

Grace will uproot us. Grace will relocate our hearts. Grace liberates and casts a vision for our lives we could never predict. Grace changes us. It is a holy transfusion giving us the power and ability to pass the same grace on to others, for we can only give what we possess. Abram heard the call of grace, responded the call, and believed God's grace. Let us listen for the whisper of grace in our lives. God will draw and direct us to a thousand mile journey of this year 2019 and throughout our lives.

Questions for Reflection

1. How would you respond if God is directly calling you now?
2. Have you experienced the call of grace in your life? If so, what was the call like?
3. Abram packed his stuff, left his hometown, and went wherever God sent him without knowing the destination, as he listened and followed God's call. Are you ready to listen and follow God's call this year 2019?

January 6, 2019
EXTRAORDINARY GRACE (1)
Hearing the Call of Grace
Genesis 12:1-9
Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

Happy New Year! How's your new year so far? I hope and pray that you have a wonderful & blessed year in 2019. When we have a new beginning, such as a New Year or a new school year, I remember a Chinese proverb saying, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." When we walk step by step every day this year, trusting God's faithfulness, God will show and direct our ways. As we begin a new year, I would like to think of God's grace for several weeks. The journey of God's grace begins with hearing its call. Grace is calling us. Our responsibility is to listen to this whisper. We have to be willing to hear.

Today's text is God's calling of Abraham, known early on as Abram. Abraham's journey begins with God's covenant, the promises God made. Abram moved with his father, Terah, and extended family to a place called Ur. After Terah died, Abram received a message from God. It was a direct communication from the Almighty. Have you ever desired such a thing? If God were to speak to you right now, His voice booming, would you listen? Would you obey immediately? or would you doubt it was really God?

Here is the truth. God has spoken, not the way you might desire, but He has spoken through His Word made flesh, through the Scriptures, through the lives of believers throughout the centuries. The question is not whether God will speak. The question is whether we are willing to listen. Will you hear? Abram was willing to listen to the call of grace. This is what God said: "*Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you.*" (12:1)

That is pretty straightforward. 'Leave everything you've known, all the people who know your language, your customs, your relatives clamoring to help raise your children – just pick up, pack, and go. Put your future, your family, your fortune, and your life as you know it completely in My hands.'

God continued to tell him: 'Oh, and by the way, I am not going to tell you where you're going. You don't get to know the specific destination. It could be a beautiful place; it could be a desert. You have one job. Trust Me. You don't get a postcard picture of your final destination. But no matter where I send you, no matter where you go, you have Me. And this process of leaving will begin to change you on the inside. You will be forced to firmly put your affection on Me. I don't want you trusting your own holiness or some idols you can fashion with your hands. You must want Me and no other.'

We can assume he was a little shocked to be receiving such communication. God continued with the second half of His message.

"I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the people on earth will be blessed through you." (12:2) This is God's promise for Abraham: 'I am going to bring you into a land I've chosen. And in the midst of this I will do extraordinary things in and through you. You will be blessed and you will bless others. I am with you, Abram. You and I are a team. I, the Lord, am the one doing this. You obey Me. Follow Me. That's your part in this plan.' God is for Abram. God is directing Abram, telling him what to do and where to go, and that the end of this story will be great blessing for Abram and those who come after him.

Think about the question behind the story. Why Abram? Why did God give him the privilege of hearing the call of grace? Why did He choose to bless Abram and all his descendants? Abram wasn't the

special person God knew would follow perfectly. He made mistakes, actually lots of mistakes. Did God choose Abram because he was wealthy and had a lot of livestock? He didn't need Abram's wealth. Why did God choose Abram? It was the mysterious grace of God. His unmerited, undeserved, and unlimited favor was poured out on this man – extraordinary grace. Abram obeyed, packed up, and began a journey that started with hearing God. He listened and followed.

Do you think Abram struggled at first? He might have had conversations or big arguments in the tent at night with Sarai. "Go over this one more time and tell me what He said. Are you sure about this, Abram?" Perhaps Sarai had heard the message from a distance. Perhaps she had such great trust in Abram that she simply turned and began to pack without question.

Hearing the call of grace forces us to decide – follow or stay. God will complicate our lives when He whispers His grace. But if we hear the call of grace and decide to follow it, it makes things easier. Now we know what to do. In Abram's case, he knew specifically how to respond. But the voice of God will put such a radical call on our lives that it will force us to wrestle with ourselves, the people we love, and our stuff.

The followers of Jesus have the same experience. Jesus brings so many more questions. He doesn't just want us to follow rules and regulations like the religious leaders of the day. He doesn't want us doing daily devotions and showing up at a weekend service, but he wants to transform us through the process of grace as Abram learned through hearing the voice of God.

Following the call of grace will become the seedbed of faith. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right path."* Abram embodied those words.

