

Genesis, part 2: Purpose Re-visited

Genesis 20

MPS God is working IN you, Christian, to bring the fullness of His redemption TO YOU as you trust Him to obey and declare the glory of His salvation in Jesus Christ to the whole world.

OBJ Every person can pursue God's redemptive plan in life to know their purpose by Three REMINDERS.

GENESIS Intro Today I want to return to our series study in Genesis. We began by asking three BIG questions about life; **Where did I come from?** (Provenance - Origin), **Why am I here?** (Purpose), and **Where am I headed?** (Perspective). The answers we find in our search form our understanding of self, of God, self and others, our worldview, and how we understand daily life in this world. Where we search, therefore, is of utmost importance for life.

God speaks to each of these questions in the Bible. His answer declares the glory of the beginning for all things. His story demonstrates purpose for every life. His power works to bring understanding and meaning to all of life. We search for answers in this world through many means, but all these answers are found in one source, and it is not a "thing" or an "ism", but the person of Jesus Christ. We were created by Him, for Him and through Him (Col 1:16), and only in Him is true life, the answer we long for. Augustine of Hippo, Third Century theologian, explains why the answers to these questions are so important for us when he writes, "Because you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee."¹ God created you to know Him, and to know that He wants to know you personally. Genesis is God's revelation of the beginning, and His invitation into a personal relationship with Him.

TRANS Let's take a moment to review the chapters of Genesis for Part Two, Purpose. These chapters introduce us to the foundation of God's covenant of redemption, and the purpose of our life in the mission of God on earth.

In Genesis 12, God calls a man, Abram, to follow Him by faith alone and promises him a blessing that will extend far beyond Abram's life. Abram takes his family and belongings and sets out for place he does not even know. In Genesis 13-14, a right worship of God is established as the way in which we follow Him. Abram and Lot separate, but Abram has to rescue Lot because his disregard for God placed him in a very compromised situation. But Abram honors God as the provider and protector of his life with a tithe offering. In Genesis 15, God gives Abram a vision for His promise and spells out the covenant with Him. Genesis 16-19 begins with Abram and Sarai trying to accomplish God's promise in their own strength, and it causes them to sin. God gives circumcision a sign of covenant and promises that he will provide a child, Isaiah. Abram continues to serve and follow God. When we reach Genesis 20, God's faithfulness and longsuffering holds true even in the midst of Abram's unfaithfulness and sin.

These chapters outline **Five Distinctives of God's Covenant** (that define salvation in Jesus Christ for us).

1. God is our Covenant; covenant-maker (with man), -defender (against sin), and -keeper (faithful to His Word). The whole purpose of God's covenant, of salvation, is that God gets us, and we get God; he makes us alive together with Him in Jesus Christ.^{Eph2:5} This is His will because "Salvation belongs to the Lord."^{Jonah2:9;Revelation7:10} And, "there is salvation in no one else".^{Acts4:12} **Covenant with God is His from first to last, from conception to consummation, from regeneration to glorification.**

2. God marks us as His own by Holy Spirit in us. Circumcision was the mark of the flesh given to Abraham.^{Gen17} But now baptism identifies us publicly with Christ, in His death, burial and resurrection,^{Rom6:4-5} as Holy Spirit who circumcises the heart^{Rom2:29} seals us as His own and guarantees our inheritance.^{Eph1:17;4:30;Phil 3:3;Col 2:11-12} **God marks Christians as His own by Holy Spirit in us.**

3. God commands our faith by His Word to walk in obedience to Him. The Living Word, Jesus Christ, that brings faith in its hearing, the Bible, is the very means by which God's grace continues to flow to us to empower us as we walk with Him. **God has not called us to perfection for Him, but to holiness IN HIM that is lived out by faith in His Word as we walk WITH Him.**

¹ Augustine, Confessions, 1.1.1.



4. God watches over His people, but He judges sin and wickedness. Just as God is our covenant, so He is faithful to watch over his people and sustain us. *“For the Lord know the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”*^{Psalm 1:6} *“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*^{1Peter 3:12} **God is the watcher of His covenant people.**

5. God leads His people to declare praise of His Name on earth. Abraham demonstrates this with his life. He prays for God to use Ishmael^{17:18}, a son born of Abraham’s sin, and God promises to care for him, but a promised son, Isaac, will come through Sarah.^{17:19} Abraham delivers Lot, then prays again for his deliverance.^{18:22f} **God’s mission in the world is the reason Christians remain, and this is our purpose!**

Why has God done all this in His covenant through Jesus Christ? *“In him we have redemption through his blood,”* Paul says, *“making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and thing on earth.”*^{Eph 1:7,9-10} Until you walk with God by faith through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you cannot know God’s purpose. **The KEY to purpose in life is God’s covenant.**

TRANS As we come to Genesis 20, We see God’s active work for redemption as Abraham comes to Abimelech.

