



The Sermon

Dr. Steven J. Lawson

Genesis 12:10-20

"The Faithfulness of God"

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TRANSCRIPT

I want you to take God's Word and turn with me to Genesis chapter 12. Today we're going to be looking at verses 10 through 20. And the title of this message is "The Faithfulness of God." And you may not immediately recognize the title with this text, but I hope that I can make that very apparent to you. I'm going to read the text, then pray, then we will look together more carefully at this passage, Genesis chapter 12.

And if you're visiting today, we're preaching through the book of Genesis and literally going verse by verse through the book of Genesis. There's fifty chapters, so it's going to take us some time. But we believe that deeper is better than shallower, and really slower is better than faster, because it allows us to get into the text of Scripture. We are committed that every jot and every tittle of Scripture is inspired and inerrant and is profitable for our souls. So we don't want to just hydroplane over a passage, we want to go down into this text. And even taking this many verses, in some sense, we won't be able to say all that we would like to say. But I want to begin by reading the passage starting in verse 10 of Genesis chapter 12.

The Word of God reads, "Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, 'See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife"; and they will kill me, but they

will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.' It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

"But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, "She's my sister," so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go.' Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him." What an intriguing passage of scripture. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, as we look at this passage, we ask for Your Holy Spirit to give us understanding and insight. I can only bring this text to our ear, and You must take it from the ear to the heart. And so, we plead with You to do soul-searching work within us, and a sanctifying work within us, and for some here today, even a saving work. So, Father, we ask that You would do what only You can do. We ask that You administered to us through Your written word. And so, we ask this that Christ would be honored and glorified. In His name we pray. Amen. [End]

Upon first reading these passages it would seem that this is a text all about ethics and how we are to respond in certain difficult situations. We would ask questions like, "Was Abraham justified to ask his wife to lie about who she is? Was that ethically correct or not correct?" We could ask the question, "Was Sarah to submit to her husband to do this thing that is not correct, or should she have resisted and not done what he asked of her?" And this really goes back to the greater issues of ethics: "Is it ever right to do wrong? Does the end ever justify the means? Is there ever a lesser evil to be chosen? Was Abram right in doing this, or was he wrong?" Those are ethical questions that are arisen from this passage.

But that's not why Moses wrote this. Moses, who is the author of the book of Genesis, gives us no answers in this text. If he wanted to address that, he would have put it in the text of Scripture; and at this point, there are no other books in the Bible to bring to bear upon this passage. This passage, if there was ever a text, that stands alone without the rest of the Bible to interpret it, it would be the opening chapters of Genesis. This passage raises many questions in our minds that, quite frankly, go unanswered. Moses gives no evaluation of Abram's actions, whether right or wrong. He leaves it for us to sort out, really, as we know from the rest of the Bible, to be brought to bear upon our understanding of this.

That's not the primary purpose of this text, to teach us Christian ethics. This passage, first and foremost, is about the faithfulness of God. It is about God keeping His promise to Abram that He gave in the first three verses of this chapter, "that you will be the father of many nations, and that all the families of the earth will be blessed through you, that there will be a messianic line that will come from your loins, and that the salvation of the world will come through Abram."

This is not about Abram, this passage is about God, and it is about God keeping His promise, and about God keeping His covenant. And despite the famine in Canaan, that I just read, and despite the dangers in Egypt, and despite Abram's trying to jockey through this maze of difficulty, God nevertheless kept His promise to keep Abram alive and to keep Sarah alive, because she will deliver a son of promise; his name will be Isaac, and Isaac will be in the messianic line. The side story is, "Did Abram do right? Did he do wrong? Did Sarah do right, or did wrong?" That's looking at this through human eyes, not through God's eyes.

We need to understand how to read the Bible. Every passage of Scripture is to teach us something about God. The book of Joshua is really not about Joshua, it's about Joshua's God. The book of Isaiah is really not about Isaiah, it's about the holiness of God. The book of Job is really not about suffering, it's really about the sovereignty of God over our suffering. The book of Daniel is not to teach us to dare to be a Daniel, the book of Daniel

is to teach us about Daniel's God, and how He protects and preserves His own.

