

**Global Gospel Outreach:
Standing on the Promise
Genesis 17:1-8**

Last week Pastor Don finished up a series on the letter to the Ephesians where in previous weeks we had heard about putting on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. Last week we looked at the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God and prayer of all kinds and how much we need them both in Global Gospel Outreach. Global Gospel Outreach begins with living Christian lives at home and then moving out into our neighborhoods and beyond with the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to those who are not yet rightly related to him.

As we begin a month of emphasis in our Sunday Morning Worship on Kossuth's role in Global Gospel Outreach, I would like to "set the table" for the privilege we will have in the weeks to come to hear from those involved in Gospel ministry in other parts of the world.

For those of you who are less familiar with Kossuth, Global Gospel Outreach, as would be the case for any biblically-driven church, is one of our seven stated values which drive the way we think and live as a church body. Very simply this value states: **The world is our responsibility.** *Therefore we strive to proclaim Christ both in our neighborhood and around the world.*

One thing parents seek to do as they raise their children is to help them understand their respective roles and responsibilities in the world. Similarly, a church like Kossuth, which has been placed in a specific neighborhood, at a particular juncture of history, enabled with a specific set of gifts must understand the responsibility given to it by the One under Whose authority it functions. This understanding will lead to a more consistent outworking of that responsibility in practice. For this reason we look forward to these coming weeks asking the Lord to assist us, as His people in this timeframe and in this place, to deepen our understanding of the purposes for which He has placed us right here right now.

Knowing our responsibilities and doing them is the sign of a maturing church. The understanding of these responsibilities should be seen in growing measure **in the church budget** (our money is a symptom of what is important to us), **our sending** (selflessly sending out quality people God is raising up here at Kossuth to other parts of the world so that those who have never heard of salvation through Jesus may hear and believe and continue to make disciples), and **our own activity** (sacrificially engaging in the ministry of the Gospel as God opens doors to us right here in Lafayette!) As we enter this month of consideration of God's task for His church, we want to go back and look at a passage from God's word which is the foundation of the marching orders for God's people to go into all the world and preach the Gospel...or the Good News: ***that God Himself has declared that He will be our God and we (the redeemed) will be His people....NOT because of anything we have done....NOT because we have deserved to receive this, but solely and entirely because of His amazing grace which has reached down and saved wretches like you and me.*** This is a message which runs all throughout the Scriptures beginning with Genesis and right on through to Revelation. (Now we can say we have preached through the entire Bible this morning)

Introduction:

At the end of Genesis chapter 11 the reader of the book of Genesis is introduced to a man named Abram. It is key to our understanding of all that takes place in chapter 12 and following that the name *Abram* means *exalted father*. Imagine meeting Abram and hearing his name, asking him how old he is, what his profession was, asking him about his children...only to find out he had NONE. This was Abram's lot in life until he was 86 years old.

In chapter 12 the LORD tells Abram to go to an unspecified location...take a trip...I'll tell you later where you are going! The LORD goes on to tell him that He will make Abram into a great nation...that the LORD will bless Abram and make his name great and that those who bless him will be blessed of the LORD and that those who curse him will be cursed of the LORD and that in Abram, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Quite a promise indeed...we see the greatness of God in this promise...for if God does not fulfill it, we should not trust him. However, we see that God, the One who is Faithful and True, keeps His promises in remarkable ways all the time....every time! Abram obeys the Lord...and takes his wife, Sarai and his nephew, Lot and embarks on this journey of unspecified

destination. Abram was 75 years old then

Later on in chapter 12 we find Abram and Sarai in Egypt...we see some of the blemishes or a flaw in Abram's character, as Abram lies to the Pharaoh. God's faithfulness to himself and to his promise are seen here, as well, as Abram's cowardice puts God's promise in jeopardy.

In chapter 13 we see Abram, by now a very rich man in livestock, and his nephew, Lot going their separate ways due to a dispute over water. Later in chapter 13 God renews his promises to Abram to make *"his offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted."* (13:16) However, Abram must have wondered how this was going to happen as he still had no son!

In chapter 14 we see the faithfulness of God to himself and to his promise in physically protecting Abram in battle as he and his men rescue Lot from the hands of warring kings.

In chapter 15 God renews his covenant with Abram calling himself *"Abram's shield,; his reward."* We read in this chapter the meaningful phrase in verse 6: *"And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."*

In chapter 16 we are told of the plan Sarai and Abram devised to have the son for whom they so deeply longed. Their lack of dependence on God's methods and timing led to great chaos....out of which God is continuing to do His work...even to this day!

Arriving at chapter 17, when Abram was 99 years old, 13 years after the birth of Ishmael, the son born to Hagar and Abram, God appears to Abram again and reveals Himself to him as "God Almighty" (El-Shaddai)...AND changes Abram's name....to Abraham...the father of a multitude. Imagine the shock of those who heard that Abram's name had been changed to the father of a multitude after the birth of just one son...what was Abraham thinking? He was listening to God and believing (though not always understanding) what God was saying to him.

Why did Abram have to wait so long for God to do His work? We need to learn that God is never in a hurry to get his work done. His work in our lives takes time and we need to learn well the lesson that while we are in a big hurry to see growth take place, or problems to be solved, or our children, family or friends to get saved, God has his timetable which is perfect...which we don't always (and may never) fully understand.

