

Proclaim God's Blessing

Turn with me to Genesis chapter 12 starting with verse 1. In this text, God makes a covenant with Abraham that will set the stage for the rest of redemptive history because God brings salvation in Christ through Abraham. Here in Genesis 12 God promises to bless Abraham and all the families of the earth will be blessed. As the text unfolds we will see that the blessing being referring to God conferring salvation on people through the work of Christ. From this text we will learn how Genesis 12 should provide motivation for us to proclaim God's blessing, to proclaim the Gospel.

Now let's read what God's word says to us. 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. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar

to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. 9 And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

[Prayer before sermon]

I can't believe it. I just can't believe it. I was thinking as I sat in a church for a course entitled 'Perspectives on the World Christian Movement' I listened as the speaker gave out statistics demonstrating the need to proclaim God's blessing of salvation to all people, especially in the context of the unreached. He gave facts such as how approximately 95% of North American church spending goes to domestic projects 4.5% goes to regular missions and only 0.5% goes to the least reached half of the world. Statistics about the need to proclaim God's blessing to international students such as the fact that 90% do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior; 80% will return to their home countries after completing their education here; 70% will never have the opportunity to have a meal in an American home; 80% will never have a Christian as a friend. The statistics the speaker gave disturbed me. I couldn't help but think of how there is such a need to proclaim God's blessing to all people yet how is that we do not do more? We all know that we need to be a blessing to all people by proclaiming the gospel. We know people are in need of the gospel. However, we often fail to proclaim the blessing to people and so are not a source of blessing to them. Here in Genesis 12 we see that Abram is called to be a blessing to all people. Like Abram we must also be a blessing. We are not a blessing like Abram by being a representative of a covenant but we may see that in our context today we can be a blessing to

people by proclaiming God's blessing to them. Therefore, we see that we must proclaim God's blessing to all people.

There are three reasons we may see in this text that we must proclaim God's blessing to all people. It is because God prepares blessing for all people, God promises blessing to all people, and God provides blessing for all people.

First, we see that God prepares blessing for all people. In this passage we learn what God's way of preparing the stage for the rest of His acts in redemptive history is, especially blessing people in the work of Christ. There are two ways we see that God prepares blessing all people through Christ.

First, we see that God first prepares to bless all people by calling someone to be a blessing. God calls Abram in verse 1. In verse 2 we see that the purpose of God's call on Abram of making Abram's name great and blessing Abram is to bless all people. In verse 3 we see again that God's call includes blessing Abram to bless all the families of the earth. In calling Abram to this task God prepares or sets the stage for the blessing He will give to all people as is indicated by the future aspect of promise in verses 2-3 that Abram "will be a blessing" and "families of the earth shall be blessed."

Second, God prepares to bless all people by sending some one to bring blessing. God sends Abram out in verse 1. He sends Abram to the land which he will show him as verse 1 also indicates. This land is Canaan to which Abram arrives in verse 5. Why Canaan? Canaan was not the best of all lands but it was the best land adapted to God's redemptive purpose of blessing all families of the earth. It was most adapted to God's purpose of preparing the world for His goal to bless all people.

How God prepares to bring blessing by calling and sending people may be seen in the life of William Carey. In the eighteenth century God prepared to bring blessing to the unreached peoples of the world through calling and sending Carey. Carey was a shoe cobbler by trade. He had a zeal for missions that gave birth to protestant missions. He live in a time when Hyper-Calvinism was prevalent. Hyper-Calvinism said that God would bring the blessing of salvation to people on His own without calling and sending people. One man was so convinced of this that he said to Carey, “Young man sit down. You are an enthusiast. When God desires to convert the heathen He will do it without help from you or me.” In response to this kind of teaching Carey wrote what is now called the ‘Magna Carta’ of missions. The book is named, “*An Enquiry in the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*” often just referred to as “The Enquiry.” The first section of this book argues that God calls and sends people to bring the blessing of salvation to people. Carey overcame the resistance of Hyper-Calvinism enough to start the first protestant mission agency. Carey went on to become the first protestant missionary God called and sent to India.

As God prepared to bless people by calling and sending Carey and as God prepared to bless all people through Christ by calling and sending Abraham, so does God do today. We are to proclaim the gospel when God gives us the call to proclaim the blessing in Christ to our next door neighbor, when we are called and sent out by God to China not knowing how we will get there and so must trust God to fulfill His plan, when we a called and sent out from living with our parents to living in France where we do not know any one. We should proclaim God’s blessing when being called and sent means trusting leaving behind every thing we know as it meant for Abram.

The second thing we see in this text is that God promises blessing to all people. We see this promise in the covenant between God and Abram. The purpose of the promise is found in verse 2 when God says that He blesses Abram for Abram to be a blessing. In verse 3 we learn why Abram is to be a blessing it is so that “all of the families of the earth shall be blessed.” We see God’s promise to bless all people in the promise of land because the promise of land was a means to God’s redemptive purpose of blessing all people in the work of Christ as verse 7 indicates. The promise of offspring or seed points God’s redemptive purpose in the coming Messiah because it picks up the theme given earlier in Genesis 3:15 of God putting enmity between the seed of the woman and serpent which foretells of Christ’s work. From all this we learn that the blessing which verse 3 refers to is a Messianic promise of Christ’s work to come.