Every book in the Bible is first and foremost about God, and if you're not looking for God, you're really misreading the Bible. In fact, Genesis 1, verse 1, the whole Bible starts this way: "In the beginning God." Doesn't say, "In the beginning the earth. In the beginning Adam. In the beginning human civilization." It says, "I in the beginning God." Everything is in one way or another to teach us about God. It's not even to teach us about salvation, it is to teach us about the God who saves, and the gospel that He has designed, and the message that He has declared, the Son whom He has sent into the world to be a Savior.

And so God is ultimately the main character in every narrative of Scripture – understand that – and that Abram and Sarai are in a supporting cast role. They are off to the side of the stage; and front and center is always God, and what God is doing in the world, and what God is doing in and through the lives of people. And so that is what we see here in Genesis chapter 12. That's why I've titled this "The faithfulness of God." I could have come up with a clever title that would have reflected Abram and Sarai and the lie and going along with it, but that's subsidiary. What is primary is what God does in this text.

So what is the faithfulness of God? What does the faithfulness of God mean? It means the reliability of God to always do what God promises and pledges to do. The faithfulness of God is the fidelity of God to keep His word no matter what man may do or not do. The faithfulness of God is the loyalty of God to support His people even in the midst of their trials and difficulties. The faithfulness of God is the trustworthiness of God to honor His covenant, a unilateral covenant that is not dependent upon man, but is upon God and God alone. It is not a bilateral covenant where there's God's part and there's man's part. There are times in the Bible where there is this synergistic understanding of sanctification. But in the giving of this covenant, it is unilateral; it all rests upon the shoulders of God to carry out his own saving purposes.

And so Abram must be kept alive, because he will be the father who will sire a son of promise: Isaac. And Sarai must be kept alive, because she will bear the son of one who will be in the line of the Lord Jesus Christ. So what this passage is is really just one more vital link in the chain of providence and in the chain of human history. It cannot, must not break, to take us to the cross, and to build this bridge to Calvary. So as we look at this, there will also be many lessons for us to learn on a practical basis for our lives. But what is primary is found in verse 17: "The Lord struck Pharaoh." That's the Mount Everest of this passage. That is the high water mark, the high ground of this passage.

So let's begin in the valley. Let's begin the ascent upward to the mountaintop. And in verse 10a, the beginning of verse 10, I want you to see, first, the disaster. It could be the difficulty. As Abram is dwelling in the land where God called him, he is met with great adversity, and we read in verse 10, "Now there was a famine in the land." Sounds like a good book title to me.

The land is Canaan, which is the Promised Land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey. It is a fruitful land that has now become barren as a desert. There's a severe food shortage, there is a famine, no doubt caused probably by drought conditions. And human life cannot exist without food, and neither can Abram; he cannot survive without food. And so he is in the very place where God has called him out of Ur of Chaldees to come all the way into the land of Canaan for this.

This is the very place where God sent him. Abram was in the right place at the right time, when he was met with this difficulty. He is not out of the will of God, he is smack dab in the middle of God's will. God sent him into a famine, just like God Jesus sent His disciples under the Sea of Galilee that night, and when a storm came up.

And what we learn from this is that God has never promised us an easy life. And if you're trying to calculate and recalculate the decisions you have made based upon, "Has this brought me prosperity, or has this brought me

adversity?" you may be a very poor interpreter of divine providence, because God who is all-wise and all-loving, yet all-sovereign, often sends His servants into famines and into times of difficulty within the very epicenter of His will.

Difficulties are a part of living in a fallen world. And if Abram had known that there was going to be a famine in the land once he arrived, he might have stayed in Ur of Chaldees. And so it was really the wisdom of God to not reveal to Abram what would be waiting for him once he arrived in that land, otherwise Abram might have just stayed at home and remained where he was.

