

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 12:1-3

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Fred Craddock was a seminary professor. He shared a story about a time when he and his wife were visiting Tennessee. They were sitting in a small cafe and there was a stately, older gentleman walking around from table to table, greeting people. He met the Craddocks and asked Fred what he did for a living. He said he taught pastors how to preach at a seminary. The gentleman then sat down with the Craddocks and told them that if Fred taught preachers how to preach, he had a story to share with them.

He proceeded to tell the Craddocks that he was born to a mother who didn't have a husband. This was at the turn of the century and the stigma related to that situation was significant. He shared how difficult it was as a young child because his classmates would call him a name he didn't like, and every time he went into town he could almost hear the whispers of judgment from others in the town.

Then, one day a new pastor came to town. Fred and his mother went to that church. When the pastor met young Fred he asked "Who is your father? I think I recognize you." Fred cringed thinking that even here, in this church with a new pastor, my past continues to haunt me. He braced himself for what was to come. Then the pastor broke out into a huge smile and said, "I recognize you! You are a child of God. You have a magnificent inheritance, son, so go forth and live up to it!".

The old gentleman told Dr. Craddock and his wife that that was one of the most influential moments of his life. The Craddocks later learned that the older gentleman in the cafe was Ben Hooper, the governor of the state of Tennessee. Mr. Hooper didn't let his darkened past inflict him and haunt him for the rest of his life. He went on and did great things. And he credits much of that to his pastor reminding him of his inheritance!

The toledoth of Terah begins in 11:27 – As I said last time, bad chapter division ... but ... there is a reason the translators made the chapter division here. 12:1-3 is massively important ...

You've heard of the "Romans Road"...

This is the "Genesis Road" – 3:15; 8:1; 12:1-3

READ Genesis 12:1-3

Proposition: 5 Elements in the Call of Abraham

I. Revelation

II. Separation

III. Exploration

IV. Protection

V. Expansion

So That: Instruction and application for us from this absolutely unique, most important turning point of all redemptive history.

1st Element in the Call of Abraham ...

I. Revelation

Gen 12:1a

Point – Revelation, God revealing Himself

- Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.
- There has never been salvation from Adam and Eve to now, separate from the Word of God, from God revealing Himself.

Proof – **Gen 12:1a** – “**Now the LORD said to Abram**”

“**Now**” – something about to happen – like Christ saying, “behold”

- Around 2090 B.C.
- Abram was born in 2165 B.C. (date for the exodus is 1445 B.C. [+430 (years in Egypt) + 130 (Jacob's age upon entry to Egypt) + 60 (Isaac's age at Jacob's birth) + 100 (Abraham's age at Isaac's birth)])
- Abram is now 75 (v. 4) • 2090 B.C.

v. **12:1** is first record of God speaking after the Dispersion (11:1-9)

- a word of blessing
- also after Creation - God's first word is a blessing v. **1:28**
- also after Flood - God's first word is a blessing **9:1**

God speaks to Abraham 4 times – 12:1; 13:14; 21:12; 22:1

God appears to Abraham 5 times – 12:7; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1; Acts 7:2

Note: Abram doesn't seek God. God seeks Abram.

- God came to Abram when he was precisely like his contemporaries: not seeking God, serving and worshipping idols, seeking to make a name for himself away from the purpose of God.
- And God saves him.
- this is true in all of God's salvation; all of God's revelation

Abram is an idolatrous pagan before his calling. He brings nothing of merit to the table.

That is just like us. If you are a Christian, it is not that you are a little more righteous than your neighbor, or had something within yourself, that made you seek God. You bring nothing of merit to the table. God sought you....you didn't seek God.

The focus of Genesis (and the rest of the OT) from this point forward is on God's choice and care of His chosen people. This begins with the call of **Abram**.

How many children in Jewish households have been named Abraham?

How many children in Christian households have been named Abraham?

How many children in Muslim households have been named Abraham?

Hebrews 11 and the Hall of Faith:

Moses the Lawgiver

David the King

Elijah the Prophet

Joshua the great General

Daniel the Statesman in another land

Yet...

... all would acknowledge Abraham as their father in the Faith

Abraham is called:

17:5 – “the father of a multitude of nations”

20:7 – “prophet”

Psa 105:6 – God’s “servant”

Gal 3:9 – “the believer”

Rom 4:11 – “the father of all who believe”

James 2:23 – “the friend of God” (Also 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8)

1) First call in Ur (Southern Iraq) – went with father Terah from Ur as far as Haran – Acts 7:2 – “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran”

2) Second call here (Gen 12:1-3) in Haran (Border of Southern Turkey and Northern Syria)

Abraham’s salvation begins with the Word of God.

