go, but more than anything else, he wants to meet God. There is something, a drive within Abraham, a desire to have fellowship with God, and that is the fundamental point, this longing for fellowship. If in fact you're going to be walking by faith, it's not enough just to do what God tells you to do. You have to long for the fellowship.

There's a great passage, if you look with me in Psalm 119. Of course, we're looking for the blessings of God, right? So, as we look for the blessings of God, what better passage to go to than a passage that says, “How blessed are you”?

(Psalm 119:1) “How blessed are those whose way is blameless,
Who walk in the law of the LORD.

(Psalm 119:2) How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,
Who seek Him with all their heart.”

The psalmist wants to be careful to let you know that it's not just about doing what He says, it's about seeking Him with all your heart.

Of course, Isaiah 30:18 will basically say the same thing. It will literally say,

(Isaiah 30:18) “... How blessed are all those who long for Him.”

So, it's no wonder that Abram's going to be blessed. Why? Because he's longing for God. The fundamental point of Psalm 1 is, you're not going to be blessed if you're hanging around these people, but you are going to be blessed if you meditate on the word of God day and night, and you long for that fellowship in Him. I mean, meditation is really that picture of a relationship.

What's interesting about the place that he ends up, and this is kind of a note that I want to emphasize, is that it says,

(Genesis 12:6) “Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem...”

See that? Now, here again, up to this point, nothing has made any of these places significant. But if you remember the name “Shechem” actually means “shoulder,” and it gives this interesting picture of shouldering responsibilities. But of course, on either shoulders, you have shoulder blades or you have these big arms. So, if you go into Shechem, Shechem is kind of in the middle and you have these two shoulders, you have these two mountains, Gerizim and Ebal. If you remember, Moses, later on, will bring the people of Israel to this particular area in this valley where Shechem is, the place of shouldering, and here, you'll have these two mountains on either side. Well, on the one mountain, he's going to put people up and he says, “Now, I want you to proclaim the blessings of God.” “Gerizim,” all the people are going to declare the blessings of God, and on this, if you don't do what God tells you, the curses of God. So, Deuteronomy 27-28 begin to reveal those things. Well, this is going to be the place. What's interesting about this

is that this is the place where Abraham longs to have fellowship, and you realize that it's the fellowship that's going to keep you, I would say, more specifically, focused on the blessings and the desire for those things, but also realizing the curses that should come in this. He's wrestling with these things.

If you look in the passage, it is this time that he's there at the oaks, and let me just emphasize, the word “Moreh” means “place of teaching”. Once again, it's the place where they would perceive, “I'm going to learn something from God” and of course, God would visit them.

“... Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

(Genesis 12:7) The LORD appeared to Abram...”

Where? Right where he was wanting Him to. He was seeking after God; God appeared. Long after God. Seek after God. He'll find you, and certainly he does that.

“The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants...”

Let me just emphasize that particular word, “to your seed”.

“... I will give this land...”

Once again, he's 75 years old and I think he's pretty much written everything off. He turns in this text, he builds this altar there before God as the Lord, once again, who had appeared to him. Can you imagine that moment? Now, when does God become real in your life? I think He becomes real in your life when you long to have fellowship with Him. There will be times that God's going to say, “Do this, do this, do this,” and you need to do this, but what He's looking for is the relationship. Sit under the tree, call upon the name of the Lord, and He's going to appear to you. He'll make Himself real to you; to all those who long after Him.

If you look at the passage, it goes on, it says,

(Genesis 12:8) “Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east...”

Now, I just want to emphasize something at this juncture, and it's not obvious according to the passage, the name of this particular city is not Bethel at this time. It will be called Bethel later on, because God will meet with Jacob

in particular there and He says, "I'm going to call this the House of God." So, it's called the House of God later. At this juncture, it's actually called Luz, but the Scripture is not telling you that, because it's Bethel that's in mind. This is a very interesting point that the text has given you. By the way, if you want to check up on me, it's found in Genesis 28:19. But that these cities have different names is not the issue. The issue is what God has ordained them to be, and the interesting picture that is given here is this, that on the one side you have the House of God, and on the other side you have Ai, which means "destruction". This is a moment of decision in Abram's life, and I would say in every person's life that has decided to follow Christ, you need to sit down and consider both the possibilities. Think about the wonderful things that God has promised to you and the perils. I oftentimes think in terms of when you're talking to somebody, what's at stake? Well, this person's soul, or the possibilities; he could be forever with God. You sit and you begin to think through those. What's interesting within the text is that destruction in this text... Well, I'll let you read it.

It reads this way,

(Genesis 12:8) “Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east...”

Which is telling me that the destruction is looking him more in the face. “East” has this sense of closeness, where “west” is more a distant thing. The House of God is a more distant thing. So, there's this seeming separation that's going on and concern.

So, the way the passage reads is,

“... and there he built an altar...”

Now, the text not only goes over the fact that he built an altar, but there's something tacked on to this text, and I want you to read it with me,

“... there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.”

