

Session 1

October 17, 2021

THE BASIS FOR CONFIDENCE

Genesis 12:1-8

No one in the Bible exemplifies the concept of faith more than Abraham. Yet I have often said that his story reads like a soap opera. The story is one of a faithful yet flawed family who could shine like a new penny one moment and then lie like crazy the next. That may be why we love Abraham, and we love the example he set. No one displayed more faith than Abraham...maybe because no one needed more faith than Abraham! Although his name was *Abram* at the time, I will refer to him throughout as *Abraham* (see Gen. 17:5). His story begins in Genesis 12.

Reaching down (vv. 1-3). For years I have outlined these first verses using an outline I got from my colleague Dr. Robin Jumper (although he says he doesn't remember it!). Regardless of its origin, it's still a good one. It begins with an *undeniable call* (v. 1). Notice that the call rings with sovereign clarity. There is nothing about Abraham's life that warranted God's favor; nothing that inclined him toward God. By most counts, he hailed from the region of Babylon, a land (and people) renowned for its pagan worship. Next, there is an *unsolicited promise* (vv. 2-3). The cost associated with Abraham's call was to leave his homeland and extended family. But the benefits included seven divine promises. The Lord said, (1) I will make you a great nation; (2) I will bless you; (3) I will make your name great; (4) I will make you a blessing; (5) I will bless those who bless you; (6) I will curse those who curse you; (7) I will bless all the peoples of the earth through you. Again, keep in mind the sovereign aspect of this event. Abraham did not ask for this, nor did he negotiate for it. As always, God was reaching down. The unsolicited promise was followed by an *unlimited result* (v. 3). All the peoples on earth would be blessed through him. This was the beginning of a nation that God would use to introduce His Son. For reflection: *In what ways have all the peoples of the earth been blessed by the Jewish people? If this is the case, why do you think so many people hate the Jews?*

Moving out (vv. 4-6). Abraham's response to God's call, was *unquestioned obedience*. God reached down...Abraham moved out! Several interesting details are mentioned. Verses 4 and 5 explain *who and what* left the land of Haran. Abraham, his nephew Lot, his wife Sara, their household and family possessions, and the servants who worked with them made up the caravan. Verses 5 and 6 tell us *where* they traveled (from Haran to Canaan) and *how they got there* (passing through Shechem, and the site of Moreh) and *who* they encountered (the Canaanites). These details become important markers later. Remember, Abraham never settled in the land, but only passed through it (see Heb. 11:9). The people and places mentioned will show up again when the land is possessed by Joshua some 600 years later. For reflection: *Why do you think God had Abraham walk through the land, then wait an additional 600 years before possessing it?*

Looking up (vv. 7-9). Once Abraham was firmly engaged in traversing this new country, the Lord reflected back to His original promise: "I will give this land to your offspring" (v. 7). Notice the original promise was to create a *people*. Yet God immediately set forth to provide them with a *place*. This connection to a land of their own was reaffirmed to Moses (Deut. 11:24) and again to Joshua (Josh. 1:3). The promise has important implications today (consider the current and continual struggle in the Middle East) and will until the endtimes (see Rev. 12). As

Abraham traveled through the land and considered the incredible sovereign grace and providence of God, he paused to offer the only reasonable response he could: humble submission, increased confidence, and genuine worship (vv. 7-8). For reflection: *Think about the connection we all feel to the land. What would it be like to be a displaced people? Can we in America even imagine such a thing?*