Revelation, ...

2nd Element in the Call of Abraham ...

II. Separation

Gen 12:1b

Point – Leave everything and walk by faith.

- leave all that represents security
- leave your country
- leave your people
- leave your family

Proof – **Gen 12:1b** – “**Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house,**”

Josh 24:2 – “Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.””

This is at the heart of the separation that God is calling Abraham to - more than a spatial separation - also spiritual separation.

This is not a suggestion from God to Abraham. This is an imperative (command) – go from your family, country (nation), and father’s house.

Abraham has to exchange the known for the unknown

- a step of faith

Abraham was probably already wealthy and he was certainly settled (this was a big thing 4000 years ago when there were no planes, trains, automobiles, email). God tells Abraham to pack up and move.

Dr. Graham Scroggie, graduate of Spurgeon’s College in London. After pastoring in England, Scotland, New Zealand, Australia, Tasmania, the United States, and Canada, he became pastor of

Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle during World War II – *“The callings of God never leave a man where they find him. For to stay where he is after God has bidden him to move on is itself a backward movement though he takes no actual step.”*

Illustration – Recall the lyrics from Martin Luther’s hymn, A Mighty Fortress is Our God - *“Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;”*

Application – Count the cost. “Forsake all and follow Me.” This is part of what it is to be a follower of Christ.

- It’s not easy to leave things that are dear to us – family, country, house.
- Walk by faith not by sight (comes into full play in Gen 13).

Mark 10:29-30 – “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Revelation, Separation, ...

3rd Element in the Call of Abraham ...

III. Exploration

Gen 12:1b-2

Point – Separation from: and separation to:

→Departure and Discovery →Consecration

The separation was very specific – country, people, family

The exploration is very general (not specific) - not much detail

Proof – Gen 12:1b-2 – “To the land which I will show you; ²And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;”

For Abram – Exploration and discovery of place and purpose

Discovery - of the place God has for him: God will give Abram a new country.

- he left Ur previously and now he is leaving Haran

“**to the land which I will show you**” – Abram is told nothing about the land that God will show him.

- five times God says “I will” in vv. 2-3
- “Get going and I will tell you.”

He must exchange the known for the unknown.

Abram has no idea at this point we would be discussing him 4000 years later in Gilbert, AZ.

We are wrapping this all around Abraham but it applies to us today. God says get going to all of us...whether it be in the ministry, in the church. We will realize this in our lives as we are obedient to Him. It is our step of faith. Listen...obey....go.

The place - This land is of huge importance - it permeates throughout the Old Testament and is referenced in the New Testament. It will realize itself fully in the End Times and as a whole when the nation of Israel repents.

Lev 26:42 – “then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.”

2 Sam 7:10 – “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel”

Ezek 47:13-23 – explicit details of boundaries/division of what the land that God promises to Abraham in Gen 12:2 will look like.

Heb 11:8-9 – “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;”

In the Toledoth of Terah, this time of Abraham, there are no great kings or empires in Gen 11:27-25:11. There are not any massive temples being built or expanded. The life of Abraham is characterized by tents and altars.

Yes, he was a wealthy man, but there was always a nomadic aspect to him. This is so that God’s glory would shine that much brighter with this man that he is marking out with the selection of a nation and the coming of the Messiah through this man’s lineage.

Discovery - of the purpose God has for him:

God will give Abram a new family, new nation, and a new name.

“And I will make you a great nation” – God picks one of the least likely heads of a nation

- he is the son of an idolater; he has a barren wife
 - he is getting older and past typical child bearing times
- Yet, God says He will make him a great nation.

The backdrop of Sarai’s barrenness (11:30)

Barrenness - This is huge - goes through the rest of Scripture

- Gen 25:21 (Rebekah)
- Gen 29:31 (Rachel)
- Jgs 13:2 (Manoah’s Wife)
- 1 Sam 1:5 (Hannah)

- Luke 1 (Elizabeth)

It is to demonstrate that it is not man that wills or runs, but God who chooses.

Application - God is sovereign over

- the dry ground (famine -12:10)
- the barren womb
- the broken heart
- the denied job application
- the cancerous cells....
- everything

And we trust God. We follow Abraham's footsteps. To God be the glory.

