

Genesis 12:1-9

Free To Go

Main Point: / SI:

Abraham's story is the story of all of God's children. We are God's children by faith in His promise, by faith in His Word. You cannot be a son or daughter of God without faith. God called Abraham to see what God had done for him, and to trust God's call upon his life. Abraham responded with faith. He left what was comfortable, safe, and 'made sense' in order to follow God's call and believe the promise. Abraham is the father of all who will believe, trust, die to what 'makes sense to us' and follow God's call to bring life to the world.

Intro:

Beginning of story of Abraham's gradual disentanglement from country, family, and father's house.

For Abraham and for us, what does it mean to have faith? To act on that faith?

What does this look like? Listen, Go, and Be Yourself.

1Listen (v. 1a)

That God speaks is at the forefront here.

Listening is the first step in obedience to God.

But Listening is based on the promise. Not like SIRI who can often be wrong. ILLUS of SIRI telling me the wrong directions... SIRI, give me directions to this address. One time this happened on the way to a soccer match for Ethan and took us to the middle of a field of head high weeds at the end of a dead end road. My confidence in Siri waned, so I went to Google and he did me right.

Listening to God, leaning in to hear Him, to take in what He says and to obey is dependent upon His promises. Listening can easily be downgraded in its importance. This may be why God wrote such a big book – the Bible – He wants us to take time to take it in. Listening to Him is certainly the main point of this passage – “I will” just piles up...

Look at all the times God says, “I will” – 6 times. God is turning Abraham's ear.

The text gives us lots of hints that this was not easy for Abraham. There were now present and there would be to come – all kinds of obstacles.

11:30 > Sarai is barren, they are old, and they are childless.

v. 6 > Go to this place where there are people already living.

What about you? What circumstance is making it difficult for you to listen? To hear the promise from God? In the midst of obstacles ahead, what has your ear?

ILLUS of high ropes course when I was youth director at avpc. From the ground, it looked easy, but up there 30 feet off the ground... I had to tune out everything else and listen, trust, and take action – obey what the guide said to do. (trans to 2)

Listen in order to hear, in order to receive. Before action. This is what people mean when they ask, “have you prayed about this?” Have you stopped to seek God, to hear His voice in the Scriptures?

Action without listening is just pride and fear, not faith.

But to listen with faith in the promises, then you know you are sons and daughters of Abraham and Sarah –

*** Listen to Hebrews 11:8-16 >**

2Go, Listen, and Bless. (vs 2-4a)

Abraham called to go, and called to leave.

In Ancient Cultures – land is everything – security, future, inheritance. These are your people, this is your land.

We get a taste of this today when people ask ‘where are you from?’ Where are your roots, what has established you, made you into who you are today?

Abraham is called to give up all of this.

He has roots – family, possessions. Ur is on the Euphrates River, 150 miles southeast of Babylon. It’s about 1000 miles from Canaan. He and his father, Terah, have settled in Haran, about 400 miles from Canaan. It’s a long way still.

* Abraham is the new beginning, a second Adam by which God means to bless the whole earth – all the families of the earth.

We are on the journey to the Promised Land. (Hebrews 11)

Can’t get away from what the call to Christian faith really is > a call to leave behind and a call to go in order to be a channel of grace to the world.

So look at it, look at this assurance, this promise:
I will bless you.

Bless >

Bless > “To kneel”

ILLUS of working as a server/waiter at chili's. I did a lot of kneeling. Down at eye level. I am there to serve. I have knowledge of the menu, and I have access to the food. In fact, you can't get it without me. Servanthood is power. They have needs, and I have assets.

Take the word 'bless' back from its trivial, empty usage. –

Def: To bless > To take up what has been given to you and use it to give life to others.

Look at how God blesses > He gives what is His to give. He shares. He overflows in generosity. This is the definition of love. That is what God is. He blesses, so that all the families of the earth will be blessed by those with the faith of Abraham.

There are assets, gifts, riches, joys to be received, and to be given. God kneels. God condescends. Look at what Jesus did. Jesus comes down out of heaven – leaves what is comfortable in order to serve, to kneel and to give to all who will receive from Him.

This is the root of what Jesus means by “Blessed are the poor in spirit” – those who are willing to receive are those who are most able to bless.

ILLUS of Ferrari Enzo. Barry Lundgren. WSJ 10/9/19.

When he was 10 years old, Barry Lundgren saw a Ferrari in a parking lot. As he walked to get a closer look, he heard a voice say, ‘don’t get too close to my car.’ He remembered that and thought to himself, if I ever own a Ferrari, I’m going to share it. So that’s what he does now. He now owns one of 400 Ferrari Enzo’s ever made.

399 were sold and 1 was donated to the pope, which, um, kind of makes me contemplate converting to Roman Catholicism. He drives it around, takes it to car shows and racing events. When people see it, it’s like a celebrity walked in the room. People ask if they can take a picture of it, and he says, ‘why don’t you get in the front seat and I’ll take your picture?’ He has an Instagram page @sharetheenzo.
“Part of the joy of owning it is the joy it brings to others.”

