

Genesis 17:1-27 - A Command and A Promise

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 August 2023

Preacher: Pastor Jared Bromka

[0 : 00] Father, you have such an amazing way of imparting truth. It's not the way we would pick, Lord. And you tell stories and paint pictures that we never would.

But Lord, when we open our hearts to see past the surface, Lord, and to see that the words that you speak, they truly are life, truth, and spirit. Lord, we ask you to fill us with your spirit.

It's not by might nor by power, but it is by your spirit. And Lord, let that not be just a phrase we say or put on our walls, but something we live by. We just thank you now for this time in your word, in Jesus' name. Amen.

My theme today is a command and a promise. In chapter 17, we see a command and a promise. So I thought we'd look real quick at kind of like where we are in history, because we've just kind of been bumping along, and now we're in Abraham's life, and we're moving all over the place here. Between the end of chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17, that little gap, if you look at verse 16, see that little white space between that and the beginning of chapter 17?

[1 : 04] That's 13 years right there that took place. Abraham was fourscore and six years old when Hagar bare Ishmael to him, and then beginning chapter 17, we have 13 years of just jump forward in the life of Abraham.

So we look at this kind of overview of the Old Testament, very broad overview. You can kind of see the different arcs. So we've gone through creation and kind of the history of the beginnings of the world, and now we're in what's called the period of the patriarchs.

And this obviously begins with Abraham and then goes through his sons until we get to the seven sons of Jacob. They're going to go down into Egypt. That's already been promised as part of God's promise to Abraham when he was Abram, was, hey, your seed is going to dwell in another nation. And they're going to come out of there and then into conquest. But that period of the patriarchs to Exodus, that's like 52 chapters.

It kind of shows the highs and the lows throughout Scripture of where, you know, they're walking with the Lord. They weren't walking with the Lord. And so you see Adam and Eve, they're way up there at the top, and it's a low point when they get to Noah, where the world's at.

[2 : 18] And then it's back up with Abraham. We're kind of down again in Egypt, up with Moses, and then it's just all over as you go through the kings. But I thought that one was kind of cool. I like charts, and I like charts that are a little different and give a different view.

So as we're moving with Abraham through history, there's a lot that's being begun, right? That's what Genesis is. There's foundations. There's starts. There's good beginnings.

There's promises. There's not a lot of fulfillment. But I was thinking about Abraham and Abraham. Abraham now. Thank the Lord he's getting his name changed to Abraham.

Abraham, his life, it wasn't like incomplete, right? He wasn't like, well, I'm about to die, and nothing really got started because I'm in Genesis. You know, nothing got completed.

I mean, it's all started. For him, it was a whole and full and a complete life. But if you think he's 99 years old, him and Sarah's 89, I guess.

[3 : 18] She's going to be 90 when she has Isaac. And so there is something in their life that's incomplete. And it's thinking of, like, people have midlife crisis, you know, and they get to a point. And shake your head at me.

Midlife crisis, yeah. But people have midlife crisis. They get to a point, and I think it's, you know, you look back, and it's like, wow, we had great times. But they're over now. And when I had them, they're fantastic.

You know, I had great times with my kids when they were little, and we did all this stuff. But you get to a point where you look at it, and you go, but what does it mean now? It's done, and it's gone.

What does my life have right now? What's the value in it at this moment?

And we can have this idea almost as we look at Abraham's life, like, well, it was just the beginning. The culmination is Jesus. Yeah, but Abraham didn't live for 2,000 years.

His life was contained within those amount of years that he lived. And so are ours. And we kind of think, like, the only life that really matters and time frame that matters is this one. This one.

[4 : 17] I mean, something happened back in 1900 and 1800 and all that, but this is the only one that matters because this is the one I'm living. And for us, obviously, that's very true. But there are things in our lives, there's promises that God gives us, and it looks like maybe they're not fulfilled.

Abraham's life is going to look like some of his promises aren't fulfilled. But we have the promise, Jesus, of that in Christ. All the promises are yes and amen. We're going to see in this chapter where, from God's standpoint, when he gives a promise, it's already done.

You know? And so when we walk through our relationship with the Lord, I think we need to keep in mind all the things God wants to do in our lives, they're done. They're done. Accept them as done. And then trust that he will then work that out in his time. Abraham just had a huge lapse in chapter 16 because he couldn't see that it was done. He couldn't see that, well, if God said, I'm going to have this son, I'm going to have a son by Sarah.

He wasn't accepting that. So there's this unfulfillment in his life. And I think fulfillment doesn't come from experiences or time. It comes from now knowing that there's fulfillment in Christ, there's completion in the Lord.