A.W. Pink: *God has a reason for His delays. Not until man comes to the end of himself will God put forth His power. Not until man's extremity is reached does God's opportunity arrive. Not until our own powers are "dead" will God act in grace.*

1. Global Gospel Outreach is initiated by God Almighty

He commands His people to:

- a. Walk before Him
- b. Be blameless

Walking before the LORD, helps us understand the essential nature of being rightly related to our Creator/Owner. According to one author, this phrase (*Walk before me*, **Genesis 17:1**) is *suggestive of a child running ahead and playing in the presence of his father, conscious of his perfect security because he is just behind.*

How can a sinful man walk blamelessly before the LORD?! Isn't God commanding something which is impossible for Abram to do here?

Abram had just **disobeyed** God's command in Genesis 16 when he and Sarai carried out the scheme to get a son via Sarai's servant, Hagar. Abram was well aware of his imperfections...and now God is telling him to be blameless?! How can a disobedient man accomplish the Lord's purposes?

Let's be very clear. The Lord DOES expect perfection from His people! Repeatedly in the Scripture we find phrases like:

- *Be holy for I am holy (Leviticus 11:44)*

- Be holy to your God (**Numbers 15:40**)
- You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (**Matt. 5:48**)
- ...that we should be holy and blameless before him. (**Ephesians 1:4**)
- ...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct (**1 Peter 1:15**)
- Let...the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.” (**Rev. 22:11**)

However, His people have NO way of their own to produce the perfection God requires. Thankfully we learn from the Scriptures that what is impossible for man is possible with God. For all things are possible with God.

- Matt. 19:26;
- Mark 10:27;
- Luke 1:37;
- Luke 18:27

This God Almighty who appears to Abram is a **‘missionary God’**:

1. God is on a mission (to save His people from their sins, Matthew 1:21).
2. God is on a mission to make Himself known (Deuteronomy 29:6, Isaiah 43:10, Ezekiel 20:20)
3. God is on a mission to make Himself known to people who do not know Him (Psalm 22:27, Psalm 48:10).
4. God is on a mission to make Himself known to people who do not know Him so that they will know Him and make Him known to others who do not know Him.

However,

- Our ideas about God are too small...
- Our dependence on God is too weak...

2. Global Gospel Outreach continues with the reconciled sinner worshipping the Living God.

- Abram says nothing in the first part of this 17th chapter....God does all the talking...Abraham doesn’t even argue back.
- Abram’s body language spoke loudly of His fear of the LORD and his belief in the Living God!

Reasons we don’t engage in the privilege of Global Gospel Outreach as we should:

- (a) I value my convenient “creature comforts” more than I value God.
- (b) I somehow deserve the grace I have received.
- (c) I have somehow earned the grace I have received.
- (d) I haven’t yet understood the grace I have received.
- (e) I have a better way of getting God’s work accomplished.

3. Global Gospel Outreach is the provision by God Almighty of the means for his people to come to him.

Abraham’s descendent, the LORD Jesus Christ, would bless people from every nation, tribe and language by coming into the world...born of a woman...born under the law...and accomplishing on behalf of his people that which his people could NOT do on their own.

- a. In the perfect life of Jesus Christ he kept God’s law completely (Matthew 5:17)
- b. In his death on the cross, Jesus, the Righteous One, suffered and died in the place of the unjust so that he might bring us to God (1Peter 3:18)
- c. In His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ triumphed over sin, death and hell for our justification (Romans 4:25)

4. Global Gospel Outreach announces to “all people everywhere” that reconciliation with God (*I will be their God*) is an accomplished fact!

God will be the God of anyone who, by faith, will acknowledge their sinfulness and turn from it and trust in Jesus Christ ALONE....He has done ALL that is necessary to save from sin.

5. Global Gospel Outreach is dependent on the work of the God who reconciles.

Notice the covenant promises in this passage which God ALONE can produce:

Covenant promises: Restoration

- *My covenant is with you....You shall be the father of multitude of nations*
- *Name change...I have made you a father of a multitude;*
- *I will make you exceedingly fruitful* (remember: this is a 99 year old man!);
- *I will make you into nations;*
- *Kings shall come from you;*
- *I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant: to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*
- *I will give to you and to your offspring....the land:*
- I will be their God

The Promise of God to be the God of His people is

- Precious
- Powerful
- Perpetual

The Promise is Precious...because it demonstrates the patience, love and mercy of our Creator....Do you know Him today? How is that seen in your life?

The Promise is Powerful...it's recipients are people who were dead in sin, whose eyes have now seen the majesty and glory of Jesus....ALL because of His grace!

The Promise is Perpetual (Trustworthy)....God is Almighty & Faithful...to Himself, to His promises...and to His people.

Study Questions

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. (Genesis 17:7)

1. How does God's promise to Abraham relate to the church's task in the world today: *the making of disciples of all nations*?
2. Who are the "offspring" of Abraham? What Scripture would you use to support your answer?
3. What are the Gospel dynamics of God's promise in Gen. 17:7?
4. Where should this message be taken? Why?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your burden for the task God has given all of his followers to make disciples?
6. To what do you attribute your score from question # 5?
7. What is your understanding about what *your* role in disciple-making is (should be)? How is this seen in your life in practical ways?
8. In what ways are you asking God's Spirit to change your heart as a result of our study of Genesis 17?

9. In what ways should our disciple-making be inseparably linked to our worship on Sunday morning?
10. Could you identify yourself with any of the possible reasons suggested as to why we don't engage in the disciple-making work God has given to his people
 - (a) I value my convenient "creature comforts" more than I value God.
 - (b) I somehow deserve the grace I have received.
 - (c) I have somehow earned the grace I have received.
 - (d) I haven't yet understood the grace I have received.
 - (e) I have a better way of getting God's work accomplished.

Further verses for consideration:

- Psalm 48
- Psalm 107
- John 20:17