

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR SMALL GROUPS DISCUSSION

Genesis – Living in Redemptive Grace

Sermon Series

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| 03 July 2022 | Genesis 11:27-32 | Faith in God's Covenant Promised |
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03 July 2022

Genesis 11:27-32

Faith in God's Covenant Promised

When we make promises to others, what might cause us to not fulfil the promise or to break the promise?

STUDY

Genesis 11:27-12:20 tells us the beginning of Abram's story. All the key characters in Abram's story are introduced in the first 5 verses – Abram, Sarai, Lot, Nahor. Abram and Sarai are the main characters in this story, while Lot has a major role in the first part of the story, and Nahor is important only as Rebekah's grandfather (Rebekah is Abram's daughter-in-law, later in the story). The family had left Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan, but they had settled in Haran instead. And in Genesis 12:1-3, God made Abram a very big promise.

Read Genesis 12:1-9.

1. What did God promise Abram?

| | |
|-------------|--|
| The command | |
| Promise 1 | |
| Promise 2 | |
| Promise 3 | |

2. What is the purpose of God's blessing of Abram in this promise? (vv.2-3)

3. Abram was obedient to God's command in God's promise and went to Canaan with his entire household. What happened when he reached Canaan (v.7)? How did Abram respond to this?

Dig Deeper

Descendants, reputation, and honour were very important to the people of the Ancient Near East (where Abram lived). What does this tell you about God's promise to Abram?

In Gen 12:7 the Lord appeared to Abram – what effect do you think this had on Abram and on his faith in God's promise?

Read Genesis 12:10-20.

4. There was a famine in Canaan and so Abram went to Egypt. Do you think this was a wise decision on Abram's part? (Consider both that Egypt had the River Nile and was less dependent on rainfall, and God's earlier promise to Abram.)

5. What did Abram tell Sarai to do? What do you think motivated his decision?

6. Consider Abram's plan in vv.11-13 and how it played out in vv.14-20. What did Abram not anticipate? How is the security of Abram and his household secured?

Dig Deeper

Abram decided that Canaan was not the place to be in because of famine in the land. Do we make decisions in the same way as Abram today? Does difficulty in where we were called by God mean that we were mistaken, and we are out of God's will? How do we tell?

Abram was enriched by Pharaoh when Pharaoh took Sarai into his house. Was this a sign of God's blessing on Abram?

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

7. Abram obeyed God's command to go to Canaan, but he later went into Egypt. How did God treat Abram in both cases?

8. Jesus tells us that it is not the size of our faith but the object of our faith that assures God's action (Matt 17:20; Luke 17:6) and Paul reminds us of this in Eph 2:8-9. How is this same principle demonstrated in Gen 12:1-20?

APPLICATION

9. When have you relied on your own wisdom to resolve a problem instead of remaining within God's direction? How did that work out for you?
10. What ways can you step out in active faith, trusting in God's promises? What are some factors hindering you from stepping out in faith?

REFLECTION

Write down a key lesson and a key verse from this study.

How should we pray and change in response to what we have learnt?

DISCIPLESHIP IN COMMUNITY

- **Share:** Tell your group members about a time in your life when you were convinced that God's direction for you was wrong. How did you come to that conclusion, and was it a right conclusion? What effect did it have on your faith?

PRAY FOR ORPC – SUPPORTED CHURCHES OVERSEAS

- Pray for our overseas supported churches in Philippines and Myanmar. Pray for God's protection and provisions for the pastors and their flocks. Pray for church growth and sustainability.

17, 24 July 2022

Genesis 13-14

Faith Provides

Lot was asked to choose between the well watered Jordan Valley and the comparatively dry promised land of Canaan. Is the right choice obvious?

STUDY

In Genesis 13-14, the pivotal choice is the one that Lot makes – the choice to settle in the Jordan Valley instead of the promised land of Canaan. Abram's faith in Yahweh is tested through this choice and its consequences.

Read Genesis 13:1-9.

1. Abram returned to the Promised Land and re-committed himself to God's promise. However, Abram encounters a problem. What was the problem, and what was the proposed solution?

Dig Deeper

What surprises you about Abram's proposed solution? Why does it surprise you?

Read Genesis 13:10-18.

2. Lot looked at the land and saw the divide between the Jordan Valley and the land of Canaan. Was this the only possible division?
3. The narrative tells us more about the location that Lot has chosen (v.13). What is said about Lot's choice? What does Lot's choice tell you about his priorities?
4. God appears to Abram again after Lot had made his choice and separated from Abram. What does God say, and what significance does it have to Abram?

Dig Deeper

The Jordan Valley is described in Genesis 13:10 as being like the garden of the Lord, implying that it looked like a land which God had blessed. How do we know if the good things we see about a choice before us is really the mark of God's blessing upon it?

Read Genesis 14:1-16.

5. Genesis 14 opens with an account of warfare in the Jordan Valley that breaks out after 12 years of peace. Two battles are fought (13th year, and the 14th year) and the kingdoms that rebelled are utterly defeated. Genesis 14:11-12 then tells us why this background was important – Lot and his household were taken along with the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their provisions. What was Abram's response when he was told of Lot's capture?
6. What was Abram's motivation for his action? (See also vv.23-24.)