[5 : 29] So as we get into this chapter, it's easy kind of to just look at like that we're on this journey through Genesis. Well, these are people's lives. This is going to cover hundreds of years.

And for them, it was very important and integral to them where they're at with the Lord. And what these things that we may look at as, excuse me, future promise, what were they to them in that moment?

So in chapter 17, it's been 13 years, 13 years that Hagar has gone back and lived with Sarah, 13 years that Ishmael has been raised. Is he raised by Sarah?

Is he raised by Hagar? Don't know. But 13 years that Hagar has been able to now live there and cohabitate in a way that she didn't feel like she needed to run away because she had submitted to the Lord.

13 years of Abraham having a son and 13 years of Sarah, most likely very frustrated. Possibly bitter. But when Abraham was 99 years old, and we're going to find out when we get over here when God promises a son by Sarah, it was re-read where he said, he laughed and said, Shall a child be born into him that's 100?

[6 : 40] So at 86, Abraham's able to reproduce. Okay, he's having kids. By now, he's not. He's saying at 100, it's over.

I'm not having kids. And there ain't no way Sarah is. She's never had kids. It's just certainly not now. So God waits until it's impossible. He waits until there is no ability for Abraham and Sarah in their own strength to fulfill this promise.

There's nothing they can do now. They already tried that. We saw what happened. So we're going to see that God's command and promise lead to covenant and blessing.

So God's going to give a command, and within all of God's commands, our promise. Within all of God's promises, our commands. They go together. And they lead to covenant and blessing.

It all begins with the Lord, right? It begins with his word. In this chapter, we're going to see a lot of will, a lot of I wills. God's going to say, I will, like 12 times and infer I will.

[7 : 41] The word will appears 14 times, 14 wills. And then what's on the back of an I will? If God says, I will, then it shall. We'll see 18 shalls.

So this is God emphatically saying, this is going to happen. I'm going to do it. You tried, Abraham. But the really cool part, the thing that I was just blowing my mind this week was, Abraham gets a part now.

It's like, God's like, I'm going to do it all. But you get a part. Yes. You know, it's like painting by numbers, right? It's like, oh, I can do that. God put the number there.

Oh, what color? Yes. Just stay in those lines. Okay. You sure? You want me to go? Maybe go that line. You know, you can do that. I could do that. So, and that's how the Lord is with us. So our understanding of who God is allows us to take part in what he does.

And so Abraham's going to kind of understand more of who God is, and then he's going to be able to take part in what he does. Let's jump in.

[8 : 45] When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said unto him, I'm the almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect. And so he's appeared to Abraham.

Whenever it says appeared, it literally seems like he appeared physically in some form. We're going to see that again when he comes down to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. He's there talking with him, and he's got a couple of buddies with him, the two angels, because it says he's appeared. And then later on, it's going to say he went up from him. So there seems to be this physical appearance. And we know that Jesus will say, Abraham saw my day and was glad. So within this promise and this interaction of God with Abraham, he was able to see what was coming with the Messiah.

And he says, I am the almighty God. That is El Shaddai. We all heard that before, probably. There's a song in the 90s, El Shaddai. That's pretty popular. I remember.

And El Shaddai just means almighty or omnipotent, because he says there, I'm the almighty God. El God Shaddai, almighty. He's almighty. He's omnipotent. His power does not diminish.

[9 : 54] Abraham's is diminishing. God does not diminish. He is always potent. And he says this to Abraham. He says, walk before me and be thou perfect.

Well, hasn't Abraham been walking before him? He has. He has. He's old, but he's not been perfect. Well, the idea of perfect there isn't don't sin. The idea is one of wholeness, entireness, blamelessness, soundness.

It's like Abraham, walk before me in a way that you have nothing that can be blamed. There's no blame. And this is why I see the command and the promise. So God commands him, is saying, walk before me and be thou perfect.

But you see also within that, that God's saying, it's almost like he's declaring that. Like, Abraham, you will walk before me and be perfect. You will do this, Abraham.

You will walk before me in soundness and completeness. Philippians 2.13 says, That's for it is God which works in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

[10 : 57] Do all things without murmuring and disputing. Why? That you may be blameless. Because God's working in us, to willing to do of his good pleasure. We have nothing we can complain about. It's his timetable.

It's his working. That we may be blameless, harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

That's that idea of what he's saying there to Abraham. Hey, just walk before me and be perfect.

What he says to us in Christ now, same thing. God's working in us so that we can then work that out to shine as lights in the world.