“And I will bless you”

- 5 times in 12:2-3
- 6 times in chapters 1-11

Promise repeated to Isaac - 26:3 – “Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.”

And Jacob - 28:13 – “Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.”

“And make your name great”

Before the Flood, the “sons of God” tried to make a name for themselves (6:4 - literally “men of a name”).

Before the Dispersion, man said, “And they said ... let us make a name for ourselves” (11:4).

Man seeks his own position, prominence, and power. → Name – Babel

What’s the difference between:
“And they said” and “And God said”?

This is the contrast between:

the finite	the Infinite
the feeble	the Mighty
what may or may not happen	what will happen

God gives the same promise to David
2 Sam 7:9 – “I will make you a great name”

Abraham has to exchange (separate from) the known for the (to the) unknown and find his reward in what he would not live to see (nation) what is intangible (name) and what he would be to others (blessing). Truly a step of faith.

“**And so you shall be a blessing;**” – second imperative (command)
• a result and a command

God wants to make us **channels of blessings**; not **receptacles of blessing**.

Illustration – We had no idea when Margie and I started attending a young married home group in WA that I would be asked to lead another small group. We had no idea God would lead us to attend The Master’s Seminary in CA, which would lead to being on staff at Grace Community Church. And we had no idea that God would then move us to the East Coast and then back to AZ and San Tan Bible Church. ☺

Eric Alexander, Pastor in Glasgow, Scotland – *“There is no ideal place to serve God except the place He set you down.”*

Jim Elliot - *“Where ever God has you, be all there”*

Application– Exploration - Consecration!

Revelation, Separation, Exploration, ...

4th Element in the Call of Abraham ...

IV. Protection

Gen 12:3a

Point – Abram and Sarai weren’t just leaving their country, their people, their family. They weren’t just leaving their place of familiarity, culture, language, and customs.

They were leaving their place of security and safety. They were going to a place where they will be surrounded by Canaanites.

Proof – **Gen 12:3a** – **“And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse.”**

What is Abraham going to receive from that? God’s protection.

Application - Remember who is on your side! Reassurance from God...as you are leaving your safety and security, remember you are going to great safety and security that requires faith.

- 1) God leads with the **blessing**. God responds to the man who curses with the **curse**. This is a subtle distinction in the text. God does not choose/elect unto condemnation in the same way

He elects people to salvation. Some use the term 'double predestination'. Condemnation is 'because man' (Mal 1, Rom 9). Even this subtle distinction in Gen 12:3 fits in perfectly to the pattern we find in the rest of Scripture.

2) 2 different Hebrew words that are translated as "**curse**"

- man's blasphemous curse (treat lightly, disdain)
- followed by God's judicial curse

3) switch from plural object of **bless** to singular object of **curse**

- **God is by nature a Savior**
- **to let Abraham learn and us learn that God is concerned with the individual details**

1 Chr 17:8 – "I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a name like the name of the great ones who are in the earth."

Illustration– Remember, Noah was not safe because he was in the Ark. Noah was in the Ark because he was safe. That is a distinction.

Application – In the same way, Abraham and Sarai here.

Revelation, Separation, Exploration, Protection, ...

5th Element in the Call of Abraham ...

V. Expansion

Gen 12:3b

Point – God wants to make us channels of blessings not receptacles of blessings.

Proof – Gen 12:3b – “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

The barren womb of Sarai is the backdrop to God’s promise to make Abram a great nation. The babbling pagans in Babel seeking to make a name for themselves is the backdrop to God’s promise to make Abram’s name great. In the same way, the birth and spread of the Nations in chapter 10 are the backdrop to this promise from God to Abraham.

Gen 10:32 – “These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.”

- that does not mean universalism
- that doesn’t mean every single person in every family
- but it does mean representations of all the groups shall be recipients of God’s grace and mercy that comes through Abraham

This blessing will be through Jesus Christ, the One promised in the Garden of Eden (3:15)

Turn to: Gal 3:6-9

People in Galatia were being drawn in by men who are introducing human works as a means of salvation. By doing this, they were polluting the true Gospel. Paul points back to Abraham while defending the true Gospel. God says Gen 12:3 is the Gospel.

It isn’t just about Abraham, it’s not just about us. There is an expansion. God works out and bears fruit in your life so that we can plant seeds and other fruit will be gathered.

CONCLUSION