This unforeseen difficulty may be right where you are this morning. In the will of God, in the sovereign will of God, God may have directed you to that job, into that marriage, into that church, or into that ministry. And just know that if you have been following the will of God, you are there by divine appointment. And there is no place in this fallen world that is an easy place, just understand that. We're not in the millennial kingdom here, and we're not in heaven yet. We are living in a world under the sway of the prince of this world, the God of this age. There is still a curse that God has put upon this fallen world and upon the human race, and we still work by the sweat of our brow, and women still deliver children with great pain.

We live in a fallen world. And Abram is right smack in the middle of difficulty, and he is there because God sent him there. And God could have sent him anyplace else. He could have sent him to Pebble Beach, I guess, I don't know, where everything's great. Only the elect understood that, okay. It's a small circle among us, the righteous remnant.

But that's the first thing we should learn from this. And I don't know what all's going on in your life, but I say this to encourage you and strengthen you, and perhaps to help you nail your feet to the floor, that there are many times that God sends us into a difficult place. And God has purposes and designs beyond which we can even understand, to strengthen our faith, to wean us off of the world, to help us be compassionate towards other people

who are going through the same difficulty, to cause us to rely upon the Lord, to deepen our prayer life, et cetera, et cetera. But that is the difficulty that we see that begins this passage. And if that's where you are today, you're in very good company, and you're standing where Abram and Sarai stood.

The second thing I want you to note is the departure; that's the second half of verse 10. "So Abram went down to Egypt." He went down geographically. He went down south and west. He left the Middle East and he went to Africa, to northeast Africa to Egypt, and the reason that he went there is – though we're not told, but undoubtedly – because of the Nile River. Everything grows around the Nile River. It is a massive river that even in drought conditions remains full of water. And there will be crops growing along the side. I've floated down the Nile River, and there are farmers on every side growing their crops. And no doubt, the same was true when Abram was alive.

And so Abram went down to Egypt. This was a wise decision on Abram's part. And sometimes people wrestle with the ethics of, "Should Abram have stayed where he was?" No, I think in a situation like this God wants us to use prudence and common sense and wisdom, as a result of prayer. "And we are in the middle of a drought, and there's food over here. I mean, we could wait for God just to open the heavens and for apples just to fall out of clouds, but that's probably not going to happen."

And Matthew Henry, the great commentator, Puritan commentator, writes on this passage. He says, "We actually tempt God and do not trust Him in the time of our distress if we do not use the means He has graciously provided for our preservation. We must not expect needless miracles." "So where you are, there is no food. Where you can travel to, there is food. It would be a very wise decision for you to get up and to go where you can find food."

And so we read, "He went down to Egypt to sojourn there." The word "sojourn" is important, because that means "temporarily to dwell there," not to move in and to stay, but just to sojourn there, and the idea is to dwell for

a period of time in a place, and then he will return back to where God had originally called him to go, to Canaan. And he gives the explanation why at the end of verse 10, which has already been stated, "for the famine was severe in the land."

That's what was driving him out. It wasn't just a drought, it was a severe drought. And this word for "severe" comes from the same root word that is translated elsewhere in the Old Testament for "glory," which means a heavy weight. It speaks to the weightiness of God. And it's the same root word here, and it really is the idea of an oppressive, heavy drought, a burdensome difficult drought.

And there's something for us to learn from this in a very practical way, that God can send us to a place. He can send us to a job, He can send us to a church, He can send us to a ministry. But things can change, and difficulties can come, and you would have to make some new decisions: "Do you stay, or do you leave?" And wisdom sometimes dictates that a change of location is in order. And that is what we see taking place here with Abram; he is acting with common sense.

I would remind us too that Abram is not yet a believer in the Lord. He's not yet converted until Genesis 15, verse 6. And so he is responding on a human level as best he can, to walk through the maze of the trials of life. But he makes a good decision.

And some of you here today may be at the crossroads of decision-making in your life; and as you've come to church today, even in your mind maybe you have been – your mind has been drifting off to whatever major decision you need to make regarding where you should live or what you should do. Abram should be an example to you that it is possible to be sent by God to a place, and then by necessity have to leave, only to return again.

