

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 12:1-9

Sunday September 5th 2010 Morning Service

Rupert Bentley Taylor

This is one of great passages about God's plan of salvation. About blessing from God & relationship with God. Nothing we need more than these two things. Lots here unique to Abram: the command of v1 & the incredible promises were said to Abram not to us. Yet here are immense principles about how God deals with his people.

1. Blessing From God

'Bless' is key word coming five times in v2-3. Blessing is God's good purposes being done in our lives. Not us getting our way: God having his way with us.

1) Blessing Is All Of God. Begins with God 'The LORD had said'. And it is not just words: God's acts: 'I will' frequently repeated. Whole of Bible is out-working of the promises given here. All God's initiative. Abram not blessed because of any special virtue: by end of this chapter we find Abram acting in ways that speak of lack of trust. Yet God determines to bless him in sheer mercy. Not one of us who finds blessing because we deserve it.

2) Blessing Flows From Obedience The promises of blessing of v2-3 depend on obedience to the command of v1. Commands a radical uprooting. He is sent out without knowing where he was going (see Heb 11:8 & Acts 7:3-4). He will be blessed because he obeys. God's blessings are not found by those who negotiate with God: it is found by those who surrender to what God says. Jesus said 'If anyone would come after me he must deny himself & take up his cross daily & follow me' Lk 9:23.

3) Blessing Primarily Offers Rewards Beyond Our Times Our world values primarily what we get here & now. Abram knew good things from God in his lifetime: so 24:1 says 'Abraham was now old & the LORD had blessed him in every way'. Yet most of God's blessings promised here didn't happen in his life time.

I will make you a great nation:

I will make your name great:

All peoples on earth will be blessed through you:

To your offspring I will give this land:

Not just like this for Abram: bulk of God's blessings are joys beyond our times on earth: Jesus says 'Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven' Mt 6:20. The joys of those who have found God's blessings are not capable of coming to an end: Ps 16 says 'You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand'.

4) Blessings Are In Order To Be A Blessing. Blessings are to serve God's agenda not ours. The blessings were so he would be a blessing (end of v2 & 3). If you are blessed it is so that you can bring good to others. But v3 speaks of breath-taking extension of blessing coming through Abram so that 'all peoples on earth will be blessed through you'.

How? _____

__See Matt 1:1. Gal 3:8 says 'The Scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith & announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'. So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith'. The greatest blessing we have to pass on is the good news of Jesus. Jesus is the Blessed One come to bring blessing, whatever it cost. God has blessed us so that, whatever it costs, we may be a blessing

2. Relationship With God

In v.4-9. Abram travels through Canaan. But the key thing that happens is his relationship with God. What sustains relationship with God?

1) Initiative Of God Began with God speaking to Abram v1. Then v7 'the LORD appeared to Abram & said...' The Lord wanted to go on disclosing himself to Abram. See 15:1, 17:1, 18:1, 22:1. This on-going knowing of God is heart of salvation. God wants to speak to us again and again. He has given us his Word so that we may feed on it again and again.

2) Obedience Of Faith. The text emphasises Abram's obedience: v4-5 'so Abram left as the LORD had told him... He set out, he took, they set out, they arrived'. He believed what God said & did as God said. Same in 17:3, 21:14' 22:3. It was not perfect obedience, but this eagerness to obey what God says is at heart of relationship with God.

3) Sacrifice Of Blood. In response to God in v7 Abram 'built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him'. In v.8 'He built an altar to the LORD' Also 13:18. What was an altar? Place of sacrifice. Why did Abram keep building altars? Because he was a sinner. Because he was guilty before God. Because even repentance is not sufficient without sacrifice. Because he deserved death from God. The sacrifices, given in place of the life of the worshipper, pointed to need of someone to die for him. Abram, like us, a sinner needing a Saviour. The only reason we don't need to build altars is that all that the altar & sacrifices pointed to was fully accomplished once for all when Jesus died at Calvary in the place of us sinners. Our relationship with God is only possible as we plead the blood of sacrifice shed for us.

4) Voice Of Prayer. V8 'he built an altar & called on the name of the LORD'. Abram kept doing that: see 13:4 & 21:33. The phrase 'on the name of the LORD', puts on the emphasis not on the eloquence of our prayers, but on Who it is we call to: 'the name of the LORD'. There is all that we need in the name of the LORD.

All we see here stand together: obedience, sacrifice & prayer are still at heart of relationship with God. May we too now & forever know the joy of salvation: blessing from God & relationship with God.

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