Verse 2. And I'll make my covenant. And here's the first, I will. And I will make my covenant between me and thee. And I will multiply thee exceedingly. So what does the Lord declare first? First we have what? He said unto him, I am. And then he said, I will. And that's where we have to understand first who God is, before we understand what he does.

[11 : 54] God comes first with, this is who I am in your life. I'm El Shaddai. And now because of that, this is what I will do. And we can believe that, because now we know who he is.

And what does Abram do? Abram fell on his face. And God talked with him, saying. So we have two words there for speech, don't we? This is one of those other points where I would look at and say, why doesn't it just say, and Abram fell on his face and God talked with him?

Or Abram fell on his face and God said. Why does it reiterate this? Why is it twice? So the word there for saying is to bring forth, to utter.

You know, it's like, okay, a saying. Someone spoke, someone said something. But the word there, talked with, is more personal. It's more intimate. And the idea is to set an order. It actually has within it to pasture and to guide.

It's to shepherd. The idea of this, the speech is, hey, I'm going to talk to you in a way to guide you. It's much more intimate and personal. As we look at this chapter again, the, you know, we've been looking at the covenant and the promises and looking at how that applies to our lives.

[13 : 01] We've been looking at the relationships between people and how that applies. But man, don't lose the relationship and intimacy that God has with Abram.

This man who's up and down and up and down and all over. Here, the Lord's showing up and just hanging out with him, talking with him. Abram, I want to talk to you about something. I have something exciting to tell you.

And Abram fell on his face. Humility before the Lord. Isaiah 57, 15 says, For thus says the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place.

Who does he dwell with? With him also that's of a contrite and humble spirit. To revive the spirit of the humble and revive the heart of the contrite ones. And then, verse 4, God is talking with him.

He says, As for me, behold, my covenant is with you. You shall be a father of many nations. He's been told that already. He's reiterating that.

[14:05] Neither shall thy name anymore be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham. For a father of many nations have I made thee.

Abram means father or exalted father. Abraham means father of a great multitude. Oh, fantastic. I had the name dad, and I'm not a dad.

And now I'm, you know, got the name Big Daddy. But I still don't got any kids, you know. Father of a great multitude. So that H that he puts in there.

Abram, and he adds the H, the ha. That is H-A-I, I think in English it's spelled. And it's pronounced high in Hebrew. And it is the same idea where God breathes into Adam the ha, the breath of life.

He's stuck that now in the middle of Abraham's name. He's going to do the same thing with Sarah.

But Abraham's being made new. God is breathing life into him. We're going to see why he has to do that here in a minute.

[15:09] But it was in the place of humility that Abram was made new, wasn't it? God says, I am, I will. Abram humbled himself and said, I believe that.

I believe you are who you said you are. I believe you're going to do what you said. You know, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you should be saved. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. I believe that. I accept that.

And we humble ourselves and say, I'm a sinner, and I need to be saved. And then we're made new from that place of humility. Nobody was ever born again in pride. You know, it's just, it's not, it's not going to happen.

From that place of humility, he breathes life into him. And he says, I will make you a father of many nations. And here it is. For a father of many nations, have I made you.

It's done. It's done. In verse five, I've made you this, Abram. You already are. You are a father of many nations. And is he a father of many nations?

[16:07] Yes, Abraham is a father of many nations. And we're looking back over time. We can see, yes, he has been the father of many nations. So that person, Abraham, whether he had had a child yet or not, he's still Abraham.

And God looks at him and says, well, that's you. I see you. I know what I'm going to do in your life.

And I see the completion and the wholeness. You're a father of many nations. What does he look at you and say? What does he look at me and say?

Maybe he looks at you and says, oh, I see you as a restorer of relationships. I don't help anybody in their relationship. He's like, yeah, but I know you're going to because I know what I'm going to do in you.

I see you as reaching the laws. I see you as preaching the gospel. I like to read, you know, I like to read a lot of the heroes of the faith, Christian literature, guys who have done it really well.

Hudson Taylors and Charles Spurgeons and those guys. But it's interesting because before God used them, he didn't use them, right? You usually, you read about their lives from when God stepped in and started doing something.

[17:09] It's like, wow, look at what he did. You know, this is amazing. But before that, they were just living their life and God stepped in and then decided to use them in a different way.

But their relationship with the Lord across those, that period, to the Lord, it looked the same because he knew them, who they were in every state of their life.

So when God's calling Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, in God's mind, that's Abraham. He knows.

He's like, oh, that's the father of many nations. I know him. He'll command his children after me.

