

Beyond Blessing  
Genesis 12:1-9  
Rev. Henry Pascual

Prayer of Illumination: *Holy One, your Word and your promises are true. Speak to us words of hope and promises, that we might be a blessing to others. Amen*

We all want a blessed life. We pray for it, don't we? We ask God to bless our families, our health, our work, and our churches. We count our blessings when life is good, and we long for them when the road gets rocky.

And rightly so. Blessing is one of the great, sweeping themes of Scripture—mentioned 88 times in the book of Genesis alone. It is a gift from God. It's God's design for fruitfulness, abundance, and well-being, woven into the very fabric of creation.

By the time we get to Genesis 12, Abram had already experienced a lifetime of blessings. He had family. He had massive possessions—cattle, sheep, and a whole community of servants working the land with him. By the world's standards, Abram was a success.

But something **was missing**.

If you look at the very end of Genesis 11, the narrator drops a devastating line: Abram and Sarai had no children. Their future was closed. And suddenly we realize that all the blessings Abram possessed could not solve his deeper problem.

There always comes a point when even our greatest earthly blessings **cannot answer our deepest longings**. A loving family is a profound blessing, but it cannot insulate us from grief. Meaningful work is a blessing, but it cannot guarantee a lifetime of purpose. Good health is a gift, but it cannot halt aging or escape death. Financial security is a comfort, but it cannot conquer a human heart filled with fear.

Genesis 12 teaches us something surprising, even jarring: **blessing, by itself, is simply not enough**.

Blessings are beautiful—they give us life, hold us close, and sustain us day by day. Yet, as wonderful as they are, blessings alone aren't enough to carry us into the future God has for us. For that deeper journey, we need **a promise.**

Blessing is wonderful. It is life-giving and sustaining. But blessing alone cannot carry us into God's future. For that, we need **a promise.**

Here's the difference. A blessing helps us in the present, but God's promise shapes our future. Blessing helps us live in the world as it currently is; promise carries us toward the world as God intends it to be. Blessing sustains life, but promise transforms it. Blessing looks at today and says, "This is what you have." Promise looks at tomorrow and says, "This is what God will yet do."

Abram's true story begins not when he counts his assets, but when God speaks a promise:

*"Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you."*

Notice what God *doesn't* do here. God does not hand Abram a map. He doesn't provide a timeline, a budget, or an explanation of how any of this is supposed to work. God simply gives Abram a promise. And that promise **changes everything.**

What makes this remarkable is that Abram **did absolutely nothing to earn it.** Before Genesis 12, Abram had no recorded words in scripture. He hadn't performed any heroic deeds. He hadn't displayed extraordinary faith. He was just a guy living in Ur. But God speaks. God calls. God promises.

This story begins **not with human achievement,** but with **divine grace.** And grace is God's unmerited favor.

The same is true for us. Faith begins not with our promises to God but with God's promises to us. Before we seek God, God seeks us. Before we trust, God speaks. Before we obey, God calls. As the parables of the *Lost Sheep* and *Lost Coin* remind us, it is not that we found God, but that God found us (Lk. 15:3-10).

And when God speaks, Abram becomes someone entirely new.

Think about this: none of God's promises to him had actually been fulfilled yet. He didn't have the land, and he didn't have the child. But he started living his daily life as if God's future was already a reality.

That right there is the definition of faith: **living today in light of God's tomorrow.**

So Abram packs up. He leaves everything familiar behind and walks toward a land he has never laid eyes on. His obedience isn't driven by certainty; it's driven by a promise. Time and again, the text underscores this step of faith with a simple, rhythmic phrase: "*So Abram went*" (Gen. 12:4, 10, 13:1, 18).

He stepped into the dark unknown, sustained only by God's promise. He didn't have a guarantee. He had a promise—**and that was enough.**

That promise didn't die with Abram. Generation after generation, God's people leaned on it. When they were breaking under the lash of slavery in Egypt, they remembered the promise. When they were wandering in circles in the wilderness, they sang the promise. When they sat by the rivers of Babylon in exile, weeping for home, they found hope not in their current circumstances, but in God's ancient promises.

Today, the church is called to live out that very same promise. We don't gather week after week because our lives are perfect or because the world is at peace. We gather because we believe God's promises still stand.

We stake our lives on the promises that say: "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" We trust that grace is stronger than sin. We believe that love is stronger than death. We pray because we know God's reign is coming.

Now, none of these realities are fully visible to us yet. The world looks messy. But like those who walked before us, we organize our lives around these promises anyway. We live toward them.

That means your future is not determined by your current circumstances. Your future is determined by **God's faithfulness.** The future does not belong to your fears; **it belongs to God's promises.**

So I have to ask you: What are you living by today?

Are you living only by your blessings, or are you living by God's promises?

Blessings are precious gifts. Enjoy them, thank God for them. But blessings alone cannot sustain your hope when the road grows dark, and the blessings fade away. Only a promise can do that. Only a promise can carry us beyond what our eyes can see and launch us into God's future.

Abram's journey began with a promise, and so does ours. Therefore, let us walk forward in trust—not because we know exactly what lies ahead, but because the **One who promised is faithful.**

And that, my friends, **is enough.**

Thanks be to God. Amen.