

Sermon Outline

“GOD THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH”: FINDING OUR CONTENTMENT AND HAPPINESS IN GOD

TO BE GOD TO YOU (GENESIS 17:1-8)

I. Covenant of Grace

II. God’s Promises to Abram (Genesis 12, 15)

- A. Genesis 17 is part of the Abraham story.
- B. Before we come to the events in this chapter, God had already been interacting with Abraham for quite some time.
- C. Genesis 12: God calls Abraham (or *Abram* as he was known back then) to leave his home country and go to the land that he would show him.
 - 1. God promises Abram that if he would leave his home, God would...
 - a. make him a great nation (12:2)
 - b. bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him (12:3)
 - c. cause Abram to be the means by which “all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
- D. Genesis 15: God justifies Abram and seals his covenant with him.

III. God’s Promise to Abram (Genesis 17:1)

- A. Chapter 17 starts by telling us that Abram was now ninety-nine years old.
- B. God says to Abram: “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly” (vv 1, 2).

IV. God Reaffirms His Covenant (Genesis 17:3, 4)

- A. Abram responds to the Lord by falling “on his face” (v 3), an act of honor and worship.
- B. Abram believed God’s promise and honored God for it.
- C. God says to Abraham, “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.”
- D. God reaffirms the covenant that was made back in chapter 15.

V. A New Name (Genesis 17:5)

- A. God renames Abram: “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.”
- B. In those days (as it is with traditional cultures today), names were significant.
 - 1. A person’s name was thought to define his character, even his destiny.
 - 2. The fact that God changes Abram’s name shows that he owns Abram and has the power to change his destiny.
 - 3. God changes Abram’s name from “Abram” (“exalted father”) to “Abraham” (“the father of a multitude”).

VI. The Promise of Fruitfulness (Genesis 17:6)

- A. God specifies what he would do for Abraham: “I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you” (v 6).
- B. Like any old patriarch, Abraham is concerned that his clan would do well.
- C. That is precisely what God promises. God promises to secure the future of Abraham’s family.
 - 1. He promises that Abraham would be “exceedingly fruitful”; meaning that he’s going to have thousands upon thousands of descendants.
 - 2. Nations and royalty are going to come from his family line.

VII. The Promise of an Everlasting Covenant (Genesis 17:7)

- A. God goes on to say, “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” (v 7).
- B. While the first promise had to do with fruitfulness and prosperity, the second has to do with the vertical relationship between Abraham’s descendants and God himself.
- C. God says he will “establish” his covenant between himself and Abraham and Abraham’s “offspring.”
- D. How long will this covenant last? God says “throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant...”
- E. The heart of the covenant is this: “to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”
—*The LORD gives himself to sinful human beings.*
- F. What does it mean for the Lord “to be God to you and to your offspring after you”?
1. It means that the Lord is going to be Every Good Thing to Abraham and his offspring.
 2. Every good thing that Abraham and his offspring need, God is going to be for them.
 - Guardian
 - Protector
 - Leader
 - Provider
 - Teacher
 - Redeemer
 - Source of life
 - Lord

VIII. The Promise of Land...and of God (Genesis 17:8)

- A. God repeats the promise.
- B. After he promises an everlasting covenant, God promises to give land to his people (v 8).

- C. But this is quickly followed up with “and I will be their God.”
- D. The real prize of the covenant is God himself.

IX. Joining the Family

- A. Abraham is the start of God’s reclamation work.
- B. How do we get a share in the covenant of Abraham? This is the question the apostle Paul seeks to answer in his letter to the Galatians.
- C. The key chapter is Galatians 3.
 - 1. Paul begins this chapter by rebuking the Galatian Christians for allowing themselves to be influenced by those who teach that allegiance to the Law covenant of Moses was necessary to becoming full-fledged children of God (vv 1-6).
 - 2. Paul says that it is “those *of faith* who are the sons of Abraham” (v 7), i.e., those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ.
 - 3. In 3:9, he writes, “So then, those who are *of faith* are blessed along with Abraham, the man *of faith*.”
 - 4. Just as Abraham believed God and God considered him righteous, so it is those who trust in God (especially in God’s Son Jesus) whom God deems righteous—not those who rely on their own good works.
 - 5. This is how the blessing of Abraham comes to us Gentiles: “...*in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith*” (3:14)
 - 6. “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29).

X. The Promise Is for You

If we are now children of Abraham through simple but constant faith in Jesus Christ, those precious words—“to be God to you and to your offspring after you”—are now for us. God says those words to you and me today. God speaks those words over our lives today. God is not ashamed to be our God and the God of our children. God gives himself to be Every Good Thing that we need.

Questions for Further Reflection

1. What is the significance of God’s changing of Abram’s name?
2. What did God promise Abram in Gen 17:6-8?
3. The heart of God’s covenant is “to be God to you and to your offspring after you.” What does this entail?
4. How do those words “to be God to you and to your offspring after you” speak to you today? Where do you need to hear those words today? What doubts, fears, and worries does this promise address? How does the promise help you prioritize your life and values?