

Trusting the Plan and Promise of God Part 1

Genesis 12,15,16,17 and Hebrews 11:6, 8-10

“Even when I don't see it, you're working! Even when I don't feel it, you're working!”

Talk about a song of faith! So many times in life we can't see a way out, a way through, a way up, a way down, a way over, but Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life!” Jesus could say that because He was God in the flesh! He was the fulfillment of the promises of God in the Old Testament. The question for us today, just like it was for Abraham back in the book of Genesis, is this: Will we trust the plan and promise of God? Today's message is part one of two in this larger series on God's covenant promises found in Genesis! Let's pray and ask God to open our hearts and our minds to His message for our lives!

I'm so glad each one of you are here today and it is my prayer that you will learn some things that will strengthen your faith and help you see just how amazing the promises of God really are! I wanted to clarify something about our reading plan. We will be reading through the Bible, but the 260 plan does not cover every chapter in the Bible. So reading through the 260 plan is not the same as reading the entire Bible. The 260 plan will hit the major highlights of Scripture, but will skip over some of the passages, like those which have already been covered in other chapters. And, as I said last week, we will not be able to cover all of the chapters you will be reading throughout the week. It would just not be possible to do that in a year. There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible and only 52 Sundays in a year! If we studied the Bible one chapter each Sunday, it would take us over twenty two years to get through the entire Bible. We want you to know, of course, you are welcome to read the chapters that are not in the reading plan if you also want to read the entire Bible this year. Anyway, I just wanted to clarify that for you! And I'm actually going to touch on a chapter today that is not in our reading plan, but I felt it important to share because of how it speaks to God's covenant promise to His people. Let's get started...

Trusting the Plan and Promise of God - Noah

Like last week, today's message comes from the book of Genesis and deals with God's plan and promise for humankind! Once again we will see God's promises in the Old Testament Covenant are setting a foundation for the Covenant found in the New Testament! In fact, testament actually means covenant so the Old Testament is actually the Old Covenant and the New Testament is the New Covenant! I believe we're going to discover some awesome spiritual truths. A lot has happened in Scripture since we talked about the creation narrative and the fall of Adam and Eve. Their fall took humanity in a terrible direction and as you read in your Bible readings last week...

Gen 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Gen 6:6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

Gen 6:7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them."

Gen 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Things had gotten so bad with humanity that God was in pain! Yes, God understands pain and suffering more than we could ever know. Some people think because God is perfect and

sovereign that He knows nothing of pain, but only love, peace and happiness! God is love but it is that very love which causes Him to know the depths of pain, the depths of suffering, the likes of which we could never fully understand! Parents sometimes have a glimpse of the pain love can cause! God as Creator, was the Father of humanity and His heart was filled with pain at the horrible sin, injustice, and abuse that was happening amongst His children! People were involved in unspeakable wickedness and some were even sacrificing their children to pagan gods in horrible rituals. I don't fully understand or have all the answers to all the hard questions surrounding the judgement of the flood, but I can say this: I believe God gave the people chance after chance to turn from their wickedness and as for as the innocent children, when they drew their last breath on this earth God gave them their first breath of eternal life in heaven where they would never face those terrible abuses again! Had God not stepped in this pattern and cycle would have continued unabated, and God had to act. Again, I don't have all the answers, but under the Old Covenant there was the law and there was judgement, however, God had a New Covenant plan that included a powerful solution for breaking patterns and cycles of sinfulness and it was the cross! If you've struggled with patterns and cycles of sin that maybe were handed down to you, Jesus really is your answer. When I want to understand and know the heart of God I look to the Cross where God took on unfathomable pain and showed us His ultimate love for humanity by taking the punishment we deserved. A Japanese theologian, Kazoh Kitamori wrote these words back in 1958...

"The gospel, that is, the pain of God, infinitely transcends the pain of the world, but why has it come into existence? What is the object of God's pain? It was born to save the pains of the world and to make the pains of the world its purpose."