Abram is just walking this out. And it's the same for us. God already knows who we are and what we will do. And we get the opportunity to walk it out in faith. 2 Corinthians 5.17 says, therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Old things are passed away. And here it is. Behold, all things are become new. You are a new creation. All things are new. It's not an I hope so. It is now that way.

[18 : 13] And so God gives this promise to Abraham. And all of God's promises, like we said, they're future for us. But for God, they're present.

And they're already done. And I'll make thee exceeding fruitful. And I'll make nations of thee. And kings shall come out of thee. Fruitfulness came when?

Only after he was made new. Only after Abraham was born again. Only after Abraham became Abraham will there be fruitfulness. And I'll give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger.

All the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. And I'll be their God. And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. Okay. Well, this is new. Because up to this point, where's the covenant been? It's been all on one side. It's been all on the Lord's side. It's this one-sided covenant.

[19 : 21] God said, hey, I'm going to do this for you. And now he's coming in and saying, Abraham, I'm expecting you to have a part in this. Whoa. This is new. Verse 10.

This is my covenant, which you shall keep between me and you, and I see it after you. Every man child among you shall be circumcised. So God is stepping in and saying to Abraham, there's a part in this for you.

But only a new made man can be expected to respond correctly to God's covenant. Only the new made man. Abram didn't get a part in God's covenant. Abraham did.

Abram was in God's covenant in that God brought him in and God did the work. Abraham, newly made, born again, now has a part to play in God's covenant. And this is not a part to play of like, if you don't keep this, buddy, I'm going to smoke you.

This is participation. This is a desire and a willingness to be part of what God is doing. So Abraham's willingness to walk according to God's command, verse 1, walk before me, caused him to fall on his face in humility because Abram knew that what was being asked of him was impossible.

[20 : 33] How can I do this? It was in that place of humility and faith that El Shaddai, the Almighty then, stepped in and caused Abram to be born again to Abraham.

He brings him to a place of impossibility. Abram responds in humility but faith. And then God steps in and gives him what's needed. Only the new made man was given a part to keep in God's kingdom.

Abraham couldn't keep any part of this covenant apart from God working in him. So who was it actually keeping this covenant? It's God working in Abraham to will and to do for his good pleasure. And Philippians 2.13 tells us, for it's God that works in us to will and do of his good pleasure. And what is that covenant? You know, the Bible is amazing. It covers every topic.

And as we just go through it, we're going to cover every topic. But truth is discreet. Truth is discreet. Truth is not overt.

[21 : 34] There's nowhere in the scripture where truth is overt. When you get to the cross and crucifixion, it's not even overt.

It's not in your face. Every horrible aspect of it. You can research that. It's very interesting. But you don't need to know all that to know that Jesus went to the cross. It was painful and horrible and disgraceful.

And he died in my place and took my sin. And I believe that. I can be born again. A three-year-old can understand that. I was three. I understood that. I asked Jesus into my heart. I was born again. I didn't walk very well for a long time. But I can remember it like it was yesterday. I still remember that moment. You don't have to have the truth overtly thrown in your face.

It's discreet. And as we go through this, this is very discreet. And I like that. Because being in different areas of ministry and youth ministry, there's this idea that if you're not like in their face, and if you're not shocking for the truth, maybe that's the word.

[22 : 36] Truth isn't shocking, not overt. That, well, you're not going to be effective. And I completely disagree. I think that God is a gentleman, and God is very discreet.

So there's this covenant. He says, This is my covenant which you're going to keep between me and you. Every male child among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and there shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.

The idea of token is signal or evidence. Signal and evidence. Who's it between? The end of verse 11.

Me and you. Okay? This is a token that is what? It's intimate. It's visible, but intimate.

It's hidden. It's outward, but inward. Right? So man's part in God's covenant is visible, but intimate. The same today.

[23 : 36] Our part in God's covenant that we keep is an inward one. God comes and says, Abraham, I want you to have part in this. But it's between me and you. It's for you and I to know.

And the flesh has no part in God's covenant, doesn't it? None at all. None at all. What did we just see in chapter 16? We saw the flesh attempt to be part of God's covenant, and it wasn't going to fly. Abraham tried with Ishmael. But the sign of God's covenant was not for the world. You know that? It's for the individual. The covenant God's making with Abraham isn't for the world.

It's for the individual. It's for you, Abraham. You will know. When you're in a group, when you're in a crowd, when a son of Abraham is in a crowd, they're not going to know if he kept the covenant.

But he's going to know. And it's going to shape his life and who he is. It's going to affect them.

You're going to go, wait. Oh, I can't go and do that with them. I mean, they don't know it, but I know.