Reminds me of Paul’s admonition (1 Tim 6:17-19)

As for the rich in *a*this present age, charge them *b*not to be haughty, nor *c*to set their hopes on *d*the uncertainty of riches, but on God, *e*who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, *f*to be rich in good works, to be generous and *g*ready to share, ¹⁹ thus *h*storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may *i*take hold of *i*that which is truly life. Abraham is father of faith, and father to those granted material riches.

Bless > Some of you know what it is like to have that channel of being a blessing attacked, disdained, and have been hurt by it. Some of you are tempted to shrink back and withdraw into yourself b/c God gave you these things and the world is hating you for it.

Story of model on TED talk who talks about how she happens to have been given this standard of beauty that publishers are looking for. And she and other models talk among themselves about how they know people think that being a model is glamorous, but the secret truth is that they are in constant discussions with themselves about how insecure they are about how they look!

As a father of daughters, as a husband, as a pastor – do you see what that is? Dishonoring what God has done, what God has given. It's v. 3 “him who dishonors you, I will curse.”

*Abraham would face opposition because of the promise. You will face envy, jealousy, idolatry, people glomming on to you in order to get something from you. This is repugnant and is under God's curse.

Let that sustain you, and more than that, lift you up to continue to bless, to serve, to attack back with the weapons of compassion, kindness, love that their hearts might be broken open to see what God has given them and stop shaming or using you for their own kingdom's ends.

So what do you do when you face opposition? V. 7 > God reminds, assures, shows up. Jesus says, “I am with you always.”

God requires perfect obedience to His commands and none of us are good enough for His standard. So He sent His Son to fulfill the law's demands and to take our punishment upon Himself in our place. So that you are free to be yourself, your redeemed, repurposed self in union with Christ. (trans to 3)

3Be Yourself (vs 4-9) (Soul freedom, free to go, free to be yourself)

v. 4 > So Abram went, as the Lord told him. He is responding to God's promise to make his name great so that he will be a blessing.

Verse 2 – “...I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” The grammatical construct goes against everything in your natural response that says, “oh great, now I have to do all this, I have to be all this, I have to perform.”

Look at it again. It says you will be a blessing. The supernatural equipping and enabling is all of grace, all gift. To free you to be who you are as God's son, God's daughter. You are not your own, your life is His.

As soon as you take the plunge into faith, you have died to everything that the world says is worth keeping – reputation, possessions, family, country, status – so that you can be free to live how you were meant to live – free to serve your Master's kingdom and be about His business which has become your business.

ILLUS of Braveheart ... Scottish Highlanders outnumbered and outmatched as they go against English heavy cavalry. William Wallace gives them a rousing speech, and they stay and though scared, they fight. His warriors say to William Wallace – Fine speech, now what do we do? Wallace replies, 'Just be yourselves.'

Look what Abraham did... he worshipped. He built an altar twice. Worship is the check on the pressure to 'be somebody, to do something.' Worship is a response. You give praise and honor, time and treasure to that which gives you what you need – validation, affirmation, acceptance, assurance, safety, security, significance, essentials for living.

If you allow yourself to be washed in the "I will's" (6 of them here), and their implications, then you can every day be yourself as God has made you and equipped you and blessed you.

What does this look like? Enzo Ferrari? You cannot help what God has given you. Whether you have a lot or a little, you have assets that God has given in order to give you life and to bring life to the world.

Conc?

So go back to the promise, the irrevocable promise, the tonic, the medicine, the white blood cells that attack the virus, the assurance, the good news that is only good in the presence of bad news, the announcement, the "I will" in the face of 'no way that could happen.'

You may not own a Ferrari, but you do own your faith. You have received the gift of faith, the faith of Abraham, and now it is yours. You are freed from keeping it to yourself. You are freed to share it. And listening is the place to start.

End with Illustration of John and Dylan Peters in Costa Rica

“Having kids provides us with many opportunities to develop relationships that we would not have otherwise. Our taxi drivers with children have given us their phone numbers so that we can have park play-dates. People want their children to practice English, and we won’t turn down an opportunity to get to know new families! EJ has started taking ballet, so for 45 minutes every Tuesday I (Dylan) am sitting in the “waiting room” with a group of Costa Rican moms while our children are in class together. It’s my favorite part of the week. I have had the privilege of praying for two different mothers grieving in very different ways. These conversations have reminded me that the Lord brings people across our paths intentionally, and listening can be a powerful tool for evangelism.”

May God raise up more listeners among us... people of faith who can’t help but be overflowers of God’s abundant grace in kindness and generosity to all the families of the earth.

Questions for Small Groups

What would it be like to be Abraham and Sarah— seasoned, wealthy, established, a lot of responsibility, comfortable – and then to receive a call from God to leave it all and go to the unknown?

How is the life of the Christian, the journey of faith, similar to Abraham’s journey? What have you left behind? What are you trusting in for your future? How does that practically play out in your life?

How does it strike you that the call to obedience is a call to be yourself, your renewed self, your redeemed self, the person you are in Christ?

What is one way God has blessed you that you have seen Him use you to bless others? How does it feel to experience God blessing others through you?

How can going deep into what God has given you help protect you from jealousy and envy?

Think of some non-Christians in your life. How could you pray that God would enable you to reach them through listening? What does listening sound like to you as far as evangelism?