

Faithful Living in a Fallen World: A Study in the Life of Abraham

Lesson #1, *Genesis 12:1-9*

What it Means to be A “Called-Out” People (in a World that’s not listening)



What is a Christian? Usually we define the word “Christian” in terms of what we do (or what we do *not* do). [low, like everything else, we make even our FAITH all about US & what WE do = I prayed to receive Christ, I walked the aisle, I’m trying to DO this and BE this way / trying NOT do these things or BE this way, “Do, be, do be do be do . . .” It’s all about ME (Whit & Wheelchair)]. The Bible, however, begins identifying who and what a Christian is with **God** and NOT with us! **1 Peter 2:9, Mark 3:13**, and other passages demonstrate that Christians are first and foremost **WHAT?**

**** Christians are first and foremost a CALLED -- OUT people, hand-picked by the LORD. **** [& not “here, doggie-doggie,” but “Lazarus, come forth!”]

Through the window of God’s call to Abraham, we see some parallel **characteristics** of God’s call to those of us who are great great, great, great, great, grandchildren of Abraham (**cf Galatians 3:29; Romans 4:11-17**). [If “in Christ,” you are part of Abraham’s family!]

But first, let’s look at the promise (sometimes called **the “quad-promise”**) to the Father of our Faith, and how this promise gives us something this fallen world in which we live CANNOT give us.

- **God will have a PEOPLE, Vs 2.** This is an advantage for us living in a world where people are struggling with **IDENTITY**. [Sexually, people are struggling w/identity, socially, people want an identity + a people to identify w/, therefore gangs, groups (BLM), and social media networks.] If you are a Xn, you are already part of a multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-generational group of people who share a common Savior, a common Creed, and God has given you an INCREDIBLE IDENTITY!
- **God’s people will have a PLACE, Vs 1.** This is an advantage when living in a world where people have a feeling of **ROOTLESSNESS**. [Mobile society (used not to be that way . . .), people feel uprooted w/o a sense of “place”.] If XN, the PLACE you have is where God has put you, and you’re to “put down roots” where you are and work for the **WELFARE** of the PLACE where the Lord in His providence has put you.

- **God's people will have God's PROTECTION and PRESENCE, Vs 3a; 28:15.** In a world where people feel VULNERABLE and LONELY, this is an advantage. [We're obsessed about SECURITY (systems, doors & windows, gun sales, etc.) & even in a cyber community, people feel alone ... "likes".] But the only security we have is knowing that NOTHING can touch our souls (Psalm 121), and NOTHING can make God leave us OR forsake us. As Jesus says, "Lo, I am w/you ALWAYS . . ."
- **God's people will be part of a PROGRAM, 3b.** God intends to bless this world through 1 man and his descendent(s). And God begins this program of "blessing" with a "call". In a world where people are feeling a loss of PURPOSE, this is a great advantage for Abraham's children. [Living for no other purpose than your own advancement and/or well-being is a dead end street @ best, @ worst a highway to hell . . . Leighton Ford (used to work w/Billy Graham), "& then, what?"] As Xns, we're part of something BIGGER than ME, much bigger, and we find ourselves when we get lost in something BIGGER than ourselves. [USM vs AL Bret Farve's Senior Year . . .] When we get swept into a MOVEMENT bigger than ourselves & into GOD'S GRAND STORY, we find our purpose.

Now, characteristics of "the call":

1. The Call of the Lord to His people (us) is utterly UNEXPLAINABLE, Vv 1-3.

- **In light of the HISTORY of this fallen world, Genesis 1-11.** From Genesis 3 on, there's disobedience, rebellion, violence, the fall, the flood, the tower = a world cursed, flood, and scattered. God's judgements against people live egocentric lives and attempt to USE God & People to get what THEY want. And yet God insists on blessing the whole world IN SPITE OF THIS WHOLE WORLD BEING IN REBELLION AGAINST GOD! And He's never given up, but has provided a way from people in this fallen world to be blessed, and ultimately to bless the world and RESTORE the world!
- **It cannot be explained in light of our own personal HISTORY, Joshua 24:2; 1 Corinthians 1:27.** God did NOT choose Abram b/c he was such a "good man". Xny is NOT for "good people" who make themselves "good". Xny is for SINNERS (1st qualification for being a Xn = you MUST be a sinner!). I used to think of Abram as being an "Aw, shucks" likable Jimmy Stewart kind of "good 'ole boy" type of person. GOD (in Josh 24) calls Abraham an IDOLATOR.