[24 : 37] Man, I'm a Christian. I follow Jesus. I'm the part in this covenant. And it's inward. And now's my opportunity to show it outwardly. But we also know it was never intended just to be in the flesh, in the physical.

Even back in Deuteronomy, God says, Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart and be no more stiff-necked. It's inward. Romans, Paul elaborates on this much more.

Romans chapter 2. He says, For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly. Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he's a Jew which is one inwardly. The circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

It's not the physical flesh. It's the flesh of the spirit. It's the self-nature and self-will that needs to go. And this is what God's bringing to Abraham now.

A man who's 99 years old. Abraham, this is what we're going to do. Abraham said, About that, Lord.

[25 : 46] He said, okay. Okay. Removing the flesh hurts. We got to cut it out. We got to kill it. It hurts to remove the flesh. Verse 12.

He said, He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you. Every man, child, and your generations. He that's born in the house, or bought with money, or any stranger, does not have your seed. Covenant is all-encompassing.

Completely and fully-encompassing. All of Abraham's sphere of influence. Remember we talked about authority, and those who are under authority. Your authority is that sphere that you are responsible for, and the boundaries within it.

I can't be responsible for, I don't have any authority in Eddie's household. That's outside my boundaries. My boundaries and my authority, it's everything within my boundaries. And my job is to make sure those within that, those boundaries thrive, and are edified, and are healthy, and well.

And so within Abraham's boundaries, he's saying, every part of your life, you can't leave anything out. It's all-encompassing, this covenant, in every part. Eight days old, so God knows what he's doing.

[26 : 55] At eight days, a newborn's immune system has peaked, and their ability is at a maximum for clotting, for their blood to clot too. So God knows what he's doing, folks. And his vitamin K has fully developed at that point in their system.

He that is born in your house, and he that is bought with money, must need to be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

So we have an external covenant that's to reflect an internal condition of the heart, right? Because what does he say? And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul, soul, shall be cut off from his people.

He's broken my covenant. So the outward is a reflection of the internal. If you don't want to take part in this, your soul is cut off from this covenant. You have no part in this covenant apart from walking according to God's command.

It's the same for us, guys. Now Paul's going to liken this to baptism in Colossians. In chapter 2, verse 11, he says, in whom also you are circumcised, in other words, in Christ, with a circumcision made without hands and putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, that's what we cut out.

[28 : 08] We cut out the body of the sins of the flesh. It's painful. It's got to go. It's something I can't see you do. It's something you have to do in your heart, internal. It's private. It's intimate.

And putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Here's that token. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who has raised him from the dead.

In other words, we trust in God. It's his job to do it. The operation of God who has raised us from the dead, buried with him in baptism. Baptism's a token.

So going under the water, coming out of the water, didn't do anything for me if the internal is not there. Right? I only do the external after the internal, the work of the heart.

But if someone says, I refuse to be baptized, I'm not going to be baptized. I'm not going to associate with Christians in the church. Okay, well, then I don't think there's a work that's been done in your heart.

[29 : 06] You know, there should be an excitement. It can be a little nerve-wracking, sure. Like, okay, the way we do it today, like, the whole church stands around. Well, it wouldn't be too nerve-wracking here for a few of us. But like, the whole church stands around and you're there in the water and then someone says, do you have anything you want to say?

No. Just dunk me. I believe in Jesus. But the idea is identifying that we are externally identifying. So in our culture, it's not so much baptism, is it, that we identify externally.

Usually we identify externally by what we don't associate with, not what we do associate with. You can tell someone in our culture, oh, I go to church. Like, yeah, yeah, okay. But if you tell them, I don't go here, here, here, and do that, they're like, whoa, what are you identified with?

Well, I follow Jesus. Let me tell you about this covenant. But anyway, the soul shall be cut off.

External, let's reflect the internal.

The inward keeping of God's covenant set a man apart from all other people groups of the earth.

And then again, you take one Jew, put him in all these Gentiles, he may look exactly the same, but he knows he's set apart because of the keeping of God's covenant.

[30 : 19] And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, Abraham's thinking, oh, she's probably in trouble. I haven't heard about this in 13 years, and here it comes.

Oh, boy. As for Sarai thy wife, she shouldn't have said that. Thou shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

And I will bless her and give you a son also of her. Yea, I will bless her. And there's two I wills right there. He's going to bless emphatically.

Sarah will be blessed. Despite her crotchety nature, despite her inability to have children, she will be blessed and she'll be the mother of nations, kings of people, which will be of her.

