

YOU WILL BE A BLESSING

Genesis 11:27 - 13:18

Key verse 12:2

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing."

We thank God for granting us the precious study of Genesis, through which we can lay the firm foundation for our life of faith in the Almighty Creator God. In the previous lesson of Genesis, we learned about the reality of God's judgment, God's salvation for Noah, and His grace never to judge mankind again through a flood. However, as we learn in these chapters, the inner nature of mankind remained unchanged, namely evil from youth. Thus, rebellion against God, violence, war, immorality and idolatry spread again over the whole earth.

Today we learn that in the midst of such dark times, God had hope for one man Abram, calling him out of his fatherland and raising him up as a source of blessing for all generations on earth. We learn about the vision of God in His calling for Abram. We also learn about the faith of Abram, who simply obeyed God's calling. God also calls each of us as a source of blessing for students and for world mission. God's hope for one person is His hope for the whole world. Like Abram, let us obey God's calling so that God can use us as a blessing for His work of salvation in our generation.

1. God's Calling and Abram's Obedience (11:27-12:9)

In 11:27-32 we find the story of Abram's family, who originated from Ur in Chaldea in what is now Iraq. Ur was the center of a sophisticated culture at that time. The famous archaeologist, Charles Wooley, was amazed when he excavated the city in 1923

and found even ordinary dwellings with two stories and 13 to 14 rooms. Ur was a flourishing city in the 2nd millennium BC. At the same time it was also a city of idolatry, where especially the moon god Nanner and the moon goddess Ningal were worshipped in huge temple complexes. Already Abram's father Terach left the city of Ur together with Abraham and Nahor to move to Canaan. However, he settled down in the city of Haran in present-day Syria on the way there. There they prospered economically and owned many servants and livestock. Nevertheless, the family remained entrenched in idolatry. For example, we find household idols among Nahor's descendants.

Let's look at 12:1: "The LORD had said to Abram, „Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." Abram's life of faith began with a bang, namely with God's calling. God commanded Abram, who had been living like his father Terach, to leave his father's house and start a new life and move to a land that God wanted to show him.

Why did God command him to leave his home country? Abram was living in an idolatrous environment and had also worshiped idols. But they were dead idols that could not give true hope. God did not want to leave Abram in such a hopeless life whose end would only be death and eternal damnation. God wanted him to leave this idolatrous life and start a new life with the hope of God. In the same way, we may also

leave our old life and idols and begin a new life with God. It is not too late to do so. A spiritual leader once said, "Life begins at 70!" Abram was even 75. But the sooner we move out of the idolatrous life, the more blessed we are. We are very blessed to move out of the old idolatrous life and live a life with the promise of God in our college years or even in our youth and childhood.

God told Abram to move to a new land because He wanted to teach him faith. Without even knowing where God wanted to lead him, he moved. Abram learned to trust absolutely in the Word of God and the guidance of God. Through this faith training, Abram learned that God was his personal God: "God is the God of Abram." Through the obedience of faith, Abram was able to develop a personal and deep relationship of love and trust with God.

God gave Abram not only a command, but also a promise. Let's look at verses 2 and 3: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." We can divide the content of this promise into two parts.

First, God wanted to make Abram great. God promised Abram that He would make him a great nation, bless him, and make him a great name. He, who still did not have a child despite his advanced age of 75 years and therefore lived a sad, fatalistic and depressed life, was to become a great nation. This included that he would have many descendants. He, who until now felt abandoned and cursed by God, was to be blessed abundantly by God. For this purpose, God was going to make him a great name. In fact, God fulfilled His promise to Abram. Even today, so many people from different peoples all over the world testify with joy that they are Abraham's children.

Second, God intended to make Abram a source of blessing. God's intention was not only to bless Abram, but through him to let

God's blessing flow on to all the generations on earth. God wanted to make him an example of faith to countless people that still speak to us today. Above all, God wanted to send from his tribe the Messiah Jesus Christ, through whom the spiritual blessing of forgiveness and salvation would be spread to all nations. We thank God who has called us to be a source of spiritual blessing to the disoriented and spiritually ignorant young people in our country and beyond to all peoples on earth.

