May you consistently seek the perfect will of the Father

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!*

 Psalm 1:1

All of us are, unfortunately, guilty of wickedness, sin, and scoffing. This is part of our human condition brought about by the fall in the Garden of Eden. Our hearts are intent on evil from our beginning as we were even conceived in sin. However, we who are Christian should not fall under the condemnation of this verse.

When we truly accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, it is no longer our desire to walk in the council of the wicked. Our desire becomes walking in the council of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Our choice is to no longer stand in the path of sinners, but to walk the pathway of righteousness. Sitting in the seat of a scoffer becomes repulsive to us; we look forward to the holy seat awaiting us at the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Yes, we still succumb to the flesh and engage in evil; but the new heart we have received from Jesus desires to please Him and we do not dwell in wickedness. His atoning sacrifice frees us from slavery to the ways of the world and assures us that we face no condemnation in Him.

Blessed be God forever

In Christ’s love

John

 8-14-22

Gen 11:26-32, 12:1-4

We noted before that there are two genealogies of the line of Noah’s son, Shem, given in Genesis. They diverge at the children of Shem’s great-grandson, Eber; and Eber is where the name Hebrew eventually comes from. Eber had two sons that are mentioned; one is Joktan and his line is followed in chapter 10.

In chapter 11, the line of Eber’s other son, Peleg, is followed. The earth was divided during the days of Peleg, so his name means “was divided”. This is a reference to the account of the tower of Babel where the LORD divided the population of the earth by confusing their language. This account of Babel would have taken place just about 100 years after the flood.

Following the line of Peleg in Shem’s genealogy is important because it leads to Abraham; the first to be identified as a Hebrew; and the first to be identified with the idea of promise. The concept of promise shows up often in Genesis where the promise requires faith in God because keeping the promise is beyond the ability of mankind. This is keeping the promise given back in Genesis 3:15 regarding the seed of the woman who is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

We began our reading today with verse 26 and a man named Terah who had three sons: Abram, Haran, and Nahor. This is reminiscent of Noah who also had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. We find out later on in Genesis that Terah also had a daughter named Sarai. A little is mentioned about each of these children of Terah; but what we eventually learn is that all four of the children of Terah were direct ancestors of Jesus.

We also need to make sure we don’t get confused: in addition to the son named Haran there is also a place named Haran; and in addition to a son named Nahor there is also a place named Nahor. We’ll have to keep these straight.

Terah and his children lived in a place called Ur of the Chaldeans. The city of Ur was a large place that was in southern Mesopotamia. The people group that lived in the area were called the Chaldeans. Recall that all of this was in the area of Babel or Babylon. This is after the LORD confused the language of the people, so this is a group that stayed in the area while others moved on. In fact, this is almost 200 years after the tower of Babel incident.

Terah’s son, Haran, apparently died somewhat young. He died before his father did while they were living in the land of Ur. Before he died, he sired three children. He had a son named Lot, whom most of us have heard about. He also had a daughter named Milcah. Not many remember Milcah, which is unfortunate because she also is a direct ancestor of Jesus. Haran also had a third child named Iscah, who was probably also a daughter but nothing else is known about her.

Another son was Nahor. Nahor married his niece, Milcah, the daughter of Haran. In chapter 22 of Genesis is the news that these two had eight sons. Nahor and Milcah became the grandparents of Rebecca who married Isaac and also the great-grandparents of Leah and Rachael, wives of Jacob. Nahor stayed in Ur when the rest of the family moved on toward Canaan. So, it is from this area of the world that Isaac got his wife and Jacob had to travel to in order to get his wives; all from the family of Nahor, and ultimately, from the family of Terah.

Abram married Sarai, who turns out to be his half-sister. They both had Terah as their father but they had different mothers. Verse 30 tells us that Sarai was barren, that she had no child. If we were reading

Genesis for the first time, this wouldn’t seem very important. But this verse is critical to the idea of promise; of God’s faithfulness and mankind’s need to depend on Him.

Terah, Abram, Sarai, and Lot all left Ur of the Chaldeans and headed toward the land of Canaan. At this point, we are not told why. But we are told that they didn’t make it all the way to Canaan; they only made it as far as a city called Haran. Haran is about 500 miles northeast of Ur. Because of the lay of the land and the Euphrates River, you could not simply go west and get to Canaan; you had to go north and then turn and continue southwest.

Terah and his family settled in Haran. We are not told why they stopped there instead of continuing on to Canaan. Terah died in Haran at the age of 205. As we read through the genealogy of chapter 11, we can see that the life spans have significantly decreased as compared to the time before the flood. Sin has begun to take its toll on the physical health of the people. Sin has a very real effect on the physical world.

In the beginning of chapter 12, the reason is given for the family to have left Ur of the Chaldeans and headed for Canaan.

*Now the Lord said to Abram,*

*“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you.”*

The reason for going is simply that the LORD told him to. There is a little bit of a question regarding when Abram was told to leave his country: Was he told in Ur or was he told in Haran? If we look at it chronologically, it would appear that God told him to leave from Haran. However, the wording and other parts of the Bible don’t support this.