Dig Deeper

Genesis 13:12 tells us that Lot moved his tent as far as Sodom, and Genesis 14:12 tells us that Lot was taken with Sodom and Gomorrah. What does this say about Lot's relationship with Sodom and Gomorrah?

Was Abram alone in his fight against Kedorlaomer, Tidal, Amraphel, and Arioch? See also Genesis 14:24.

Read Genesis 14:17-24.

7. Two kings met Abram on his return, with very different receptions. How did each king receive Abram, and what was Abram's response to each king?

Melchizedek, king of Salem:

Bera, king of Sodom:

8. How was Abram's faith demonstrated in his responses to the two kings?

Dig Deeper

Most of us read Genesis 14:21 as Bera, king of Sodom, generously offering to let Abram keep the recovered goods. But the fact is that Abram and his allies were under no obligation to restore any of the people or the goods to the defeated kings. How does this change your understanding of Genesis 14:21?

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

9. How has Abram's faith been tested in Genesis 13-14 and in each test, how has God been shown to be faithful?
10. Lot was asked to choose pastureland, but most of us today are not herders or owners of livestock. What parallel choices are before us today?

APPLICATION

11. Choosing according to God's will can often be difficult. What has Genesis 13-14 taught us about making such choices? In what ways do you struggle with this?

REFLECTION

Write down a key lesson and a key verse from this study.

How should we pray and change in response to what we have learnt?

DISCIPLESHIP IN COMMUNITY

- **Share:** When have you faced choices like the one Lot faced – a choice between what society judges to be good and what God judges to be good? Share with your group your experience.

PRAY FOR ORPC – SUPPORTED MISSIONARIES

- Rebecca Lim serving in Mongolia with Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES).
- Woon Lee Tzu serving in East Asia School of Theology (EAST).
- Elder Paul Johnson serving in Wycliffe Singapore.
- Dr Lion Soegiharto serving in Evangelism Equipping (EE) Mission Singapore.
- Billy and Fiona Seah serving in Care Channels International.
- Dr Walter McConnell serving in OMF.

31 July 2022

Genesis 16

Faith in God's Covenant Inaugurated

Has there been a time when you doubted God's promises?

STUDY

We often think of Abram as a giant of faith, but like us, he had times when he doubted God's promises. In Genesis 15, we see Abram's doubts as well as God's gracious response to them.

Read Genesis 15:1-6. YHWH tells Abram not to be afraid, because God is his shield and great reward. This is particularly important given that Abram had just rejected a significant amount of goods from the rescue of Lot and had potentially offended the king of Sodom.

1. What doubt does Abram express here?
(Consider also Gen 12:2)

2. What was God's response to Abram's doubt?
Is this in line with God's promises from before? (cf. Gen 12:2, 13:16)

3. In verse 6 we are told that Abram believed the LORD, and God credited it to Abram as righteousness. What does this tell us about how we are counted righteous? (Consider Rom 4:2.)

Dig Deeper

Is it helpful for us to be reminded that God is our shield and our very great reward when we are worried and anxious? How did it help Abram?

What promises has God given to us today? Is it hard for us to trust God to fulfil these promises?

Is it contradictory to say that assurance depends on God's promise, not our performance and yet to say that we must believe to have assurance? Why/why not?

Read Genesis 15:7-21. YHWH declares His identity – He is YHWH, the same God who brought Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans, the same God who purposed to give Abram Canaan. This is a God who is known by Abram, a God who has not changed, and a God whose purpose has not changed.

4. What doubt does Abram express now? Is it one that is justified?

5. God responds to Abram's doubt with a ritual covenant. Compare the covenant made here with the prior promises made to Abram (Gen 12:1-3, 13:14-17). How are they the same or different?

6. What does the covenant with Abram (vv.13-16) teach us about God's sovereignty, timing and justice?

7. The covenant is confirmed with a smoking firepot (which had a blazing torch in it) passing through the pieces, representing God undertaking a solemn oath that He will fulfil this covenant. What is Abram's part in this covenant? Why is this significant?

Dig Deeper

Why do you think it is necessary for God to declare that He is the same God who brought Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans? Consider the religious landscape of the day.

Have you ever felt that you would really rather God responded to your doubts directly like He did to Abram's here?

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

8. How was the covenant an assurance of God's promise for Abram?

9. Abram had doubts, but he chose to believe YHWH, and so he was deemed righteous by God, enabling him to be in covenant with God. We are also in covenant with God through Jesus Christ – has the requirement of us to be in covenant with God changed between Genesis 15 to today?

APPLICATION

10. We are often very stressed about staying within God's promises, but Genesis 15 reminds us that God will do all that is necessary, our part is to trust in God. How does this speak to your life today?

REFLECTION

Write down a key lesson and a key verse from this study.

How should we pray and change in response to what we have learnt?

DISCIPLESHIP IN COMMUNITY

- **Share and Pray:** Share with each other your doubts and worries. Pray that God will grant each of us assurance of salvation and the peace of the Holy Spirit.

PRAY FOR ORPC – MUSIC MINISTRY

- Pray for the different musical groups (Chancel, MMC, Handbells, Orchestra). Pray for opportunities to promote fellowship.