

Genesis 12:1-8
Live on God's Promises

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Most, if not all of you, have probably never heard of Nouakchott. It's the capital city of Mauritania...that's a small country on the northwestern coast of Africa...population 4.2 million. Of those 4.2 million, 99.7% is Muslim. Much of the country lives in abject poverty with almost 60% living on less than \$5.50 a day. And while slavery "officially" ended there in 1981, it's estimated that somewhere between 300,000 and 600,000 citizens are owned by others. On the bright side, they held their first democratic elections in 70 years back in 2007, ...although two of the three have later ended in military coups. So there's that.

Oh, and one more thing. You're moving there. Did you not get the memo? God told me last night that he wants you to move there. I know you don't really know anything about this place. I understand that you don't know how to speak Arabic. I'm sure you aren't too crazy about living in an Islamic State. But don't worry, you'll figure it out. God will take care of you. So you need to go home and start packing. Say goodbye to your family and friends. Your flight leaves on Friday.

Now, it's easy to dismiss what I just said as the gimmick it was. But imagine if it wasn't a gimmick. Imagine you were Abram 4000 years ago and heard the Lord say, **Get out of your country and away from your relatives and from your father's house and go...** Imagine what that must have been like to have even LESS information than I just gave you about Nouakchott. The LORD only told Abram, **"go to the land that I will show you."** No demographic information, no address, no GPS coordinates, just start going and I'll tell you when you're there. There's no way that any one of us could begin to comprehend what Abram was being called to do. About all we can do is marvel and say, "That was some faith!"

So what was it that moved a 75-year-old man along with his 65-year-old wife to pull up their tent pegs, gather their flocks and herds together, say goodbye to all their friends and family forever, to go to a place they knew not where? Whenever people do something crazy in our world it's usually in search of love or fame or fortune. But Abram already had a beautiful bride and already

was a wealthy man. What would cause him to make such a seemingly rash decision to listen to this voice from above?

In a word: promises. The voice of God made some great and incredible promises to him. You may not have been counting, but there were seven in all. **1. I will make you a great nation 2. I will bless you 3. [I will] make your name great 4. You will be a blessing 5. I will bless those who bless you 6. I will curse anyone who dishonors you.** That's a pretty good list, isn't it? For many people this would be enough to get them to do almost anything and go almost anywhere. Who wouldn't want those incredible assurances in their life? But I don't think that Abram would have gone if not for promise #7 **All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you.**

You see, that promise was something different. That was something unique. Every other false god and false religion could make promises 1-6, and they did in their own phony ways. They would promise their followers greatness in the eyes of the world and earthly blessings as far as the eye can see. They would promise great fame before other people and the ability to bless the people around you. They would promise protection and good times for everyone that was on your side and destruction upon all your enemies. But promising that you would be a source of blessing for all other people on the face of the planet? That was something that even the false gods wouldn't dare to claim.

But the LORD would dare to make this unbelievable promise, a promise for all people for all time. This special promise gave meaning to all the others. This promise explained why God was going to do those other six things. This special promise was the promise of the Messiah. It was the promise of a Savior. A Savior from Abram's family; a Savior for Abram's family; a Savior for all the nations of the earth.

This is what prompted Abram to do the unthinkable. This is what moved him to go forward without fear. The LORD God had made him an incredible pledge, had offered him an amazing gift. It wasn't what Abram had been searching for or even asking for. Yet, God in his boundless grace and mercy brought these blessings to him. This is what gave Abram his faith. This is what brought about such trust in his heart. God spoke his Word and so Abram was given the faith to believe it to be true. This wasn't a blind leap into the darkness of the unknown, this was an enlightened step into God's promises.

The LORD has never asked you to take such an incredible risk as he did Abram. Yet do you ever think and even act like he's asking too much from you? God tells us to trust him in everything and for everything. OK, fine. But how quickly do we lose confidence in the Lord when the doctors can't seem to get rid of the pain or don't quickly discover the source of your sickness. Do you not wonder whether or not God is still worth trusting? Or how about when you are struggling to figure out how you are going to meet your budget and make all your payments? Does your heart scream, "God will provide!" or does it whisper, "There's not going to be enough." When a crisis comes crashing into your life and threatens to fracture your family or destroy your future, are you thinking, "God can hold us together. The LORD can make it good again." Or do you worry, "There is no hope, it just can't happen, I just can't handle it."

Our lives are filled with moments that challenge and stretch our faith. And all too often we falter and fall. Is it because God has not been good enough to us in our lives that we have wavered? Is it because we have not been blessed enough? No, it's only because we have stopped finding our foundation in His promises. It's only because we have too frequently trusted in ourselves. It's only because we have sinned by turning away from the Word of our God.

We may be amazed by Abram at this time, but he didn't always live with such an incredible faith. He had his moments of doubt and mistrust too. Abram was not some perfect saint who only got good things because he lived so perfectly. No, he wavered and faltered and fell, time and again. And did the LORD turn away from him? Did the LORD remove his hand of blessing and give it to someone else? No, the LORD stuck with Abram and blessed him beyond measure. Why? Because he promised to do it. Because he declared that it would be so. Because he chose to love Abram, and that love would never stop.

Let me ask you a couple questions. Is the LORD going to take away his love from you? Is the LORD going to turn away from you? Is the LORD going to remove his hand of blessing from you? No, no, and no. And how do you know? Because of his promises, because of his Word. You are the fulfillment of that great promise made to Abram. **All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you.** From the line of Abram came the one who was promised, the very Son of God. And that Son lived to make you righteous, died to make you holy, and rose to give you eternal life. He promised to love you with an everlasting love and then carried out that love by redeeming you from every sinful moment of doubt and mistrust you have ever had. He

promised to never leave you nor forsake you, and so has been with you through his Word throughout your life. You have faith in Christ, and so you are blessed. You believe in Jesus, so you will be blessed forever.

In the nineteenth century, the greatest tightrope walker in the world was Charles Blondin. He was the first man ever to walk a tightrope across Niagara Falls. The rope was 160 feet above the raging waters. The walk across that thin rope was 1,100 feet. There was no net or a safety harness of any kind. If he fell, he would die. But time and time again he would cross, to the great delight of the crowds that would gather. The more that he made his crossing, the more daring he became. One time he crossed on stilts. Another time he carried a chair and a small stove, stopped halfway across, and cooked himself an omelet. Still another time he pushed a wheelbarrow loaded with cement.

Every time he did one of these stunts, the crowd would roar with their cheers. One time he asked the crowd, “Do you think I could push another person across sitting in this wheelbarrow?” Of course, the crowd shouted, “Yes! Yes!” Blondin spotted a man nearby who was cheering rather loudly. So he asked him, “Do you think I could do that?” “Yes, of course,” he replied. So the Great Blondin said, “Alright then, get in.” The man quickly refused. He was no longer certain that this could be done. Even though he had seen all his gifts, he no longer had faith in the Great Blondin.

Let’s not think of our God as that man thought of that great tight rope walker. Marvelous, amazing, but...still having the potential to fail. Our God never fails. He has never made a promise he hasn’t kept. And he never will. We have seen that truth through his Word.

So let us live on his promises. Live on the promises of his care, and so drive all worry from your heart. Live on the promises of his protection, and rid your soul of all fear. Live on the promises of his wisdom and power, and know that he can and will work out all things for good. But above all else, live on the promises of his love and forgiveness for that is what gives you faith. And from that faith come blessings that will never end. Amen.