So, WHAT made Abram the 1st draft pick to begin this great movement of the Faith? We CANNOT explain it! ****IF you THINK you know WHY God has shown His GRACE to you, then you don't REALLY know yourself / know what GRACE is. **** WHY did God choose Abram? Or Me? I haven't the foggiest idea, but one word comes to mind: GRACE! God's undeserved favor to pagan Idol-worshippers like

ME! [Maybe that's why the UNCHURCHED seem to have a better appreciation of GRACE than those inoculated w/just enough religion to not get the real disease!]

2. The Call of the Lord to His People is quietly **SUCCESSFUL**, Vs 5; 7b-9.

- **We see it when God's people OBEY (4a).** We don't call undone projects **SUCCESSFUL** projects. The lawn being cut was not a **SUCCESS** until I **DID SOMETHING** – manned up and got behind the lawnmower and pushed it for 10,800 steps. No word about the route Abram took, the weather conditions, the dangers on the road, or most importantly, **DID HE EAT @ DAIRY QUEEN?** He **OBEYED** the **WORD** of the Lord! **IS SPITE OF What??** Family ties, his age, & fears about an uncertain future about his immediate future and destiny. “As the Lord had spoken to him” he went, and nothing else much mattered.
- **We see it when God's people WORSHIP (7b-9).** Abe goes to a **PAGAN** spot, and worships the **LIVING & TRUE GOD** there. Later, the twin elements of **ATONEMENT** (altar) and **TESTIMONY** are there in Abram's worship. He **PROCLAIMED** the Lord, in the midst of a culture hostile to his religion. **In a hostile environment and culture, a called-out person lives life as a PILGRIM (tent) and a WORSHIPPER (altar).** Abram knows this present world is **NOT** his home, and the tent pegs he drives down into the earth can always be taken up. **What matters for a called-out Christian is that God's WORD directs us AND that God's WORSHIP preoccupies us.** For a **BELIEVER**, **SUCCESS** in this life can be summed up in two words: **OBEDIENCE** and **WORSHIP**. To the extent that God's **WORD** directs our steps & our **WORSHIP** of God is **ULTIMATE** in our lives, to that extent we are successful.
 - A college football fan gets excited if a game goes into overtime. A church member gets mad if the pastor preaches one minute past the allocated time.
 - A college football fan is loyal to his or her team no matter what. A church member stops attending if things are not going well.
 - A college football fan pays huge dollars for tickets, travel, and refreshments for games. A church member may or may not give to his or her church.
 - A college football fan attends the game no matter how bad the weather is. A church member stays home if there is a 20 percent chance of rain.
 - A college football fan invites others to watch the game every week. A church member rarely invites someone to church.
 - A college football fan will adjust gladly to changes in kickoff time. A church member gets mad if his or her service time is changed by just a few minutes.

3. The Call of the Lord to His people is seemingly **IMPOSSIBLE**, Vv 6-7.

After all . . .

➤ **The CULTURAL situation is not favorable, and;**

The land is already occupied by people who are NOT friendly to the FAITH (sound familiar?) [RUF has to fight every year to be on University Campuses, while other religions are welcomed w/open arms].

➤ **Our PERSONAL situation is not favorable.**

HOW could Abram have a “seed”, a lineage, if his wife was more barren than a politician’s promise? Sometimes we see NO WAY for God to use US to do His work. We have health problems, family problems, personal problems, problems all around.

Why do you suppose God so often chooses to work this way with His people (us)? Cf **2 Corinthians 1:8-10**

The DIFFICULTY and HOPELESSNESS of our situation HIGHLIGHTS the fact that if ANYTHING happens, it’s the LORD doing it, and NOT us! We may feel boxed in by . . . well, everything, so that we may understand the ONLY way we can do what we’re called to do is if GOD does it. “IMPOSSIBLE” to us is always “POSSIBLE” to God!

God’s call to Abraham (and His seed He has called, namely, us) has not really changed. **Matthew 10:37-38** and **Genesis 12:1** sound awfully similar, don’t they?!? God keeps gathering Abraham’s seed, and God is still gathering people to share Abraham’s FAITH. The LORD Jesus is simply demanding the place of supreme affection in our lives. And what the Lord calls you to do, The Lord WILL ENABLE you to do, also!