The LORD told Abram to leave his country, his relatives, and his father’s house. All of these describe Ur, but not all of them fit Haran. Ur would have been Abram’s original country and where his father’s house or homeplace was. Also, Nahor stayed there so that’s where his relatives were. This is reenforced later when he will only accept a wife for his son Isaac from his relatives, who are back in Mesopotamia.

Other mentions of this in the Bible are in Genesis 15:7 where God says to Abram, “*I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans.*” Next is Nehemiah 9:7, *“You are the Lord God, Who chose Abram, And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees.*” Finally, in Acts 7:2-3 where Stephen is making his defense before he is martyred, he says, “*The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’*”

These things indicate that Abram was called by God while he was in Ur of the Chaldeans. For some reason his father, Terah, joined them; and then they only went as far as Haran. It was sometime later that Abram left Haran and continued toward Canaan.

Does it matter whether Abram was in Haran or Ur when he was called? It is significant that he was called while he was in Ur of the Chaldeans. Remember what area this is in; it is in Babylon. The city of Babel was founded by the mighty Nimrod, who set about establishing his own dominion without regard for the LORD. Evil and sinful desires were established here when men chose to defy God by building a tower that would reach to heaven. Babylon has become an established system of evil on the earth that will persist until Christ returns. Babylon is the manifestation of the seed of the serpent.

God doesn’t want his people associated with the seed of the serpent and this theme runs throughout the Bible. In the last book, Revelation 18:4-5, in reference to Babylon the apostle John tells us, ‘*I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”*’ It is interesting to note that Babylon’s “*sins have piled up as high as heaven*”, just like the tower they tried to build. Christians are warned to stay away from the evil of the world lest we get caught up in it and end up partaking of the punishment God unleashes on it.

Also, as part of Judah’s punishment for turning from God, they were taken captive to Babylon. But even here, the LORD delivered his people and brought them out of that land. So, yes, it is important that Abram was called while he was in Babylon. The LORD was calling His chosen instrument out of there; which sets a precedent. “*Come out of her, My people.*”

The last line of verse 12:1 is interesting, “*To the land which I will show you.*” God had told Abram to leave everything he was familiar with, but He didn’t tell him where he was going. We all know that Abram was going to Canaan, but he didn’t know that. This is where we begin to see the faith that Abram had in God. Although Abram wasn’t perfect, his demonstrated faith saved him. A lesson for us. We must be saved strictly by faith in Jesus, but that faith will result in action.

God promised to make Abram a great nation, which means that he would have lots of descendants. Here is where we think back to the statement that his wife, Sarai, was barren. Abram was 75 years old by the time he left Haran and Sarai was 65. This promise from God was going to require something very special in order to be fulfilled; yet Abram followed Yahweh anyhow.

God promised to make Abram’s name great. Notice the difference between this and back in the account of the tower of Babel where the people said, “*Let us make a name for ourselves*.” Obviously, the name of Abraham is very well known down through the centuries and even today. None of the names of the builders of the tower are known.

The last line of verse 12:3 says, “*And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*” We know that the fulfillment of this promise is the atoning work of Jesus Christ. But we also need to be careful how we interpret this verse: It says, “*all the families*”, but this is not universalism. The first part of verse 12:3 says, “*And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse*.” So, some will be cursed. Recall that “families” refers to nations or people groups. The salvation offered through Jesus is offered to everyone and people from all the nations will accept that offer; but not every individual.

Let’s consider why God chose Abram. If we think back to Noah, we are told that “*Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*” Noah was righteous and blameless in his time. And the apostle Peter tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Now we give credit to the Holy Spirit for working in Noah, but Noah chose to follow God and for this reason, God spared him and saved mankind through him.

None of this is said about Abram. Abram was a pagan just like all those around him. Joshua 24:2 tells us, ‘*Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.’”*’ The people in that area worshiped the moon, calling on a moon-god, Nannar. So, Abram was not righteous or blameless; he was an idolater.

The only reason for God to have chosen Abram is because God decided to. It was a choice God made and there was no humanly good reason to do so. It was simply part of His sovereign plan. As Jesus told the apostles in John 15:16, “*You did not choose Me but I chose you*.”

This is a wonderful demonstration of the grace of God. None of us deserve the good things He gives us and we certainly don’t deserve salvation. But in His mercy He calls to each one of us and offers us the redemption of sins by way of Jesus, the seed of the woman; His plan from before the beginning of time.

Prayer

Blessed Father, we are grateful that You have called each of us as You called Abraham. We are grateful for the leading of the Holy Spirit, without whom we could never come to You. And we are grateful to You Jesus, our King and Saviour; if not for Your work on the cross we would be lost.

We so desperately need Your help that we may faithfully follow You. Abraham was our example; keep us true to his illustration. We are very prone to try to handle things in our own strength and by our own wisdom. When we can’t see that You are working, we try to take care of things ourselves. Remind us that this is foolishness. May we work; but in Your strength and committing our work to You.

We worship You Lord God, as You continue to work out Your glorious and perfect plan. We continue to be in awe of You, as we see the unfolding of Your will as shown to us in the Scriptures. We are convinced that no evil can thwart You and we beg Your protection as we temporally live here in Babylon.

In Jesus’ name we pray

Amen