

Standing on the Promise **Hebrews 6:13-19**

When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself,¹⁴ saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.”¹⁵ And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.¹⁶ People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument.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.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 set before us may be greatly encouraged.¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,²⁰ where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

God’s promise to Abraham to bless him and give him innumerable children is a proto-type and for the surety of God’s promises throughout the Bible. Abraham’s life becomes a template, a road-map for trusting God, whether in the Old Testament, the New Testament or now.

The key is verse 15 - *And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.*

“having patiently waited” = *makrothymeo* = to be of a long spirit, to not lose heart

Aorist = past tense

Imperative = command

Participle = a verb used as an adjective or a compound verb *“having...”*

It was not an action but an attitude.

Let’s watch God work.

First: Abraham’s Call. 12:1-14

Abraham’s story begins in the list of nations in Genesis 11 where he is simply another name in a long list of names in the genealogy of Shem

Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel – Jered – Enoch – Methuselah – Lamech - Noah – Shem – Arphaxad – Eber – Terah - Abraham

Jesus is also a son of Shem – Luke 6:36 - *the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,*

Terah had three sons: Abram, Nahor and Haran, Lot’s father. Haran died in Ur. Abram married Sarai but she “was barren; she had no child.” (Gen 11:30)

Genesis 11:31-32 - *Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the*

Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. ³² The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

It is from Haran that God calls Abram and makes him this promise

Genesis 12:1-3 - *Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

- a) *I will make of you a great nation*
- b) *I will bless you*
- c) *And make your name great*
- d) *You will be a blessing*
- e) *I will bless those who bless you*
- f) *Him who dishonors you, I will curse*
- g) *In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*

Now we understand why the Scripture points to Sarai as barren. She has naturally had no children and God has chosen to make a promise of national and then global blessing to a man whose wife is apparently infertile.

12:4 - Abraham is 75 at this time.

- a) Abram moved to Shechem in Canaan 12:6
- b) where God promised the land to Abram's descendants 12:6
- c) He built an altar to the Lord 12:7
- d) He moved to Bethel (house of God) 12:8
- e) He built another altar to God at Bethel 12:8
- f) Abraham moved on to Negeb (Negev) the desert in Southern Israel
- g) When a famine hit the Negeb, Abraham moved to Egypt
 - Abram lied about Sarai 12:13
 - became rich there 12:16 & 13:2
 - but Pharaoh discovered the treachery and had Abram deported 12:20

Note: Abraham is not worthy of the grace God promised him in 12:1-2. And this is important for us because we aren't either.

- When you think, “I'm not worthy,” just agree.
- When the devil says, “You're not worthy,” just agree.

God is going to give Abraham and Sarah a child because of His grace, not their righteousness.

His unrighteousness is seen in four things while he's in Egypt:

- He built no altar in Egypt.
- He dug no well in Egypt.
- He made no sacrifices in Egypt.
- God speak to him in Egypt.

Back in Israel, Abraham returned to Bethel and called on God at his previously built altar 13:3-5

Lot had also been made rich in Egypt. Their herds competed for the land, so Abraham gave Lot the choice of land. Lot chose Sodom and “Abraham settled in the land of Canaan” (13:12)

At this time, God reiterated his promise to Abram

13:14-17 - *The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, ¹⁵ for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. ¹⁷ Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.”*

Abram then moved to Hebron (David’s first capitol) and “built an altar to the Lord” 13:18

Chapter 14 relates Abram’s adventures: rescuing Lot and being blessed by Melchizedek

First point: Abraham’s call is by grace.

Second: Abram’s Salvation is by Grace 15:1-6

What we’re about to see is the video of the snapshot found in Philippians 1:6 - *I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ*

In chapter 15, God reminds Abraham that the promise rests in God and not in Abraham – 15:1 – but Abram questions God about it.

God responds - 15:5 - *“Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”*

15:6 - And *“he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness”*

Romans 4 – Paul uses this moment to demonstrate

T - Romans 3:21-22 & 27 - *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe....Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded*

The Jews then ask, “What about circumcision? It’s the work that identifies us as children of the covenant.”

T - Romans 4:1-3 - *What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”*

IMP: Abraham was counted righteous in Gen 15 and circumcised in Gen 17.

Everyone who believes is a child of Abraham because Abraham believed God and was saved.

Galatians 3:7-9 – Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Back to 15:7-21 – God the Father and Son ratify the covenant God made with Abram.

This is **Hebrews 6:16-17** - *¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,*

18 - *so that by two unchangeable things,*

- a) His promise - Genesis 12:1-3
- b) His oath - Genesis 15:13-20

in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

Third: Abraham’s Failure Genesis - 16:1-4a

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, “The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.” Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³ So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴ He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

What we witness is a repeat of Eden; a failure to trust God. (And this is what the author of Hebrews is driving toward – trusting God when it would be so easy to go back to the Temple.

V 2 - *...perhaps I can build a family through her. Abram agreed.*

Genesis 12:1-2 - *The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.*

ILL – The Hagarian effect – it works temporarily and devastatingly

Galatians 3:2-3 - *Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 - *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.*

Galatians 4:21-31 - *Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. ²³ But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. ²⁴ Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. ²⁵ Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.” ²⁸ Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” ³¹ So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.*

Abraham was 75 when God promised him nations. He is 86 when Ishmael is born (16:16).

Fourth: Abraham’s Sign 17

Twenty-four years later, when Abraham was 99, God instructed him to be circumcised.

Conclusion:

(Again, I’m putting the Conclusion here because I think this is as far as we will get...)