Sarah's blessing was unearned, unlooked for, undeserved, and almost unbelievably. Unearned, unlooked for, undeserved, and almost unbelievably, as we're going to see in chapter 18.

[31 : 24] And yet God says, this is what I'm going to do, despite all of that. Then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed and said in his heart, shall a child be born unto him that's 100 years old, and shall Sarah that is 99 years old there.

Like, wait a minute. I'm 99. So by the time we have a kid, even if she gets pregnant now, I'm going to be 100. She's going to be 99. This is impossible. This is great.

This is crazy. Okay. This is not a laugh of unbelief. This is just incredulity. And then you see here some more of Abraham's heart.

So as God brings this word to Abraham, brings a covenant to him, brings a promise, what do we see happening? God's word is revealing Abraham's heart. Abraham's heart. Where it says, Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said in his heart.

And then here's another part of the heart that God wanted to bring out that needs to be dealt with. And God's, and Abraham said to God, oh, the Ishmael might live before thee.

[32 : 26] Please. I got this great idea. I mean, 13 years ago, I had a good idea. Remember that Lord? He never really talked to me about that. But it was a good idea. Can't he live? And the Lord says, Sarah, thy wife, shall bear thee a son.

Indeed. Indeed. And so you see what? The covenant, God's covenant is only in God's order. What's God's order from the beginning? One man, one woman.

Marriage. Abraham and Sarah stepped outside God's covenant, outside his order to try and fulfill God's covenant. Not going to work. When we step outside God's order, we're probably in the flesh

and the flesh is what's got to go.

Can't be part of this covenant. Only inside God's order will God's covenant be kept. He says, no, Abraham, Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son.

Indeed. And you shall call his name Isaac and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him. There are a few scriptures that in the New Testament that talk about Sarah.

[33 : 31] We're not going to look at those today. We'll look at those next time when we get to where she laughs and we'll see what the New Testament says about her. It's got a lot of good things to say.

But as for Ishmael, I've heard thee. Behold, I've blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes shall he beget and I'll make him a great nation. There's three I wills, three things that God will do. Why? Because Abraham asked. He says, I've heard you. I've heard what you said. This is the first time we see the blessing and the covenant split.

The blessing and covenant are going to split now. He says, but my covenant, he says, I will bless Ishmael. There's a blessing on him. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this time in the next year.

The covenant and the promise come only through the son of promise. Only by, who's the son of promise? Jesus. The covenant and promise come only through that son of promise.

[34 : 37] Ishmael received a blessing, but not the covenant. Be careful what you ask God for. Be careful, more specifically, what you ask God to bless. God, please bless this fleshly work of my hands.

Please. Be careful because God heard. Romans 8.28, all things work together for good to them who love God and to those who are called according to his purposes.

All things, work together for good. There's a verse in Proverbs I was just reading randomly and it says, the righteous are delivered out of all trouble. It's like, wow. Paul tells us that where sin abounds, grace did much more abound.

It's like, but we're also told if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption. How do those go hand in hand? You will find that all things work together for good.

Doesn't mean it's not going to hurt and be destructive though. You can have an absolute destructive life and make it to heaven through the blood of Christ and find out all these things did work together for a greater good.

[35 : 38] But you might not have been able to experience that for yourself. Abraham prayed the Ishmael to God that he would be blessed and God is so merciful and he's so gracious so many times.

I think how many times he, look, if there's ever a rule bender, God bends him as far as he possibly can to show himself gracious and loving and kind and blessing. There's so many that you think, why are you doing that?

No, don't bless Ishmael. Say to Abraham, I can't, I won't bless him because it's going to create so many problems. You don't want me to do that. But God has promised that Abraham's seed would be blessed. So even when Abraham produced something in the flesh and he brought it within the promise of God, it falls under the blessing of God.

Be careful what you ask God to bless. But his covenant will come by one, right? By way of the promise. The covenant comes only by way of promise, never comes by way of the flesh.

That's what we see with Ishmael and Isaac. Only through the son of promise. He says, but my covenant will I establish. Establish living means to arise. I love that. God establishes, arises his covenant.

[36 : 47] I mean, if that doesn't scream a resurrection, I don't know what does. That God's covenant arises with the son of promise. My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Set time. What looks to us like a delay to the Lord is right on time. He left off talking with him and God went up from Abraham.

Okay, it's over. See you in 13 years. And he went up talking from him and Abraham had this experience. And Abraham says, man, whew, that was crazy.

