

21. Yielded, not perfect

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A pastor received a call from a church that offered him a salary four times what he was then receiving. Being a devout godly man, he spent much time in prayer trying to discern what God wanted him to do.

One day a friend of the pastor met the pastor's young son on the street. "Do you know what your daddy is going to do?" he asked. "Well," replied the youngster, "My daddy's still praying, but mama's packing!"

I didn't say this to get more money from our church board. No right-minded church would hire a broken-English speaking Swedish preacher. You guys are stuck with me until the Lord takes me home.

Knowing God's will seems very tricky to many Christians. Sometimes we love His will because it fits perfectly with our desire. Other times, we don't like what we are getting from Him, so we try to look for some loopholes to ignore His obvious will for us. Or it seems that the door of heaven is shut and there is no voice mail, e-mail, or text message coming from heaven to tell us what the Lord wants.

However, though the Bible doesn't act like a fortune teller who does nothing but lies, it gives us many guidelines to seek God's will in our lives.

In the first 11 chapters, it covers over 2,000 years. From Genesis 12 through 50, it took 350 years. In these first 11 chapters of Genesis, we have seen the creation, the fall of man, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. Now we are going to start to look at the life of Abram, a.k.a. Abraham who was a yielded vessel, not a perfect vessel.

A. THE FAMILY OF ABRAM IN UR OF THE CHALDEANS

Genesis 11:27-32 This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. 28 And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. 29 Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. 30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child. 31 And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. 32 So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

We see here another evidence of divine election: God chose Abram in His grace. This is the beginning of the Hebrew nation.

Abram's story begins in Ur of the Chaldeans which was Babylon. He was from a family of idol worshipers and was probably an idol worshiper himself.

Because the name "Abram" means "Father," it must have constantly amazed those meeting Abram to discover he had no children. Sometimes we can gain meaning from names in the Bible. The name 'Terah' means, "delay." The name 'Haran' means "parched, barren." When Abram was in partial obedience, then delay and barrenness characterized his life. When we delay in drawing close to God, we also experience barrenness.

B. GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAM

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, (1) To a land that I will show you. 2 (2) I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And (3) make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 (4) I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And (5) in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

We know from Acts 7:2-4 that this promise was made to Abram before he left Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram's partial obedience did not take God's promise away. Instead, it meant the promise was on "HOLD" until Abram was ready to do what the Lord said.

Please notice how often God says, "I will" in these verses. Genesis chapter 11 is all about the plans of ungodly man which turned into great chaos. Genesis chapter 12 is all about the plans of God.

In v1, God told Abram, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you." As I mentioned previously, Abram was not fully obedient to the command of God. He didn't leave his father or his family, nor did he leave the land completely.

But when we come to the NT and we read of Abraham, he is given to us as the classic example of the man of faith. Faith is always marked by obedience. His faith is held up as an example to us. In the NT, the failure of his faith is not mentioned. In the NT, God only tells us of the triumphs of Abraham's faith.

I am so glad that God uses imperfect people, like us, aren't you? If Abraham had been perfect, then it could be discouraging for all of us. We would think that God couldn't use us because we all are very painfully aware of our imperfections. "Well, God can't use me because I'm imperfect." And a lot of you have been using that as your excuse to God for your failure of committing yourself totally to serve the Lord God uses people like Abram. So we cannot disqualify ourselves because of our imperfections. Again God uses yielded vessels, not perfect vessels.

In v2, God promised to bless Abram. Oh, what glorious promises! Not on Abraham's goodness, but on the grace of God. God was not going to bless him because he was a good man. God doesn't bless you and me because we're good. God's blessings come to us by virtue of God's grace.

It was by the grace of God that He called Abram. It was by the grace of God that He called you and me. And it is by the grace of God that He blesses us. Not by merit of our works, our faithfulness, or our diligence, but by His grace we experience and receive the blessings of God. I don't expect God to bless me because of who I am, rather I expect God to bless me because of who He is.

Let me ask you this question. If the Lord speaks to you to do something big out of the blue that requires a huge decision, yet He doesn't give the full picture, would you obey Him and do it no matter what? Please don't answer to any one of us in this place, because you might say something that is not completely true.

That's what this thing called the Christian life is all about, isn't it? Going... yet not knowing. As followers of our Lord, we believe He leads us in a certain direction, or in pursuit of a precise goal. That leading is unmistakably clear. Not necessarily logi-

cal or explainable, but clear. At least to us. So – out of sheer obedience – we go. We pack our bags, pull up stakes, bid our friends farewell, and go. We all face a uncertain future, but our leading by the Lord sure. How strange and exciting, yet we know that the Lord will guide us. Please remember this: The hands of God will never lead us where the grace of God can not keep us.