This leads us now to the third heading that I want you to see, and it's the deception; that's in verses 11 through 13, the deception. And we read in



verse 11, "It came about when he came near to Egypt," - that that means before he entered into Egypt - "that he said to Sarai his wife," - let's just stop there. This clearly implies that Abram has been thinking this through: "We're headed to Egypt, and it's going to mean certain things for us. We're outsiders, we're aliens, we're strangers, we're foreigners, as we come in. And they're going to see my wife." And in the back of his mind, the forefront of his mind, he's been thinking this through: "We've got to come up with a strategy. We've got to come up with an alternate explanation to keep us alive."

So we read in verse 11 he comes up with this - I hate to say - ingenious strategy, but somewhat: "See now," - and that means, "I want you to really look at this my way. I want you to really give careful thought to this, my dear, precious wife." - "I know you are a beautiful woman." Literally in the Hebrew it means she was drop-dead good-looking. She was stunningly beautiful, dark in complexion, dark hair; she was heartthrob city.

At this time she's 65 years old, which should give some of the ladies hope here today. Sorry. All right, let's close in a word of prayer right now. I have many one-liners in the back of my mind that I'm withholding at the moment.

So she is 65, okay, a good-looking 65, and she will live to be 127. So as life has been before the flood very long, it is now beginning to be shorter and shorter. But by the standard of today's length of life, she's probably about 35 to 40 years old in the aging process. So she's only halfway to the end of her life, and she's just stunningly attractive.

And verse 12, and Abram says to her, "and when the Egyptians see you, they will see you immediately, they will spot you out. You will be so pretty in their eyes, they will say, 'This is my wife.' They will kill me, but they will let you live." Abram realizes, "They will kill me so they can have you," and so he comes up with this ingenious plan. He's really such a valiant warrior here.

He says in verse 13, "Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live because of you." Now here's the interesting twist to the story at this point. What he just said is true. She actually is his sister; she's his half-sister. And just to put a little accent point on this, I'll let you see it. It's in Genesis 20 and verse 12, Genesis 20 and verse 12, and this is a key part of this narrative.

And Abraham is the speaker in Genesis 20 and verse 12, and he's recounting this. Really, we can begin in verse 11, "Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she actually is my sister." Sarai is actually his sister and he's telling the truth here. Note the rest of the verse: "the daughter of my father. So we have the same father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife."

So he married his half-sister. And so what he is saying is actually true. So he's not lying, per se, at this point; however, there are two wrongs here. Number one, he is telling half a truth as if it's the whole truth. And what he said with a half-truth truth was to cover up the whole truth. And that should be a challenge to us, because sometimes we will tell the truth, it's just not the whole truth; it'll just be a half-truth. "And so what came out of my mouth was actually correct, it's just the half-truth was spoken in a way to actually conceal and disguise the real truth, which is the whole truth."

And so that's the first wrong that he commits. He is very cunning with his words to the point that you're not really coming clean with the truth. You're not telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And you and I need to be known as truth-tellers, we need to always be telling the truth. And if the phone rings and you say to your wife, "Tell them I'm not here," you know, you're obviously not there mentally, but you need to tell the truth.

The second wrong here is that Abram is really throwing his wife under the bus. I mean, to protect his own hide, he's wanting her to lie. And he can well anticipate what's going to happen: that she is so attractive and so

beautiful, some other man is going to snatch her up, and she's going to end up married to someone else. And that's exactly what happens: she becomes a part of Pharaoh's harem. And so she will have to sacrifice her purity, her moral purity, on the altar of Abram's self-preservation. And so that's wrong and it's not right. And I think of Philippians 2:3-4, that we must consider the interests of others as more important than our own. And Abram is considering his own interests more important than his own wife's. So that's what we learn here.

So I want you to note, fourth, the danger, in verse 14, the danger. "It came about when Abram came into Egypt," – so they now have arrived in Egypt. They've just had this discussion about how they're going to play their cards once they once they arrive. "It came about when Abram came into Egypt," – and it was pretty obvious and pretty apparent. Here are two people who don't look like us Egyptians, and they come walking into town, or riding in on camels, or however it is they arrived. And then this wife is so attractive. So it's glaringly obvious that there are two new people here. The Egyptians said that the woman was – note this – very beautiful. Not just beautiful, as Abram had said, but very beautiful. In other words, she's off-the-chart, she's exceedingly beautiful, she is greatly beautiful.