Hebrews 6:13-19 - *When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” ¹⁵ And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. ¹⁶ People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 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.*

Application: 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 set before us may be greatly encouraged.* ¹⁹ *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,* ²⁰ *where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

What is the key? – v 15 - ¹⁵ *And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.*

Question: Can you do better than God? If not, why and where are you fainting? Doubting? Worrying? Working?

Community Groups:

- 1 – How are you doing now?
- 2 – Where are you rejoicing?
- 3 – How are you suffering?
- 4 – Read the text
- 5 – Start with Genesis 12:1-4. Read the text.
- 6 – What did God promise Abraham?
- 7 – What made faith necessary to believe God about this?
- 8 – Is Abraham ‘worthy’ of such a promise?
- 9 – How does he evidence his unworthiness?
- 10 – How can I take hope from Abraham’s sinfulness?
- 11 – Read Genesis 15:1-6.
- 12 – What does God promise?
- 13 – How do I know that Abraham is saved by grace through faith?
- 14 – How does Paul use this in Romans 4?
- 15 – How does Paul use this in Galatians 3:7-9?
- 16 – How did Abraham and Sarah fail God in Genesis 16:1-4

17 – What is wrong with trying to do with the Spirit’s work in the flesh?

18 – How might we be doing this in our own lives?

19 – What is the author’s application point in Hebrews 6:13-19?

20 – What is the key?

21 – Where are you fainting, doubting, worrying, working?

Remainder of sermon:

vs 10-11 - *This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.*

This cutting away of the flesh is essential because it reminds us that the flesh can never satisfy God or fulfil his plan.

When confronted with the impossibility of an even older Sarai bearing a child of promise, Abraham still wants God to bless Ishmael - v 10 - *“Oh that Ishmael might live before you!”*

15-22

It is also at this time that God changes Abram’s name to Abraham – 17:5 - *No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.*

17:15 - *And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.*

God changes the name of Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah. So Abram (*Noble Father*) becomes Abraham (*Father of many*) and Sarai, (*Princess*) becomes Sarah (*Mother of Nations*).

Fifth: Growth in Grace 18

1-21 – The promise is given to Sarah

22-33 – Interceding for Sodom

19 – God rescues Lot and destroys Sodom

Sixth: Abraham’s Repeated Failure. 19

1 - *From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar*

Abraham repeated his lie to Abimelech 2-13

In spite of Abraham's lie, God uses Abimelech to bless Abraham – 14-16

God hears Abraham's prayer and blesses Abimelech's house – 17-18

Sixth: Abraham's Son of Promise 21

1-7 – Isaac is born

Abraham is 100 years old – v 5 - *Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.*

Abraham believed God for 25 years.

8-21 – God blesses Hagar and Ishmael

22-34 – Abraham makes a generational treaty with Abimelech

Seventh: Abraham's Faith is Tested 22

God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac

- a) Both fulfilled promises (Gen 12:3; Gen 3:15)
- b) Both were the only son of their father (Gen 22:2; Matt 3:16)
- c) Both were loved by their fathers (Genesis 22:2; Matthew 3:16, 17).
- d) Both had a 3-day experience (Gen 22:4; Matt 12:40)
- e) Both were accompanied by 2 men (Gen 22:3; Matt 27:38)
- f) Both carried their own wood (Gen 22:6; John 19:17)
- g) Both submitted to their father (Gen 22:9; Lk 22:42)
- h) Both asked a question of their father (Gen 22:7; Matt 27:46)
- i) Both were brought back from the dead (Gen 22:12; Matt 28:6-7)

Jesus in Adam – A first Son / The first Adam and the last Adam

Jesus in Abraham – He believed God and saves nations

Jesus in Isaac – He is the son of promise

Jesus in Jacob – He is wounded and made a prince

Jesus in Joseph – He is loved, betrayed, resurrected, reunited with the Father and saves the world

The key concept in Abraham's life is faith.

vs 4-5 - *On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy^[a] will go over there and worship and come again to you."*

Hebrews 11:8-12 - *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he*

went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

Eight: Abraham's Loss 23

Sarah dies

Nine: Abraham's Gain 24

Isaac marries Rebekah

Ten: Abraham Dies 25

7-8 - *These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.*

Abraham died but his descendants continued to multiply and the sons of Israel were born

19-26 - *These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac,²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.²¹ And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²² The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." ²⁴ When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.*

Conclusion:

Moses wrote Genesis as a polemic against the gods of Egypt. "For 400 years you were taught the Egyptian history of your existence. But this is your God, this is where you came from, this is who you are, and this is why you are here."

The writer of Hebrews picks up on that theme and says, "Just as God kept his word to Abraham, God is keeping his word to Jesus. All who are in Abraham are saved.....through Jesus."

6:13-20 - *For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵ And thus*

*Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained **the promise**.¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, **a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,**²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*

We are not home yet. But...

God's promise to Abraham to bless him and give him innumerable children, of whom Jesus is the ultimate Son, is a proto-type and for the surety of God's promises throughout the Bible.

Even in the OT, the covenant was established between the Father and the Son and witnessed by Abraham. Thus, God's faithfulness is not dependent on Abraham's faithfulness but God's faithfulness to himself. He could swear by no greater and so he swore by himself.

Abraham's life becomes a template, a road-map for trusting God, whether in the Old Testament, the New Testament or now.

And so, the writer encourages his readers to do what Abraham did, have faith in Christ, Abraham's greatest Son.