Obedience is not a requirement of Christian commitment and discipleship, it's the by-product of an undivided heart to our God.

This covenant between God and Abraham is known as the "Abrahamic Covenant." We find 5 promises of God to Abram and his descendants:

1) To a land that I will show you

God promised them the land they could have if they obey Him. The Israelites have never really occupied the land God gave to them. At the zenith of their power during the reign of king David, they occupied 30,000 square miles, but that is not all that God gave them. Actually, He gave them 300,000 square miles.

2) I will make you a great nation

God promised to make a great nation from Abram. There is only one nation in human history that was completely destroyed, but she came back to life and still is existing – the nation of Israel. Only by the grace of God and by the promise of God, this happened.

3) Make your name great

God promised to bless Abram and to make his name great. There is probably no more honored name in history than the name of Abram, who is honored by Jews, Christians, and even Muslims.

4) I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you

This remains true today and is a root reason for the decline and destruction of many empires:

- When the Greeks overran Palestine area and desecrated the altar in the Jewish temple, they were soon conquered by Rome.
- When Rome killed Paul and many other Christians, and destroyed Jerusalem under emperor Titus, Rome soon fell.
- Spain was reduced to a fifth-rate nation after the Inquisition against the Jews.
- Poland fell after the anti-Jewish pogroms.
- Hitler's Third Reich went down after its holocaust of anti-Semitism.
- Great Britain lost her empire when she broke her faith with Israel.

During the Obama Administration, President Obama did everything within his power to treat Israel with disdain from diplomatic betrayal to political cold shoulder. It is no wonder that the economy of the US has suffered badly and unemployment was skyrocketing. But now under President Trump leadership, against all the diplomatic pressure from every other nation, the President moved the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The media and the liberal politicians cried out that the US is going to be isolated and the friendly Arab nations are going to turn against us. What happened after we moved the embassy to Jerusalem? Absolutely nothing. Jordan, Saudi, and Egypt didn't go berserk. They need us more than we need them. The US no longer relies on their oil. They no longer hold the ace card, we do.

Additionally, the liberal media want people to believe that the US economy is going to tank with the recent stock market 800 points drop and will end up in a recession.

It is a part of the liberals' strategies to make President Trump look bad before the election because they know that they cannot fight against Trump in light of this booming economy. By the way, when Obama left office, Jan 20, 2017, the Dow closed at 19,827. The latest Dow closed at 25,886.01.

The United States was one of the first modern nations to grant full citizenship and protection to Jewish people and currently the only ally in the world. This is one of the reasons why the United States has been so blessed so far. But the day U.S.A. stands against Israel, God will pull the plug and America will go down like a dirty sack of laundry. Many of you know this that in the Book of Revelation, America is not mentioned at all.

5) In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed

Not only Abram was promised blessing, but God also promised to make him a blessing to all the families of the earth. Through the lineage of Abram, we get to have the Savior of the World, Jesus Christ.

God's promise to Abraham was unconditional, one-sided – not a contract imposing conditions that Abraham had to keep in order to receive due blessings from God.

The Lord's plans rarely accompany by reasons, but they accompany by His ever fulfilling promises. He says, "I'm not going to explain to you why, but I give you My promise."

A former New York Yankee second baseman, Bobby Richardson offered a prayer that is a classic in simplicity and dependency on God: "Dear God, Your will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. Amen." God reserves His best to those who leave the choices to Him.

C. PARTIAL OBEDIENCE

Genesis 12:4-5 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.

In v1, God spoke to Abram that he should leave the country, his father's house, and relatives. Abram now is taking his daddy and nephew with him. Lot will not be a blessing to Abram as we will find out in our future study. He will be nothing but trouble and inconvenience to Abram.

This is partial obedience by Abram. Listen, partial obedience to the Lord is complete disobedience to Him.

D. ALTAR BUILDING ABRAM

Genesis 12:6-9 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. 7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. 8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. 9 So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

The tent speaks of the pilgrim who trusts God one day at a time and is always ready to move. The altar speaks of the worshiper who brings sacrifice and offers it to God. Interestingly at Abram's location, Bethel which means "the house of God" was on the west, Ai which means "the heap of ruins" was on the east, and he was traveling toward "the house of God."

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Obedience is not a requirement of Christian commitment and discipleship, it's the byproduct of an undivided heart to our God.
- 2) The covenant of God, the power of God, and the promises of God – these are the spiritual resources we can depend on as we claim our inheritance in Jesus Christ. Do you want to know more about them? Read the Word of God, the Bible daily.
- 3) The hands of God will never lead us where the grace of God can not keep us.