When we consider God's calling and promise to Abram, we realize that it is indeed God's unilateral grace to Abram. God promised Abram, "I will." This "I will" means that God Himself will fulfill His promise and make Abram a source of blessing. Some people despair about themselves a lot and think that they cannot be a source of blessing. Some also try with their own strength, but they despair when they find their own limit and weakness. But obedience of faith to God's calling and promise makes us a source of blessing.

God's calling to Abram also teaches us the ways in which God works. For God, numbers are not important. For God, one person is crucial. God calls a single person to use him as His instrument and make him a blessing to the whole world. Therefore, we may consider one person very precious and serve him with God's hope and vision until the end.

Let's take a look at how Abram responded to God's calling. Let's read verse 4 together, "So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran." This verse shows us the simple faith of Abram. Abram obeyed God's calling and moved away from Haran, entrusting himself 100% to God's guidance. At this point, Abram did not even know where God was leading him, but he obeyed God absolutely. Abram's faith was not based on his calculation or reasoning, but on the Word of God alone. Outwardly, this decision made his life very uncertain, but in fact, it built his life on

rock because the Word of God alone is true and eternal.

In verses 6 to 9, we learn that Abram arrived in the land of Canaan, but could not take possession of the land at all because the Canaanites were already living in it. He became a foreigner, dependent on the goodwill of the inhabitants. But God gave him a new promise. Verse 7 says, "To your offspring I will give this land." God did not give Abram a land, only His promise. But Abram accepted God's promise in faith. He built an altar of thanksgiving to the Lord who had appeared to him. Again and again Abram gave thanks to God, even though he had nothing in his hands yet. He could do this because he had historical consciousness. He was not living for himself, but thinking of his countless descendants who would possess the land in the future.

Here we learn how to obtain God's blessing. Many want to be blessed by God. But they are not willing to obey God's calling, like the rich young man who wanted eternal life but was not willing to obey Jesus' calling (Mark 10:20). In Matthew 6:33, Jesus tells his disciples, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Those who, trusting in the promise of God, seek first the kingdom of God, to them all these things will come. Mark 1:17, 18 say, "Come, follow me," Jesus said, „and I will make you fishers of men.“ At once they left their nets and followed him." We can be fishers of men, leading many people to Jesus and being a blessing to them by following Jesus, like the first disciples who left their nets to follow Jesus.

I used to worship my ego. Outwardly, I was a good and shy boy. But in my heart I sought to get much recognition from people through success and to satisfy my desires through a fun-seeking lifestyle. That is why there were numerous idols in my life, such as pretty girls, pleasure in sports, especially soccer and tennis, or in discos. But all these transitory idols did not make me happy, but miserable and hopeless. My parents wor-

ried about me the most among 6 children and thought I was hopeless. But our God is God of grace and hope. I thank God with all my heart that He also sought me out in His will and wonderful grace and called me into a new life for Him and for His work of salvation through Luke 5:10b: "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." Living with the calling of God was uncharted territory for me. But through faith in God's promise of Luke 5:10b, God helped me to completely leave the idolatry of my ego and live with the new identity as a blessing ever since. When I obeyed by faith His promises of Luke 5:10b, Genesis 12:2 and John 21:15, Jesus helped me to move out of my old, sinful, idolatrous life and begin a new life for God, with God's mission as a shepherd and Bible teacher for the youth and students of this generation.

God blessed the decision of faith by a freshman who left his old life and moved into the community of life with God's people with Genesis 12:2. He moved out of his old sinful and man-centered life by faith. God used him as a blessing to many students on campus, to his brother and sister, to the Disciple Making Ministry, and to world missions.

M. Peter left his father's house to start a house church for Germany and Europe mission with M. Sarah. Later, he left his future security by deciding not to work in the pharmacy field, where he earned his doctorate, but to serve the Disciples' Educational Ministry full time among the students. God blessed his obedience of faith and made him a source of blessing for Germany, Europe and world mission.

God also blesses the faith decision of our new generation, especially of 5 baptized who made a faith decision to give their lives to Jesus last year with 1 Peter 4:13. God make them a blessing to this church, to their fellow students and further to the world mission.

May God also bless Olaf to move out of Koblenz and to live the life of faith in the land of promise at Rhine-Sieg University of Ap-

plied Sciences and to be used as a blessing for all generations on earth.