READ Genesis 20:1-7

From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. ²And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.” ⁴Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent people? ⁵Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.” ⁶Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now then, return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.” **Genesis 20:1-7**

All God’s work and Abraham does it again, convincing Sarah to tell a half-truth a second time to protect himself. Abraham’s fear (again) justifies a half-truth as wholly acceptable, and exposes his wife to great danger. He also brings judgment upon an innocent Abimelech. But God is working sovereignly to bring forth His redemptive plan.(.3-7) He warns Abimelech in a dream of the looming judgement. When Abimelech makes an appeal for his innocence, God acknowledges and tells him to go to Abraham. It is through Abimelech’s obedience that God works to call Abraham out of his sin.

Abraham held onto one portion of his own plan out of fear.(.8-13) His fear caused him to doubt God and project blame on people without fact or consideration for them. When confronted, he confesses, but Abraham was holding onto one portion of his own plan. There is no doubt that we see that Abraham’s greatest hindrance was not the threat of what lay ahead nor of what God had not done, but of how would God ever come through for him. Abraham held a lingering, unresolved anxiety that God would not come through when he needed Him most; Abraham lost hope. As long as his hope was held in himself, is some portion of the plan that he could do, he would not hope in God. The “father of our faith” had a faith problem. Paul writes about Abraham in Romans 4, *Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed...²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*^{Romans 4:18,20-21} The closer Abraham got to receiving God’s promise, the more the situation demanded he trust God fully and completely; the more he had to learn a new depth of faith and the greater portion of God’s faithfulness. **Only in obedience was Abraham’s deepest fear un-earthed to be replaced by unwavering faith.**

God was working in Abraham AS He was working through Him. Listen to what Paul says is the result of this work.

²²This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. **Romans 4:18-25**



The work that Abraham was doing in following God was all about the work God was doing IN Abraham to trust Him. Righteousness was credited to Abraham as he fully surrendered himself to God and the work He was doing in him. And when Abraham obeyed by faith, God used him mightily. God blesses Abraham through Abimelech, and Abimelech because of Abraham. (.14-18) **When you obey God's command you've believed God's promise and receive His blessing!** Salvation by faith produces obedience by the same, because righteousness is not credited when think rightly about God or feel strong for God, but when we believe 2 obey (by faith) Gd's command. ILLUS Heb 11 tells this!

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OBJ Three REMINDERS to pursue PURPOSE through God's redemptive plan with our life.

1. God's redemptive work is never dependent on your perfect performance, but advanced by your complete surrender to Him. There is no exception that you can hold on to enhance God's work in or through you. What He calls you to do is trust and obey! And as you follow Him, He works all things for you. This is the essence of faith-exercised.

Are you holding to anything that God is calling you to lay down or let go of? It could be something great or small, some possession, situation, circumstance, or detail of life that you're convinced is true, so you can hang on to it. But, by Holy Spirit conviction, you know He is calling you to let it go. OR, it may be that every time you use it, think of it, or refer to it, it leads you into more difficulty or trouble. The key is that Holy Spirit continues to bring conviction to you because of it, but you've done nothing with it. **God is calling you to trust Him more, in complete surrender and specifically in this area.**

2. Fear unaddressed and unconfessed only fuels doubts and unbelief that lead to sinful rationale of self-centered actions (self-protective, self-preserving, self-defensive). We see this same action from Abraham multiple times as he determined from the beginning to use this, and refused to release it. (.13) Fear fueled Abraham's doubt that skewed his view of God. His skewed view of God created a "double-mindedness" and "unstablensness" to disobey, act without faith, in hard moments. And his disobedience from doublemindedness also caused him to "project" his biased presumptions on situations and on how he should treat other people. James issues a strong warning for how sinful disobedience affects in 1:8-2:1 and following. Fear that fuels doubt only makes one unstable in all his ways so to walk without faith, outside of God's will in sinful disobedience. And the rationale that feels "air-tight" at first, to protect, preserve or defend, is always exposed as bloated unbelief toward God. **Fear-fueled doubt that leads to disobedience skews your view of God to self-preservation, produces self-defensive rationalization to justify sin, and projects your doubleminded bias onto others for self-protection.**

3. Pursuing God's redemptive purpose in your life comes as you walk by faith after His promise by the resource of His blessing. God's provides His promise to invite you into intimacy as you walk with Him by faith. His blessing is received as you walk with Him, and resources you to accomplish His work in His way for His will. Living in God's will by the resource of His blessing clarifies purpose for life. Purpose brings direction and greater insight and clarity for discernment to everyday life and decisions. **Active obedience by faith in submission to God's command is the only means of conquering fear and walking in God's purpose for your life.**

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