

## Leaving a Godly Legacy II – The Legacy of Faith.

### 1. Overview and Review

- a. Last week I began my December sermon series on what it means to leave a legacy.
  - i. I talked about how we all leave a legacy, good or bad, whether we want to or not.
  - ii. **Legacies are what one generation leaves to another**, what one ancestor passes on to his descendents.
- b. Legacies are important because
  - i. Every one of us wants to be remembered.
  - ii. Everybody wants to leave something behind, something that said we passed through this life.
  - iii. I believe that people want to live a life that matters or makes a difference.
- c. Many of us here may have an ancestor who has passed down to us a genetic legacy.
  - i. They have given us the legacy of the color of our eyes, or the height that we stand.
  - ii. Our ancestors have unwittingly given us genes that lead us to be prone to high cholesterol, heart disease, arthritis, or bad teeth.
  - iii. Some of us have even worse genetics, leading some to have a serious, painful or life threatening disease.
  - iv. And there is nothing we can do about that health legacy.
    1. It is passed down to us in spite of all of our good intentions and the healthy lifestyles we strive for.
    2. This is the legacy of health and genetics.
- d. But there are other legacies that are passed down as well.
  - i. Last week we looked at how Adam, the first created human being, left a legacy that has been a curse for every one of his descendents.
    1. It is the curse of sin and separation from God who had created mankind for the purpose of an intimate relationship.
    2. I shared how God remedied that curse, that legacy, in Jesus Christ, and how Jesus took our sins and their penalty on himself on the Cross.
      - a. But unlike our genes which we have no choice in, each of us has a choice that allows us to receive that change in legacy.
      - b. We make that choice by faith...by placing our trust in Christ (and not in ourselves) and receive the gift of forgiveness and eternal life.
- e. Our parents have left each one of us a legacy, just as you will leave a legacy to your children.
  - i. That legacy may be temporary in the form of a financial inheritance, or property.
  - ii. Or that legacy may be more lasting and of eternal value. They may have given a legacy of faith.
  - iii. **Bill Hill, come up here just for a moment and tell us about the man who led you to faith in Christ. That is a “lasting legacy.”**

Let's look at two legacies:

## 2. Legacy of Terah:

- a. Anyone heard of Terah? (Not Tara) – He is the father of Abraham.
- b. Genesis 11:26-32 *Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. v31 Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.*
- c. For whatever reason, Terah left his country “in order to enter the land of Canaan.” So far so good, but it says, “*They went as far as Haran and settled there.*”
- d. The bible says that Terah never reached his goal of Canaan (which is modern day Palestine).
  - i. He had 135 years to achieve this goal, from the time he left Ur to enter the land of Canaan, but he only went so far.
  - ii. He settled for something less. He settled for Haran, a village he named after his deceased son and father of Lot.
- e. Was he sent by God there?
  - i. We have to believe so, because some years later, Abram (his son) is given the EXACT same goal (as we will see in a few minutes). That is no coincidence.
- f. Because Terah doesn't finish his journey, he is symbolic of some of us here in this room.
  - i. Terah's legacy is a journey incomplete.
  - ii. Terah's legacy is a project unfinished.
  - iii. Terah's legacy is a calling spurned for comfort or convenience.
- g. Has God called you to a task, a project, a mission or a journey?
  - i. Has He called you to go to school so that you can serve Him in a special way?
  - ii. Has He called you to minister to someone or somewhere?
  - iii. What excuses have you been giving Him for not acting on that call or for giving up on it?
  - iv. Do you say...
    1. Oh Lord, I have children now, I can't go on the mission field.
    2. Oh Lord, I have too many obligations to spend time on that!
    3. Oh Lord, I am too young to do that now.
    4. Oh Lord, I am too old to do that now.
    5. Oh Lord, I have illnesses that prevent me from serving, its too...painful, uncomfortable, difficult, hard!
    6. Oh Lord, the obstacles are too great, I am too discouraged.
- v. **Personal Illustration: Seminary journey to Fort Worth in 1986 – a brand new 9 month old baby, left a good job for the uncertainty of no home, job or prospect.**
  1. Many times I wanted to quit.
    - a. One time I had a good job, thought about the comfort of a secular career, rationalized “God can still use me as a Sunday School teacher.”
    - b. Another time I was self-employed, fulfilling the “substitute” dream of my life.