2. God protects Abram's family (12:10-20)

In 12:10 we learn that a famine came to the land of Canaan. Abram decided to move to Egypt. But this decision came out of unbelief. When Abram acted out of unbelief, his problem only grew. When he worried humanly that he might be killed because of his beautiful wife, he persuaded Sarai to pretend to be his sister. Now he received many gifts from Pharaoh, but had lost his wife Sarai, the mother of many nations. In this hopeless situation, God did not leave him alone. God troubled Pharaoh so that he gave Abram back his wife Sarai and let him go with all his possessions. Abram forgot God, but God did not forget Abram and eventually led everything to bless Abram.

Here we learn the shepherding life of God for Abram with His forgiving love and hope. Abram could not hold on to his faith in the time of famine by trying to overcome the economic crisis with his human calculation. However, God did not condemn him, but helped him to hold on to God's promise and return to the Promised Land. Abram learned a lesson not to trust in circumstances or his own strength, but to believe in the promise absolutely and obey God's direction.

3. God renews His promise (13:1-18)

Abram came back to the land of Canaan and moved to Bethel, where he had worshipped the Lord earlier. But the newfound wealth in Egypt created a new problem: Abram and Lot now had so many flocks that they could no longer live together because otherwise there would be constant quarreling. This time Abram did not act with human calculation. He did not try to be right, but he let Lot choose where he wanted to move. Lot chose the beautiful region along the Jordan River, which was rich in water and fertile. He no longer wanted to wander with Abram in the barren mountain country, but to live in a beautiful area where one could become rich and enjoy an interesting city

life. Lot's choice was understandable, but spiritually foolish. For the people of Sodom sinned greatly against the Lord. But Lot thought that he would already be able to live near Sodom and keep his faith there. So he separated from Abram and pitched his tents near Sodom. Later, he also lived in the city. Lot's life was later saved only because of Abram's intercession at the fall of Sodom, and still ended ignominiously and miserably.

At that time, Abram looked like a loser. He continued to live in his tents on the mountains and his only hopeful Lot had separated from him. But God came to Abram again and confirmed Abram's choice by reaffirming His promise to Abram. Let's look at verses 14 and 15: "The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, „Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever." How great was the promise of God, who would give him all the land if he would but look upon it. We may also look up from our unbelieving thoughts and lift up our eyes to see all the promised land that God wants to give us. Abram's situation had not yet changed. But he accepted God's promise. He moved on to Mamre and built an altar of thanksgiving to the Lord there. Through Abram, we learn what it means to live a life of faith. In particular, we learn his thankful life of faith based on God's promise.

Sh. Jochen and M. Priska faithfully build their altar of prayer and thanksgiving at Rhine Sieg College. M. Debora and Sh. Warmherz also faithfully build their prayer and thanksgiving altar at the Juridicum. This year, despite the challenge and the Corona pandemic, we were able to build God the altar of thanksgiving at the 41st anniversary service. We prayed with the hope and vision of God for spiritual revival by renewing our faith in the promise of God from Ezekiel 37:10 and already seeing that God has given us 1700 campuses in Europe and already three mission bases in M-world. We may also faithfully build an altar of prayer and thanksgiving at each faculty because

we have the firm confidence that God has given us this land for spiritual conquest.

Today we have learned God's inconceivably great vision that passionately helped a hopeless man Abram and raised him up to be a source of blessing for all nations. We learned Abram's exemplary faith to leave his habitual idols and simply obey God's calling. Let us personally hear God's call, leave our old idolatrous lives, and begin a new life with the calling and promise of God.

Through us, God wants to reach the young people at the 1700 universities in Europe with His Word, raise them up as disciples of Jesus, and bless them. He wants to bless me and you and in us bless all nations. God wants to use Germany as a shepherd nation and Europe as a missionary sending continent for world mission and M-mission through our obedience. This is God's absolute will for us and for Germany. May God bless the beginning of the study of Samuel Abraham and Joshua, and help them to go to the campus with God's calling and be used as a source of blessing for their fellow freshmen. Let us obey God's calling and form one-to-one teams and serve the disciple-making ministry through the community of life. In all circumstances, let us remain confident in God in the promised land of campus mission and world mission. May God bless your obedience of faith and use each of you as a source of blessing for this generation.