I'm gonna go home and pray about that. Keeping this covenant. I don't know. I gotta think about this one. One thing I love about Abraham, he seemed to learn from the Haran experience, that delay. God appeared to him in Ur of the Chaldees and said, get up and out. And he delayed and he delayed and he delayed and he waited until his dad died and he finally leaves. And finally, the Lord separates out Lot from him.

[37 : 55] And it seems like God's relationship with him picks up after that. Begins to really speak into his life. Unfortunately, Abraham doesn't learn from all his lessons. He's going to do the same exact thing he did with Pharaoh.

He's gonna do that again with Sarah. Be like, hey, she's my sister. But he does seem to be very prompt now. We're gonna see when God tells him to take Isaac up to the mount.

It's like the next morning. He's like, all right, let's go do this. And here we see no delay as well. And Abraham took Ishmael, his son, and all that were born in his house and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house and circumcised the flesh of their poor skin in the self same day as God has said unto him.

Man, I wish I was that fast to respond to what God speaks to me. To respond to the things I know are commands of the Lord. Not a, you do this or else, but a, hey, you're taking part in my covenant. You're walking with me. I have something for you to do. I have a part for you. There's a little part in this color by numbers. I want you to color that right there. Don't delay. Don't stick it off.

[38 : 59] I'll do that eventually. We talked about this before with Abraham's delays and then watching when he actually began to walk in God's promises, the things that started happening in his life.

And that makes me think, you know, have I delayed? And there's points in my life I could have got to quicker if I had not delayed so much. So when you know God is speaking, don't delay.

2 Corinthians 6, verse 2 says, For he says, The Lord, I've heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succored thee, strengthened you, upholding you.

Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. All of God's promises are for now. That's why we can live in the expectancy of his return.

That's why Paul could and all the generations of Christendom could. They could say, I expect the Lord's return because in God's mind the promise is a done deal. It's gonna happen. It's finished.

[39 : 58] It's over. We accept on the cross that our sin was finished. But how many of us are living sinless lives? Wait, I'm not raising my hand. I'm not. How many is raising a sinless life?

Not me. I mean, living a sinless life, not me. But I accept it was finished and God took away all my sin. But I'm still experiencing the working of that out. The self-same day, as God said, now is the appointed time.

Galatians 5, 6 tells us this. For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which works by love.

So the things that God has us do need to be outward responses to the inward work, right? If you're serving the Lord or trying to do something to convince him to like you or to get, you know, your blue curve up or get brownie points, it's not gonna work.

It's not how it works. We don't affect the inward by the outward. It's the reverse. And so we see here in verse 24, the covenant is now shaping the very life of Abraham.

[41 : 03] Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. The covenant is beginning to have a direct effect upon his life as Abraham, born again, made new, and is now obeying God's covenant.

It's shaping his life. You know, there's something about God's covenant. It's irreversible, isn't it? Once you partake in this covenant, you can't go back.

Once you cut out the flesh, you're not gonna put it back on discreetly, right? It's irreversible. And as we enter into Christ, it's irreversible.

We're his. Now you may get chastened. Whom he loves, he chastens. But you're in now. It's irreversible because it's on him. We respond to what he's done. And Ishmael, his son, was 13 years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

And the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised and Ishmael, his son, and all the men of his house, born in the house and bought with money of the stranger were circumcised with him.

Abraham takes a stand in his house.

[42 : 10] As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. He's like, we are gonna do this. You wanna be part of this house? This is what's gonna happen. And then I think it's really cool. You see father and son, old and young, working together to take part in God's covenant, working together to remove the flesh.

Right? We need to be working in our kids' lives to remove the flesh. Don't just be like, well, oh well. No, it's very easy to think, oh, it's innocent.

Then it may be what they're watching or doing. But is it building within them a habit of the flesh, of saying yes to the flesh, of gratifying the flesh? Well, here we see Abraham stepping into his 13-year-old's life, 90 years old, dad, some old boomer, right, telling his 13-year-old, dude, the flesh has gotta go.

We're gonna do this together. He didn't leave him to do it himself either. He said, we're gonna do this together. God's covenant was based upon promise, wasn't it? He said, I make a covenant with you because of the promise I've given you.

It contained a command and a blessing. Do this, Abraham. There's a blessing in it. The two go together. It only came to a new made man. It was visible, but it was intimate.

[43 : 29] It wasn't for everybody else. It was between me and God alone. It was all-encompassing. It was to touch every sphere of life. It reflected the eternal.

God said, I'm going to make an everlasting covenant. The temporary is to reflect the eternal. Our existence here in this world should reflect the temporary decisions we do, should reflect the fact I'm part of an eternal covenant.