How God’s promise motivates us to proclaim His blessing may be seen in the life of some of my friends. At the end of this last year, a couple of my friends back home began to date. They were both good friends of mine that I went to college with. The guy was trying to serve the Lord by studying for a degree in Religion as he was planning to go into ministry. The girl was a good friend of mine that I would hang out with. I was surprised to learn this last year on a visit home that they were dating. I thought they were just friends and would remain that way. I remember how the guy at one point said that he did not think he would get married. He did not make a promise to God to stay single, but he never dated anyone while I was there at the university studying with him. Like any other couple they dated each other, the relationship growing all the while. Finally, my guy friend decided he was going to promise to marry this girl.

After my friend made the promise the girl she was ecstatic and overjoyed by my friends promise and so went around proclaiming how my friend made the promise to marry her.

Like my friends promise motivated the girl to proclaim his promise to everyone, so also must God's promise to bless all people motivate us to proclaim His blessing to all people.

However, we may tend to be passive failing to see how God's promise should motivate us. We may fail to see how it provides basis to proclaim God's blessing and so not proclaim it. On the contrary God's promise ought to motivate us to action. As one author rightfully states, "In his relationship to his covenant people, God's initiation, his gracious promise or action toward his people calls for our response. The complement of divine grace and promise is not human passivity, a *let go and let God* attitude. Grace always calls to action, to response." We respond out of love of to God and gratitude of His promise by making His promise known to those who do not know or are not partaking of the promise. We ought to tell of God's promise to bless all people to our co-worker who does not know it, to our boss who has not fully understood God's blessing which He has provided, we should tell the promise to our family, when we are away from home on a business trip, when we meet people at school who do not have a full knowledge of His promise and to the unreached people we meet while on a mission trip to Africa.

Next we see here in Genesis that God provides blessing for all people. We see this in verses 3 and 7. In verse 3 God says that all the families of the earth will be blessed. This references Christ's justification of all people. We know that this verse is referring to this because the Bible interprets itself here. Paul quotes this verse in Gal 3:8 telling of God's provision of blessing saying, "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."

God's provision of blessing is also seen in verse 7 in which Christ is referred to as "offspring" when verse 7 says, "To your offspring I will give this land." Here again Scripture interprets itself teaching that verse 7 of Gn 12 is referring to Christ. In Gal 3:16 Paul says, "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ."

How God's provision of blessing motivates us to proclaim God's blessing is illustrated well in the movie EE-Taow. EE-Taow tells the true story of New Tribe's missionary Mark Zook who went to the Mouk an unreached people group in Papa New Guinea. He shares the gospel with the Mouk by telling Bible stories in chronological order. He tells the story of Abraham and his offering of Isaac. He leaves the story unresolved right at the point where Abraham is about to kill Isaac telling them to tune in next time. The people discuss the story and they come to him telling that they think that God will make the necessary provision to fulfill the promise to Abraham to bless him. How they thought God would make this provision is to raise up Isaac from the dead. Zook continues to tell them Bible stories. When he gets to the life of Jesus, Jesus becomes the new Mouk hero. However, they are then crushed when they learn about His death. As the story continued and they learned of how God raised Jesus from the dead and makes provision for them to be saved spontaneous rejoicing breaks out in the camp for three hours. Equipped with the knowledge and gratitude for God's blessing they go on to proclaim God's blessing to the other tribes around them.

God's grace of providing blessing for all people through the work of Christ should motivate us to proclaim God's blessing to all people as it did the Mouk. Because God has provided blessing for us in Christ we should proclaim God's blessing to all people when we

receive God's blessing of salvation, when He provides grace to bless the atheistic Goth, when He provides grace to bless the hard-hearted person who has expressed hate for God all his life, when God provides the grace for our enemy to be saved. We should proclaim God's provision of blessing at school, at work, at home, at our vacation spot, at the grocery store, in the street, or where ever else we should go. We proclaim God's blessing to all people by telling them of the provision that God has made for them to be saved by Christ's work on the cross. We proclaim to them God's acts of blessing all people through Abram and that He does this through Christ's work on the cross by justifying sinners.

We see how in here in Genesis 12 God provides us with the motivation to proclaim His blessing to all people. God prepares, promises, and provides the blessing. God has blessed us with an important task. He calls and sends us to be a blessing to people by proclaiming His blessing of Christ's atoning work on the cross. The need to proclaim God's blessing to all people was seen in the example of the teacher of the 'Perspectives' class that I took. However, what I did not realize at the time that that occurred is that God was preparing me for His work. A year or two after that God called and sent me to train and work at the mission agency that speaker was from, the speaker was the founder of that agency. During my time at this agency I was reminded of God's promises to bless all people and of the need to proclaim God's blessing to all people by going to the unreached peoples of the world. By the grace God provides, let all of us remember God's promise to bless all people. Let us not ignore that God calls and sends us to proclaim His blessing to all people. Let us proclaim His blessing.