Remember, you actually saw that earlier with Seth, and then he has a son, and it says, “And people began to call upon the name of the Lord.” Well, the name of the son was basically “mortal,” and at that moment they realized

that “We're mortals. We're going to die.” So, they called upon the name of the Lord at that moment. Abram's becoming acutely aware and very highly cognizant of destruction. He's in a land with the Canaanites. He's not surrounded by a welcoming party, and he knows what's at stake. It's overwhelming him, I believe. He's now building an altar to the Lord. Before the Lord appears, before He comes, he's now seeking God and saying, “You've got to help me.” And actually, the phrase is, “crying unto the Lord.” Now, what that passage is telling us is that as we walk by faith, we need to consider both the possibilities and the peril, and in particular, in this particular case, there's a sense of crying.

Paul will write this in Philippians 2:12,

“... work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”

There is a clear sense of what is important.

Then as you go on and read within the passage, it not only says clearly that he built an altar to the Lord and that he cried upon the Lord, but then it states this in verse 9,

(Genesis 12:9) “Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.”

Which is the South, which actually is kind of another word for dry land or desert land, but it's actually the end of the boundaries. So, the Negev will actually be brought up to Egypt. So, he will go down to the furthest extent. Now, the fundamental lesson of this and a very important one is that when God calls you to follow Him, He is not only calling you in a way in which He wants you to learn all these truths and to practice all these truths in your life, but ultimately, He is telling you, “And I want you to keep going until you can't.” And what we're going to see is that God is actually going to bring a famine in to actually halt him. The purpose of famine will be to build a boundary. I don't know if you noticed this or not, but desert lands are like boundaries. So, you have another country over here, you have a desert in between you, they go, “Nah, not feeling it.” So, that's what holds them back. Well, that's God's grace. Man will figure it some other way. But God says, “You go until I tell you to go no further, but you keep going until you can't.” And that's once again a

fundamental truth in all of this. Now, what we're going to see is that Abraham does all these things and God will work in him with his frailties and his problems.

There's a passage in Ecclesiastes, and I want you to look at it with me in particular. You know, certain texts pop into your head as you're going through, and you begin to realize that life is not always easy. Ecclesiastes 11. If you go there. Life is not always easy. It has difficulties. I oftentimes refer to it as vicissitudes that come into your life and what that means is that you have ups and downs in your life. But a vicissitude is not only ups and downs in your life, but it's ups and downs with probably more downs than ups. It's a very interesting word in our English language that describes this. The point of it is that much of our life has hardships in it, and the question is, "How in the world am I going to get blessings, when I have a life full of hardships?"

Ecclesiastes writes this,

(Ecclesiastes 11:8) "Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many..."

That's an interesting phrase, isn't it? "They shall be many."

"... Everything that is to come will be futility."

What we have is God pulling Abram out of this world. Does Abraham have ups and downs? Yes. The beginning of this is going to start with a famine. It's in the very next verse as we go into the text. So, that's a downer, right? And he'll go to the extremity of facing, I would say, one of the most difficult issues that a father could ever face, and that is being willing to let his son die. Now, as you watch his life, you're going to see these difficulties. What you're going to see is in the process of his life, he not only is blessed, but he'll become a blessing.

I think it's only appropriate to understand that in this context of Ecclesiastes 8, you have Chapter 7 that is, prior to this, and he states, "I just want to let you know that the bad times are in God's hands, and He's using those for good too. So, you can rejoice in the bad times, and you can rejoice in the good times because God is orchestrating them both to give you a blessing." And the realization is that as we're obedient to Him, and as we

begin to do these very things that God tells us to do, we look back at our life; I like the way that the psalmist puts it in Psalm 16:6, and I remember my dad, I think it was just days before he passed away, and he looked at me, and there were a lot of days that he wasn't really very coherent. But he looked at me and he quotes this verse, (Psalm 16:6) "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places..."

You realize that, yeah, there are difficult times in your life. There are going to be hardships, but somehow God's going to make it a wonderful life; a life of no regret and a life of blessings, and you look back and you realize there's cards upon cards upon cards of people saying, "You've been a blessing to me." And we look back on Abram's life, and how many people have been blessed by Abraham, and how much has he blessed in his life?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word and how You direct us into walking this road of the promises of God.

We realize that as we walk this road, there are blessings that are ours and 10,000 besides. So, Lord may we be faithful to do those things that would make us worthy to receive the blessings so that we would not only be a recipient, but that we would be a benefactor to those around us, and we would be able to use these blessings in an appropriate way to spread them even further. That we would be a channel. What a marvelous truth You have given us.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. We don't know the difficulties that you've been dealing with. We don't know the extent of your life and where the Lord began even to call you. But if in fact the Lord has been working in your life in the realm of “wait,” rejoice. You're at the beginning of a wonderful, wonderful trek. God has great things in store for you. Now, just be obedient and wait patiently for Him. Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't lean on your own understanding.