

Promised  
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Allen Power

Genesis 12:1-5a; 13:11-18

To get started let's think about three words: Faith, Flaws, and Folly.

- How would you define faith in the context of a relationship with God?
- How would you define flaws in relation to human nature? What does it mean to be flawed humans?
- Finally, a word we don't often use. How would you define the word folly?
- You'll see how these three words apply to our text shortly.

As a Christ-follower have you ever become firmly convinced God wanted you to change direction in your life, career, or location yet His Heavenly plan didn't seem to make any earthly sense? It's perplexing and a little scary for God's voice to be so clear yet the way forward be so UNCLEAR. In Genesis 12 and 13 we meet Abram (later called Abraham), a 75-year-old man (BTW: that was middle age in that time). Abram had been blessed with material wealth but not with children. God came to Abram with a plan that by earthly reasoning made no sense. Warren Wiersbe said of Abraham, *"God did not give Abraham reasons or explanations; He simply gave him promises."*

- In this text we see these truths about following God's plan for our lives:
  - Our Heavenly Father is a promise-keeping God.
  - He's also a loving parent who gives provision, direction, and protection.
  - When necessary (as a parent) He administers discipline for our good.
  - We can only enjoy the benefits of our relationship with Him if we trust what He has promised and obey what He has commanded.
- The point: The abundant life Jesus promised will be found where God's promises and commands meet our faith and obedience.
- We see those truths played out in the life of Abram beginning in Genesis 12.

**Genesis 12:1–5 (ESV)** — **1** 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." **4** So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **5** And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.

- What we've just read is known as the "Abrahamic Covenant." In verses two and three we see seven promises God made to Abram. What were they?
- We might wonder why God felt the need to make this covenant with Abram.
- The answer can be found in Genesis chapters 3-11.

- Adam and Eve foolishly disobeyed God's command and committed the first sin. Sin and disobedience blossomed to the point that God flooded the earth starting humanity over again with Noah and his family.
- Even after this "reboot," people resisted God's direction, so He put in motion a plan for a chosen people who would pave the way for a promised Messiah.
- God chose an older, childless couple to be the parents of His nation Israel.
- God's Heavenly plan didn't seem to make any earthly sense. God's promises to Abram were clear yet the way forward was UNCLEAR. How did Abram respond?
- Verse 4: "Abram went as God had told him."
- Verse 5: He took his wife, his kin, his servants, and his stuff and walked away from the life he knew to an unknown future that only God knew.
- Which of our three words describes Abram's response to God's promise?
- **Hebrews 11:8 (ESV) — 8** 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.
- Abram clearly demonstrated faith as he pulled up stakes and headed to Canaan.
- Here's the lesson for us as followers of Christ: As with Abraham, God gives promises, but He doesn't always give reasons or explanations.
- We can only enjoy the benefits of our relationship with God if we trust what He has promised and obey what He has commanded.
- While Abram was a man of faith, he was also (like us) a flawed human being.
- Our lesson writers skipped 12:10-20 but let me summarize what happened.
- There was a famine; so for survival Abram took his family to Egypt.
- Sarai may have been a "mature adult" but clearly, she was very beautiful.
- Abram feared the Egyptians would want to keep his wife and kill him so they agreed she would say she was his sister and not his wife.
- Even people of faith can succumb to the flaws of human nature.
- Abram was right about one thing: Pharaoh fell for Sarai, but God sent a plague.
- Pharaoh said to Abram, *"What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!"<sup>ii</sup>*
- Sadly, Abram and Sarai would tell this same lie again as recorded in Genesis 20.
- The lesson for us: Even if we start out in faith, we can be tempted to fall back on our flawed human nature and try to control things instead of trusting God.
- Abram and Sarai were not the only ones susceptible to folly. It ran in the family.
- In Genesis 13 we read that God blessed Abram and his nephew Lot with wealth.
- It's wonderful to have close family if the family isn't living too close to each other.
- Prosperity and proximity led to problems for Abram and Lot.
- *"...[T]he land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great ...<sup>7</sup> and there was strife between..."<sup>iii</sup>* Abram and Lot's hired hands.
- So, Abram proposed a peaceful solution to Lot: "You get first dibs on the land. You choose where you want to live and I'll go the other direction."
- How was that a further demonstration of Abram trusting God?
- Lot made what seemed to be the best business decision.

- Given first “dibs” on land he selfishly claimed what appeared to offer greater prosperity. It was a choice he would one day regret.

**Genesis 13:11–18 (ESV)** — **11** So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. **12** Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. **13** Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

- Let’s consider Lot’s choice. You don’t have to be a Bible scholar to know the city called Sodom. Remember our three words? Which one applies to Lot’s choice?
- We will learn more about the full tragedy of Lot’s choice of moving toward Sodom in a couple of weeks in Genesis 19. For now, what motivated Lot to make a decision that would prove to be both foolish and fatal? What can we learn?
- Both Abram and Lot were prosperous; Lot’s greed for more was his undoing.
- Prosperity isn’t wrong if it doesn’t derail us from obeying God’s plan. Sadly, some let ambition and greed keep them from being who God called them to be.
- Meanwhile in the other direction, Abram was standing on the promises of God.

**14** 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.” **18** So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

- Notice, whenever Lot settled somewhere he simply pitched his tent but when Abram settled somewhere he always built an altar.
- Our connection to God in worship is how we can be certain we are hearing His promises, still following His plan and obeying His commands.
- Faith, Flaws, and Folly – Three choices available to every person but only one of them leads to fulfilling God’s purposes and receiving His blessings for our lives.
- **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)** — **6** And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
- We know the opposite of faith is disobedience. One commentator states: “*All disobedience boils down to one of...two [things]. Either we do not care what God says (he is not Lord); or we do not believe what God says (we do not trust him).*”<sup>iv</sup> “*We struggle to obey because we struggle to believe that God’s way will really work out for the best.*”<sup>v</sup>

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Our God is a promise-keeping God, and we can only enjoy the benefits of our relationship with Him if we trust what He has promised and obey what He has commanded.

- Sometimes that means stepping out in faith when God's Heavenly plans don't seem to make earthly sense. [24 years ago this month, the Power family experienced this. A friend asked, "Are you sure you heard God correctly?"]
- Has God ever called you to obedience without much explanation about the future? If He hasn't yet, He will. That's when we can choose to be like Abram.
- In the meantime, we can be poised for God's plans by claiming His promises, trusting His goodness, and obeying His commands as stated in His word.
- The abundant life Jesus promised will be found where God's promises and commands meet our faith and obedience.
- At the risk of sounding trite, the old hymn was accurate when it tells us to *"trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, then to trust and obey."*

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<sup>i</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1991). [\*Be Obedient\*](#) (p. 15). Victor Books.

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (Ge 12:18–19). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Ge 13:6–7). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>iv</sup> Strassner, K. (2009). [\*Opening up Genesis\*](#) (p. 65). Day One Publications.

<sup>v</sup> *ibid*