In other words, God wants to take our pain, our sadness, our troubles, and our brokenness. He wants to carry our burdens. Not because He enjoys pain, but because it hurts Him more to see us hurting! Folks this is the reason for God's plan of redemption! So we see in Genesis this: rather than give up on His plans for humanity, God once again went to His contingency plan, the plan He had if we rebelled. We must remember, there was no flaw in God's plan. He knew exactly what He was doing when His great love allowed the variable of humankind's free will to be part of His plan as He created us in His image! He is, after all, Sovereign, and it was His choice to give us choice! We chose poorly, and it caused God great pain, but God didn't give up on humanity as He protected Noah and His family in the Ark and rebuilt the human race through them. Listen...

Gen 6:9 This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.

As a result God says to Noah...

Gen 6:18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark--you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.

He also makes a promise to Noah, to never again flood the whole earth, and gave the rainbow as a sign of His promise! It wasn't long before people fell right back into a sinful, rebellious, and very prideful lifestyle! They no longer loved God in worship or gave God glory but pursued their own evil imaginations. We see that in the Tower of Babel story. However, God continues to implement His covenant plan after He disperses the people. His love and His pain were working together to make a way for the redemption of humankind! We are going to see this in a powerful

way as He continues implementing His plan of salvation with a man called Abram, who would later be named Abraham.

Trusting the Plan and Promise of God - Abraham

When Abram was around 75 years of age God spoke to him and asked him to take a big step of faith. Listen...

Genesis 12:1-5

Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

Genesis 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. "

Genesis 12:4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

Genesis 12:5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

Talk about trusting God! "Go to the land I will show you!" Pack up your household and go where I tell you. I would be inclined to say, "Tell me where I'm going first, please." I don't know about you, but sometimes I have trouble just trusting that God is going to work out little things in my life. I have a tendency to worry about every little thing! Abram, on the other hand, had a special faith. In fact, some of our memory verses for this week point this out! Let's read them together...

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Hebrews 11:9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

Hebrews 11:10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

This is such a powerful testimony from an Old Testament Character! Abraham had a trust in the promises of God, but also seemed to understand something of the plan of God. The writer of Hebrews indicates that Abraham was looking forward to the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant in the Messiah and in the Kingdom of God, rather than just what God was going to do in his earthly life! In other words, Abraham had an eternal, Godly, perspective. As we'll see later, this didn't mean Abraham's faith was always flawless, but I think we would all agree Abraham's faith was pretty strong. We'll see the reasons why as we continue our study.

An Important Interruption to our Story

Again, Abraham obviously trusted God because he obeyed! Some time later, Abraham's herds and his nephew Lot's herds were growing so much, they needed to separate. Lot had gone with Abraham and they had traveled through various lands together, but it was time to separate, so Lot went one way and Abram went the other.

I don't have time to go into all the details, but sometime later, Lot was caught up in a regional conflict between nine kingdoms. Five kings against four other kings. The four kings won and when they were taking captives and the spoils of war, Lot and his things were taken as well.

Abraham jumps into action and takes 318 of his men and defeats the four kings and rescues Lot and his things. Of course the five kings who had been previously defeated are elated by Abram's victory. It was a victory for them as well! One of these kings came out to meet Abram in the valley of Shaveh. Another King, who was not listed as one of the kings in the conflict, came out as well and brought bread and wine.

This King who just shows up in our story has a very special place in Bible history. Listen...

Genesis 14:18-20

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High,

19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.

20 And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

What is the significance of Melchizedek? He was never mentioned in a Biblical genealogy. So his birth is never recorded and his death is never mentioned in the Bible. Very, very unusual. Why? Melchizedek was a type, or a foreshadowing of a King who would someday be the Alpha and the Omega. One who was the beginning and the ending, but who also had always been and would always be. Jesus the Christ!

Why is it so important that I interrupt our story with this? It has to do with God's plan, God's promise, God's covenant to make a way for humankind's redemption! Check this out...

Heb 6:17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.

Heb 6:18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

Heb 6:19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,

Heb 6:20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Heb 7:1 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him,

Heb 7:2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace."

Heb 7:3 Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

Heb 7:4 Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder!

Are you beginning to see God's promises in Genesis were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus in the New Covenant?

As we return to our story we find Abraham and Sarai, who would be called Sarah, continuing to age and yet without a child, and Abraham has a crisis of faith. Have you ever had one of those? I have, more than once! But God continues to confirm His promise to Abraham.

