

Date : 30 April 2023
Theme : The men who walked by Faith
Topic : Consolidating our faithfulness to God through Genesis
Key passage : *Genesis*
Key verse : *I now establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you... Genesis 9:9*

Introduction

What was God looking for when He launched His master plan for the creation of mankind? We have seen how He loved and blessed each of the Patriarchs who were men of faith. But what about the Lord God Himself? What / Who was He on the look-out for?

- **What / Who was God looking for in each of the man from Seth to Noah to Abraham?**

After the Fall and Flood, God continued to look for true worshippers *Genesis 4-12*.

God took the initiative to seek out sinful humanity so that men (Seth, Enoch and others) who desired to walk with God, received grace to have their sins forgiven. They could come into His Presence to *...call on the Name of the Lord... Genesis 4:26*. God was looking for a line of covenant partners who would walk with Him. Godly people who valued His presence could worship Him.

(In contrast with the beginning of a degenerate people who *...went away from the presence of the Lord... Genesis 4:16*).

- **The Potter and the clay**

It seems clear from the Genesis account that God was looking for faithful men and women who would share time and eternity with Him. Genesis is the story of God's quest for faithful men.

God is like a Potter working with clay. When the clay refuses to yield to His shaping the Potter has to destroy it and start all over again.

So the first 10 chapters outline His purpose.

- Creation of man in His own image and likeness, with the capacity to relate to Him.
- Destruction of all who would not trust God when He provided the way out in the form of the ark of Noah. After 1650 years, only one man Noah, found grace to be faithful to Him. He sent the flood when Noah's preaching of 100 years yielded no response. The Spirit of God would not strife with man. God was looking for one man who would partner with Him. God found Noah *...among the people of his time... Genesis 6:9*.

Noah did everything just as God commanded him. Genesis 6:22

- **What is the problem when we have no faith (= faithfulness)?**

Was God withholding grace from some people while giving grace to others, like Noah?

What was the key reason why the Patriarchs found grace to walk faithfully before God?

1. Why is faithfulness the key to a covenant partnership with God?

God is looking for covenant partners.

A covenant partner is a person who is faithful to God's Word.

(opposite is faithless = covenant breaker *Romans 1:31*)

a) Nature of covenant relationship

Because God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God, faithfulness is of great importance to Him.

God is absolutely faithful and He expects covenant partners to be faithful.

God is absolutely true, He expects you and I to be truthful.

b) Power of a covenant relationship

God has made many promises to us. In return; He requires we respond obediently to Him.

- Blessings for keeping the covenant
- Curses for breaking the terms of it.

Example: Noah accepted the terms to be God's covenant partner and was subject to grace. Cain and Esau violated the covenant through disobedience or unbelief.

2. What is Faithfulness?

a) A choice we make to obey God (not a gift we possess or special ability).

It is common to hear Christians say...*I have no faith*.... Faith is not what we possess.

- It is a choice we make to obey God in any given situation, especially in a bad situation.

Example: God was looking for a man to partner with Him in covenant relationship to bring about His plan of salvation. This relation was conditional for Abraham to lead and train his family to do what was right and just *Genesis 18:19*. Abraham also had to practise circumcision – a symbol that would set Abraham and his family apart, that their fertility and future were in God's hands.

God and Abraham each had a part to play but ultimately, God would keep His promise to give Abraham an heir, a land, a nation and a family to bless the world.

- It is a proactive response in a situation, not reactive to how we are treated.

Example: Joseph's calm response to his wicked brothers

...You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good... Don't be afraid, I will provide for you... and spoke kindly to them... Genesis 50: 20, 21

b) A commitment to a long-term relationship.

Example: The Marriage covenant requires both partners to be faithful and loyal for life.

- Faithfulness always involves sacrifice and putting one's life at risk for the sake of another.

- **Abraham** was committed to his family. He rescued his nephew Lot, despite the risk of an international war involving four kings against five.

- **Abraham** was committed to obey God when he agreed to lay his son on the altar of sacrifice.

- **Joseph** chose to be faithful to God and not sin against Him, even when the balance of power at his work place weighed heavily against him. He remained faithful to his earthly employer and to God.

He had a proven record of faithfulness and could be trusted to handle the temptation of immorality. He could be trusted not to flaunt his God given advantages of being well-built and handsome. As a red-blooded young man, he chose to reject the repeated seductions of his employer's wife.

He said *...How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?... Genesis 39:9*

- **Jacob** was committed as a faithful employee. He served his employer uncle 20 years without cheating, absorbing losses and working day and night to safeguard his master's flocks.

He trusted God's protection when he returned to Canaan in obedience to God's instructions.

c) A Christ-centred covenant mindedness.

To whom am I faithful to?

It requires me to reject all benefits that might sever my relationship with Christ to whom I have pledged (vowed) my loyalty.

- How is this seen in Genesis?

- God Himself vowed by way of a covenant cutting with Abram *Genesis 15*

(He gave precise statements as to His obligations *Genesis 12:2, 3*)

- Abraham was faithful for 25 years trusting God for Isaac's arrival.

He fulfilled his role as a covenantal partner when he willingly laid the long-awaited gift of his son on the altar of sacrifice in obedience to God.

Application

a) How does a person enter into a covenant with God?

i) By accepting Jesus as my Lord. I vow this in the form of a prayer.

ii) By trusting in Jesus' sacrifice as my Substitute for the penalty for my sin. I believe Jesus died, was buried and rose again from the dead to give me eternal life.

When you vow loyalty to the Lordship of Christ and Personal Saviour, pledging to be a covenant keeper with God, you have entered into a covenant relationship.

b) Have you chosen to be God's covenant partner? Why?

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- Remember God does not act except through a human partner. As covenant partners, we can exercise His authority in addressing life's problems such as praying for the sick, sharing the gospel message.

c) How do you walk in faith as a covenant partner?

- By believing God's Word and begin to **obey** (not merely thinking about obeying)
 - Forgiving a difficult brother, like Joseph
 - Serving an unreasonable employer well, like Jacob did
 - Not fighting with a relative or sacrificing family harmony over material disputes, like Abraham with Lot.
 - Being an outstanding worker, like Joseph.
 - Fleeing from sin, pornography, lust, foul words.

Quick overview of Genesis

- great events. Chapters
- great men. Chapters
- Genesis is a book of