- c. Several times I tried to quit. Each time God confronted me with His calling and gave me a choice. “confronted by a lady in a bible study when I vocalized my ‘new interpretation’ of God’s will for my life.” She asked me if God had “changed His mind?”
  - d. I am here today because God spoke through that woman.
  - e. Imagine the courage that woman had to display to question a teacher in a crowd of people. I thank God she had the faith to do so.
- vi. God is giving you that choice today. He is challenging your excuses today.
1. Numbers 23:19 *God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.*
    - a. **God does not revoke His call.**
    - b. When He places His call to action in your life He will bring it to fulfillment. Only you can stand in the way. No circumstance, no person or difficulty can stop God.
  2. Have you stopped half way on your journey, offering incomplete obedience to God instead of finishing the call?
    - a. Don’t let Terah’s legacy become yours.
    - b. Terah let that legacy slip through his fingers. Whether he thought the grazing lands were “good enough” or he was just plain “tired” of traveling, he chose to stop his journey and settle for second best.
    - c. He had no legacy to pass on except that of failure.
    - d. Will that be your legacy or will you change that legacy today?

### 3. Legacy of Abraham

- a. Genesis 12:1-3 *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; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*
  - i. While Terah is still living, God speaks to Abram. He tells him to leave everything he knows, all of his comfortable surroundings, all of his family, and to go to a place that God will show him. (Canaan – the same place his father had started for).
  - ii. God promises Abram that if he will go on this faith filled adventure that he would be made into a great nation (a great legacy), that his name would be great! He would be a blessing, and moreso, ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH would be blessed in him.
  - iii. I would call that a pretty nice legacy, wouldn’t you?
  - iv. How would you like to be able to leave that kind of legacy?
- b. You know that when we leave an inheritance we call it a “will.”
  - i. I think that it is neat that God says in this passage on the screen that “HE WILL” 6 times.
  - ii. When God makes a promise He keeps His end of the deal.
  - iii. When He makes a legacy, it is carved in something more lasting than stone...it is carved in the fabric of eternity.

- c. The next 12 chapters in the bible revolve around Abraham's faith relationship with God, how he listened to God, how he spoke to God, what he asked Him for and what God did for Abraham.
  - i. All of this was the result of Abraham BELIEVING God which resulted in action on Abram taking action based upon that belief in what God had said.
    - 1. The bible calls that action FAITH.
    - 2. Faith is the action we take when we base it upon a belief.
  - ii. It took Abram's action, his faith, a whole 5 chapters in the book of Genesis after his departure from his father's house, which covers quite a number of years, that God actually REWARDS and RECOGNIZES Abram's faith. .
    - 1. How does God do it? God changes Abram's name.
    - 2. His name Abram means ("father is exalted"), but this was changed to Abraham ("father of a multitude") (Genesis 17:5).
    - 3. In other words, Terah missed his chance to leave a legacy.
    - 4. Terah had named his son to mean "my father is exalted" in anticipation of his own legacy. But Terah's name is erased from his son's name when Abram is renamed.
      - a. Here it is not Terah who gets to leave the legacy but Abram, who is renamed to "father of a multitude."
  - iii. What had Abram done? Nothing! God had simply chosen him and offered him a legacy.
    - 1. If Abram would believe God, then all of these blessings and this great legacy would be his!
    - 2. Abraham believes God, he acts in faith, he continues in action and experiences God's promises.
    - 3. Consider this in contrast to Terah whose name is nothing more than a footnote in the genealogical line of Abram.

#### 4. Abram's legacy is the legacy of Faith.

- a. With Abraham, his legacy lives even though he is not here to tell us about it. It is because Abraham left a legacy of faith.
- b. *Romans 4:1-8 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."*
- c. Abraham's life is a witness of living by faith.

- d. God chose Abraham not because of anything he had done. He hadn't earned God's favor. It was God's choice. He received the rewards by simply acting upon his belief that God would keep His promise to him. Look at the chronology:
- i. At 75 the LORD God appears to him and commands him to leave his family and all he knows to travel to a land unknown to him. God will make a great nation of him, bless him, make his name great and make him a blessing so that all nations on earth will be blessed through him.
  - ii. He travels to the land that God shows him, the land of Canaan. For the next 10 years he waits for a son and then fathers a child by Sarah's handmaid, Hagar, at Sarah's suggestion.
  - iii. He waits another 13 years and at 99 obeys God's command to circumcise himself and all the males in his household as an evidence of faith. God changes his name from Abram to Abraham, promising that his son will be through Sarah. Isaac is born a year later.
  - iv. Those years for Abraham in the Promised Land were not all easy years.
    1. There were famines, displacements, and disputes with neighbors over water rights, threats of attack from other peoples, years of being childless, and nearly 20 years of rivalry between Hagar and Sarah.
    2. There was the constant pressure of living in a land where he was always a foreigner.
    3. When he needed to purchase a burial place for his wife, the person selling took financial advantage of him.
    4. Abraham didn't always make right choices.
      - a. Sometimes he lied or didn't own up to his lying even when caught.
      - b. At times he ignored conflict, until it became a crisis.
      - c. Abraham, the father of many nations, was not far from perfect.
  - e. Still, the overwhelming testimony of the Bible is that he lived by faith.
    - i. Our passage tells us that Abraham was counted righteous not because he tried to earn God's favor, but because he lived by faith. He acted upon what God told him.
    - ii. That is our same calling. If we desire a legacy that lasts, we must live by faith.