Verse 15, "Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh." The moment they laid eyes on her they went straight to Pharaoh and said, "You cannot believe this woman who's come to town." I love Matthew Henry, at this point he calls Pharaoh's officials his pimps, as they're out surveying the landscape of the land for more young women to be brought into Pharaoh's house. That's what's going on here.

And so, "Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh." Now, not for her real beauty, not for her inner beauty, not for her virtue, not for her modesty, not for her faith, not for her purity, but for her external beauty. And sometimes a woman's external beauty can be a curse; it can get her into trouble with certain men. And that's what's happening here.

And so we read at the end of verse 15, "and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house." She was gently, but firmly apprehended, and she was redirected away from Abram and taken straight to Pharaoh's house, which interpreted mean straight into Pharaoh's bed to be a part of his harem, his collection of wives, which puts her in a most difficult position. It will violate her purity.

So, verse 16, "Therefore he" - Pharaoh - "treated Abram well for her sake." I mean, the irony of this is Pharaoh now rewards Abram's bad behavior. And that's what the world does, does it not? I mean, the world rewards sin and bad behavior. TV wants to get their ratings up, they just put more trash on the screen.

And so Abram now is rewarded for her sake, because she is so beautiful. And now taken into his house, to his palace, no doubt, he is given the keys to the car. And we read, "and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels." I mean, these are luxury items, and he is showered with great wealth, while she is being showered with great danger. And at this point, it is as though Abram, as I've said, is succeeding in accumulating worldly possessions at the cost of his compromise with his wife. And just because someone has possessions in this world does not mean you've been blessed by God. It may mean you've sold your soul to the devil, cut a deal with the devil, and you now have the devil's possessions. And they have been given to Abram.

So we see in verse 17 the devastation. This is now where God steps into the narrative. Now God is here, He's just not mentioned. But God is omnipresent, God is in every place. God was with them in Canaan, God was with them on the journey every step of the way: "Lo, I'm with you always." He is with them as they enter into Egypt, and he's onsite. God is onsite, and here is the true hero of the passage: it is God, it is the Lord.

And verse 17 says, "But the Lord, but the Lord struck Pharaoh in his house with great plagues." This is the first mention of God in this narrative, it is the last mention of God in this narrative, it is the only mention of God in

this narrative, but it is the most important mention in this entire narrative. No one, nothing is more important than God. And what God does in this scene is of greatest importance.

God must now intervene. God must now step into this situation. God cannot allow this narrative to continue to flow in the direction that it is flowing, because God has a purpose for Abram and God has a purpose for Sarai, and we know that it is to make Abram the father of a great nation, and that through the womb of Sarai will come the messianic line, and it will ultimately lead to the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. So God must step into this and rechannel and redirect the flow of this account. And so God struck like a lightning bolt out of the sky in a cloudless day. This lightning bolt of God's power and God's wrath flashed into Pharaoh's house and struck Pharaoh directly head on.

And not just Pharaoh, "and his house" - all these little pimps, and the harem and this collection of women - "with great plagues." I need to comment on this. The word "great" here means "large, immense plagues." And please note, it's in the plural. Not just a plague, but a series of plagues like God will unleash upon Egypt through Moses in the book of Exodus. I mean, God will unleash the artillery of heaven upon Pharaoh.

And this word "plagues," when you look it up, it means diseases, strokes, infections, the wounds that are associated with leprosy; and that's how it's actually used in most of the Old Testament. There is just a barrage of devastation, that God hits Pharaoh hard with this. It is a concentrated bombardment of affliction that is levied against Pharaoh.

Please note why: "because of Sarai, Abram's wife." It's really in spite of Abram, not because of Abram. This is the grace and mercy of God in Sarai's life, and really, ultimately, in Abram's life as well. "Because of Sarai," meaning to protect her from sexual abuse, to protect her in order that there will come a son of promise, who will be Isaac. God will protect Sarai, which is something that Abram failed to do. So God must step in and be her protector. God must be her true husband, in this instance. And we learn

from this that there are times when God intervenes like this in human history and wields a devastating blow upon his enemies.