The Struggle to Trust in the Plan and Promise of God - Abraham and Sarah

Gen 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

Gen 15:2 But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"

Gen 15:3 And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

Gen 15:4 Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."

Gen 15:5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Gen 15:6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Sarah also has a crisis of faith and she decides to take matters into her own hands...

Gen 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;

Gen 16:2 so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

Here we go again! Where's the Kingdom Man and his leadership for doing the right thing and encouraging his wife's faith? How do you think Sarah's plan is going to work out? Your right, not good! We don't have time to get into the history of what happened because of this, but there is a history that continues to this day. I told you that Abraham's faith was strong, but not flawless. And before we point an accusing finger at Abraham, when it seems improbable and impossible for God's way to work, don't we many times try to figure out a way to do things on our own? Yes we do and the consequences can be very serious and even tragic. Having said that, I must say, God loved the son that Abraham had with Hagar and promised to bless him in a mighty way! God is such a loving God. But God's promise was to create a mighty nation through Abraham and Sarah and the promised Messiah was to come through that lineage so God has to once again remind Abram to have faith in His promise to bless him and Sarah with a son...

Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.

Gen 17:2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

Gen 17:3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him,

Gen 17:4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.

Gen 17:5 No longer will you be called Abram ; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

Gen 17:6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

And down in verse 15...

Gen 17:15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.

Gen 17:16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

Gen 17:17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"

Gen 17:18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

Gen 17:19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

So you might be wondering how this all applies to your life in 2020? That's a great question and I'm so glad you thought of it!

Finding the Faith to Trust the Plan and Promise of God

First of all, what is the definition of faith? According to God's Word in Hebrews 11:6...

Heb 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

I love the way the King James Version put it...

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is the substance! Faith is being sure! The substance of what? Being sure of what? The things we hope for. Like our hope and belief that God will keep His promises! We know what God promised Noah, and for that promise to come true Noah had to place his faith and trust in God by building a boat! A really big boat called an ark. And Noah had never seen a flood! But by faith, Noah builds the boat, and not at a shipyard close to a large body of water. He wouldn't have to get to the water, the water was coming to him. But imagine the faith it took. Imagine the ridicule he took. Imagine the times he must have wondered, "I'm I really building an Ark?" But Noah walked by faith, walked with God, found favor with God, was considered righteous and faithful, and God saved him and his family. So faith turned into substance as Noah trusted God! And we know what God promised Abraham and Sarah, a son, through which would come a mighty nation and eventually a Savior for the world, and we'll see some astounding things about that next week. But what has God promised us? What has God promised you? If faith is the substance of things hoped for, what could we hope for the most in this world and what has God promised regarding that hope?

How about our hope that God loves us? The Promise...

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are...

How about our hope that God wants to and will forgive us for our sin? The Promise...

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

How about our hope that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives? The Promise...

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

How about our hope that God will be with us no matter what we face? The Promise...

Psa 91:1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

Psa 91:2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Psa 91:3 Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

Psa 91:4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Psa 91:5 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

Psa 91:6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

Psa 91:7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

So, I guess you could say that faith is trusting the plan and promise of God! Another one of our memory verses for this week is also found in The Book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

You've heard me say this before, who you put your faith in is more important than how gargantuan your faith is! A mustard seed can move a mountain, but as our memory verse indicates, if you have no faith it becomes impossible to have a relationship with God and what would please God more than for you to have a personal relationship with Him? Nothing!!!

I want to close with these words of wisdom from a Baptist Evangelist, Manley Beasley, who I had the privilege of hearing teach on the topic of faith from a book he had written on faith when I was a very young Christian. It was called the Faith Workbook. It has been republished as Adventures in Faith. And I quote:

Faith is a reason at rest with God.

Faith grows exceedingly fast not by a glimpse, not by a look, but by a gaze upon Him.

Faith is dependency upon God, and this God-dependency begins only when self dependency ends.

Faith does not always take you out of the storm; faith calms you in the storm.

Faith bids eternal truth to become present fact.

Continually revise your relationship to God until the only certainty you have is the certainty that God is faithful; not you.

Beasley, Manley. ADVENTURES IN FAITH (Kindle Locations 56-99). Unknown. Kindle Edition.

Let's pray!