5. How do you leave a legacy of Faith? I have three passages that tell us how:

**a. Remember earth is not my home**

- i. Hebrews 11:13-16. *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*
  1. As long as we live as if this earth is why we are here, as if the accumulation of possessions, houses, wealth, prestige, etc., we are living as if this earth is our

home. The bible tells us over and over that we cannot love the world and love God. We will be torn.

2. I believe this was Terah's failure. He stopped for some reason, to raise a family, to graze his herds and he set down roots. He lived for this life.
3. If you have been caught up with this life, you will not leave a legacy of faith for your children or anyone else for that matter.
4. Make a choice about where your *lasting* home is today.

b. **Remember the journey will be hard.**

- i. Hebrews 11: 32-39 *And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned[[f]]; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.* In the western Christianity we have a mistaken notion that if it isn't easy, then it isn't God's will. I believe that often it is the opposite.

1. If what you want is an "easy life" until you leave this earth, you will not leave a legacy in any form other than an etched gravestone.
2. Faith requires you to get up off your comfort zone and go where God calls you to go. Faith will result in sacrifice. Faith is not easy. **But its rewards are worth it!**

- ii. Let me show you two people who are walking faithful and aren't making excuses and who know that walking by faith is hard but has its rewards...

1. Bill Hill was given a special burden for Western Reserve Trailer Park nearly 2 years ago. Bill is not a young man. Bill is not even what I call the healthiest guy, he only has one lung. Bill didn't make any excuses. He tackled this mission and over the past year we held several outreach events there, including a block party with the assistance of a church from Missouri. This fall, he and a team of 5 others, began a weekly children's bible time on Tuesday nights at the trailer park, and have touched over 22 children so far, with 14 in attendance just 2 weeks ago.
  - a. Parents are getting curious, "what is my child finding so interesting in the bible?"
  - b. We hope that the opening will come for an adult or women's bible study there as well.
2. Hank and Dorothy Smith will be traveling to Mississippi again this winter to minister to the hurricane Katrina victims. Are they young folks? No! They know

the work will be hard. Does that make them shy away? No! They go because they are called.

3. Are you?

c. Remember faith is not earthly accomplishment

i. 1 Peter 1:24, 25 – “*All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever.*” – James 1:10 – “...

1. Every earthly accomplishment of man ends up like grass clippings – it rots, it rusts, it tarnishes.
2. The world notes someone by their accomplishments – Kings and Presidents get streets, bridges, airports named after them – people erect statues of generals – we give Pulitzer prizes for writing – Nobel prizes for peace –
3. We talked about the prizes that people win for the MVP or the Heisman trophy. But you can’t tell me who won it 5 years ago. Because they haven’t changed the world.
4. But Mother Theresa, Lottie Moon, William Carey, Adorim Judson...they have made a difference. They didn’t just change the world but were a part of changing people’s lives in this world for eternity.

6. You can make a difference too! Everyone has a circle of influence. 30,000 people is the average in a lifetime (John Maxwell)

a. There’s NO QUESTION you’re INFLUENCING PEOPLE. The question is WHAT TYPE OF INFLUENCE are you leaving?

b. The yeah buts...

- a. my kids are grown...it’s too late.
- b. I’m divorced. I’ve already blown my chances.
- c. I’m hardly able to keep my head above water...
- d. You’re 52...I’m only 23...I don’t have to worry about it yet
- e. I’m 52, I’ve wasted my life already.

c. **As long as you have one day left you haven’t wasted your life.**

7. What will you do today? Will you make a choice to leave a legacy of faith or will your legacy be that of Terah? Decide today.

a. God has given you the choice. He gave you His Son. Will you change your legacy through a simple act of faith today? Step out of your seat and walk forward and receive Christ as your savior today. He will change your life for eternity.

b. Let’s pray.