What flashed into my own mind was the Great Plague of 1666 that wiped out more than one-fourth of London, over a hundred thousand people with the bubonic plague. It was like a real pandemic. It wasn't less than one half of one half of one half percent. Well, that was 1665 and 1666 that was just unleashed like a tsunami tidal wave of death upon London.

Well, right before that, August 24, 1662; it's one of the saddest days in all of church history, when Charles II, the king of England, issued the Act of Uniformity, and made every preacher in the Church of England sign this, that they will pray his prayers, they will preach his sermons. And two thousand valiant Puritan preachers said, "We will not bow the knee to Baal." And in one day, two thousand of the greatest preachers this world has ever known, and perhaps the greatest generation of preachers, were put out of their pulpits.

And in succeeding time, other legislation was passed. They were not even allowed to come within five miles of their previous church, and then they were not allowed to come within five miles of any city. They had to live in forests and in fields, and they were not even allowed to be buried inside the city limits of London.

And when I take people to London on a church history tour, the first place I go to - there's two places I go to. One is where John Rogers was burned at the stake by Bloody Mary. The second place I take them is to Bunhill Fields, where the Puritans are buried. I mean, John Bunyan is buried there. John Owen, England's Calvinist is buried there. I mean, Isaac Watts is buried there. It's a Hebrews 11 of luminaries. And the reason they're buried there is because at that point, that was outside the city limits; and you were not allowed to even have your dead carcass brought into the city limits to be buried.

And so while this is going on in 1662 and '63 and '64, it is by no coincidence in my mind that God sent a plague that was like a bowling ball that knocked over the pins of London and brought it to its knees, such that they are carrying out dead bodies from the city of London like a parade. Now there are times when God drops the hammer and, "You've gone too far with My people. You've gone too far with My preachers. There'll be a heavy price to pay." And that's exactly what has happened here. God plays hardball, and they have no catcher's mitt, and they will suffer for this.

So this leads us to the final heading I want you to see, and it's in verse 18, the deliverance: "Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, 'What is this you've done to me?'" I mean, Pharaoh, a reprobate has enough common sense to connect the dots and see cause and effect, that there's something going on here that is beyond the natural realm. And he says, "Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?"

This is a rebuke to Abram. And we're not told how he came to know this, but he does know this, whether Abram was questioned, or whether Sarai was questioned; but it's made known to Pharaoh. He has more sense than Abram does at this point. And in verse 19, "Why did you say she is my sister" so that I took her for my wife? "I brought her into my palace, I brought her into my bedroom, I brought her in with my other wives and into my harem."

Verse 20, "Pharaoh commanded his men," - those who could still walk, those who were still alive - "Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him," - referring to Abram; Abram's the problem - "and they escorted him away." They didn't just send him away, they escorted him, meaning they walked him out to whatever the borderline was to make certain, "You're out of here for good. We want to make sure that you are never coming back to this land again."

"And so they escorted him away, with his wife, and all that belonged to him." I mean, he left Egypt with all the sheep and oxen and donkeys and servants and camels. What an amazing passage this is. But what we have seen here is really not the unfaithfulness of Abram, what we've seen first

and foremost is the faithfulness of God in the midst of Abram's unfaithfulness.

And is that not true in our lives as well, that there have been times and seasons in our lives when we have been unfaithful to God, and we have conspired, and we have plotted, and we have trusted in our own wisdom, and we've tried to work things out, and we have told half-truths, and we have drawn others into our plan, whether it's family or friends, and involved other people in our mischief and unfaithfulness? And others have suffered because of our unfaithfulness. It is true of every one of us here today, to one extent or to another. And yet through it all, God has remained faithful to you and me. He has been unchanging in His loyalty and in His allegiance to His elect.