It's irreversible. You can't undo that. And it shapes a life. It shapes a life. But the flesh has no part in the covenant. Whether it's Ishmael or whether it's here with this covenant circumcision, the flesh has no part in the covenant.

It's got to go. The covenant only comes by way of promise. It can never come by way of the flesh. Do you realize that? There's nothing in your life that you can do for the Lord that's going to come by way of the flesh. And the worst thing that can happen is you ask God to bless it and in His grace and mercy He does and now you've got this thing to deal with in your life that's of the flesh and it will have to be dealt with.

It cannot stay. We're going to see that a couple chapters from now. Chapter 21, I think. The flesh will go. But what is our promise in Christ?

[44 : 46] 1 Thessalonians tells us in chapter 5, tells us that God, the very God of peace, that He will sanctify us wholly. And I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless under the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithful is He that calls you who also will do it. Thank the Lord we're not left alone to keep this covenant. When God comes to you and says, Christian, I want you to walk before me, be perfect, whole, blameless, complete.

He says, oh, but wait, I'm going to do it for you. I'm going to be in you to do that. Galatians 5, 16, this I say then, walk in the Spirit, you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. And then John 6, 63, it's the Spirit that quickens. The flesh profits what? Nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they're spirit, and they're life. The Spirit that quickens. I like how he links the word there.

[45 : 51] It's the Spirit that quickens. The flesh profits nothing. The flesh is not part of the word that I speak unto you, it's Spirit. The flesh isn't going to come from here, guys. Be in the word.

Right? Abraham responded to God's word in humility. God worked in Abraham this ability to keep this covenant. Abraham walked before the Lord in the Spirit.

You know, we talk about walking in the Spirit, and that's one of my favorite verses is in Galatians 5, 25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. I like that, that God splits that out there.

Paul writes that in a way that's like, well, I live in the Spirit. Great, but are you walking in the Spirit? Active decisions and choices that we're going to do. But I was thinking about what does that look like as opposed to the flesh? How is it different?

And I think it's the idea of following. What are you following? What's leading your life? What's pulling your life? Remember Abraham up where it says God talked with him. It has the idea to lead, to pasture, to guide.

[46 : 51] What's speaking to your life, telling you, come this way, follow me, let's go here. And the Spirit will speak through the Word and the two will come together.

God will bring Scripture to your mind. There'll be a moment where he'll say, hey, let's go here. Don't go there. That's the flesh. Cut it off. And it may be something you love, like Ishmael. Maybe something you've put a lot of time into and put your heart into and God's saying, you can't be part of this covenant.

So, live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. Lord, I pray that you would just put your finger, Lord, on that area of the flesh that needs to go.

It's not an easy thing to pray because I feel like I pray it to my own detriment. Lord, come and cause me pain. But Lord, if the other side of the removal of the flesh is the Holy Spirit, is new life in you, is walking in the covenant, is receiving the promises of God and walking in the light of them and letting them shape my life, is receiving the Son of promise to that which was a dead and barren area of life.

That seems worth it. It's a little bit of flesh cut off, a moment of pain, and all of eternity affected.

Lord, I pray that you would do that now as we sit with you, that we would receive just your grace, your grace, which covers a multitude of sins.

[48 : 12] In Jesus' name, amen. Now, quick thought, just bringing it back around from where we started. That the truth is not shocking or overt for the sake of it.

You know, as we read this, it can kind of seem like, oh, kind of icky and like, oh, but it was a moment in their lives and a year later, two years later, you know, it's, it's, it's very real, but the work God does, he doesn't usually do it like on display.

He didn't put a cut in their forehead, you know, or something for them to see. Like the Antichrist, he's going to put a mark on their hand or on their forehead. The work God does is, is usually not visible.

It's usually, I'm not going to see that work in your life. You're not going to see it in my life. And, and that's okay because God sees it. That's the covenant he makes between me and him. Now, I can have a relationship with him that is not dependent, thankfully, on my standing necessarily with, with you in a sense.

You know, I should have good standing with you, of course, but that's not what God looks. He looks at the heart and then he says, well, that's going to translate to the outside. So just as, doesn't throw that truth in her face.

[49 : 34] Well, the work he does is, is not meant to be either on display for everybody. There's work that he needs to do in your heart and my heart. I don't know what those areas are. There's areas in my heart that I feel like he keeps revealing that I didn't even know was there.

And he's like, I want to cut that out. I want to heal that. I want to breathe that, that, that breath that I breathed into Adam into. And, and that's the work he's going to do and you may never see it. You may never know about it.

You know, but Lord willing, it'll shape my life and then it'll begin to affect the outward that will bring edification. Now I know you You