And God continues to move us forward in the sovereignty of His providence, and to override our wrong decisions at times. And there are times He lets us suffer for our wrong decisions, to teach us, "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." I mean, we can reap to the wild wind, but yet we find ourselves praying for crop failure. But God, through His faithfulness, knows where He is taking us; and He continues to build a bridge to the future.

Maybe as you look at your own life today you see scenes and episodes where you have really blown it, times in your past, maybe even times in your present right now, where you have made wrong decisions; quite frankly, bad decisions; and you have more than shaded the truth. And truth be known, you've told a lie. And yet God has been so gracious and patient with you and long suffering, to give you a second chance, to put you back in the game, to deliver you out of your own whirlwind.

This passage should speak volumes to you today, and infuse hope and encouragement into you, that God is the God of a second chance. He's the God of a third and fourth chance. But you need to get it right the first time, because there are times, like when they tried to carry the ark in a way that



God had not prescribed, there was an immediate death. So what a great God we have.

But all of this – and I must tell you this: everything that we read here was to keep the messianic line alive. And when I say "the messianic line," that God had marked out the path by which the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would come into this world. He would be born the Son of Adam. He would be born the Son of Abraham, and the Son of Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. He would be the Son of David. And He would ultimately be born of a virgin, of Mary, and He would be the Son of God and the Son of Man – truly God and truly man – and He would live here on this earth on a mission of salvation, to rescue perishing sinners like you and me.

He's the only Savior of sinners. And because of the perfection of His life, with which He lived in obedience to the word and the will of God, He was taken to the cross; and there, even God the Father was the one who delivered Him over to death upon the cross. And as Jesus hung upon that cross, all the sins of all the people who would ever believe in Him were transferred to Christ, and He bore our iniquities in His body upon the tree, and He reconciled Holy God and sinful man through the blood of His cross, and He appeased and propitiated the righteous anger of God towards those who would believe. He redeemed us and bought us out of the slave market of sin, and has set us free to live as God intends us to live. And whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So here's the question: "Have you believed in Jesus Christ? Have you confessed your sin to God? Have you come to the place where you realize that you are a wretched sinner?" And if that hurts your feelings, let me put it this way: you are a wretched sinner, and you have sinned and fallen woefully short of the glory of God; and the wages of sin is death, not just physical death, but eternal death. And the only hope that you have to find forgiveness of sin and the removal of the guilt that is weighing heavy upon you is for you to turn away from this world, and turn away from yourself, and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and throw yourself upon His mercy, and say, "Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me, the sinner. And the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Him who comes unto me I will in no wise cast out."

If you've never come to Christ by faith - all of this in this story was simply to build a super highway to Mount Calvary, to Golgotha, where His Son would be lifted up, God's Son to die upon the cross for our sins. Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life' no one comes to the Father but through Me" - you have no hope. You have no hope for acceptance with God. All you can expect is eternal death and damnation and hell throughout all eternity in the lake of fire that burns with brimstone.

Your only hope is to cling to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. Your only hope to live in heaven with God and to walk streets of gold, to see gates of pearl, to see loved ones and the redeemed through all of the ages, your only hope is for you to come to Christ by faith. And that's not a physical step, that's a step within your heart. You must take this decisive step and commit your life to Jesus Christ. You must do so this very moment. "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, today is the day of salvation." And if you wait until to tomorrow, your heart will even be harder tomorrow. You will have more sin that will have weighed you down. You will have more excuses, not fewer excuses. You must commit your life to Christ this moment, right where you sit, if you've never trusted in Jesus Christ.

We're not going to ask you to stand up, we're not going to ask you to walk forward, we're not going to ask you to wave a hand. There'll be no silliness. We ask you in your heart right now to say to God, "I believe in Your Son Jesus Christ. I, by faith, trust Him." Do not delay. You may never have another opportunity like this again the rest of your life to hear the truth so plainly stated to you. Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Come to Him now before it's too late. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, thank You for Your faithfulness toward unfaithful people, such as we often are. Thank You for Your steadiness, Your unchangeableness, Your immutability, the way You stay the course, the way You have no Plan B, the way You take our lives and just keep moving us forward So, Father, we praise You and thank You for Your faithfulness, in Jesus' name. Amen.