

## ACT TWO WEEK TWO INTRODUCTION

Genesis 12 opens Act II, which stretches across the remainder of the Old Testament. Act II begins with God's gracious calling of Abram, who is later renamed Abraham, a subtle cue to the transformational power of God's grace and promise. Scripture continues to reveal God as the pursuer of lost humanity. *He* calls Abram. *He* promises to make Abram a great nation. *He* keeps His promise by overcoming Sarah's barrenness. God keeps His promise, even through Abram's sin and unbelief. Against natural odds, Abraham and Sarah have a son, Isaac. Through Isaac and his son, Jacob, God will build Abraham's descendants into the nation of Israel. But God's covenant promise to Abraham does not terminate with Israel. God forms Israel from Abraham for the blessing of the sin-cursed nations as He says in Genesis 12:3, "*And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*" Upon all the peoples rests the judgment due for sin, but through that judgment salvation is coming.

## KEY SCRIPTURE

*Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

– Genesis 15:6

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

God's grace exhibited in His calling of Abram (Abraham) in Genesis 12:1-3 matches step-for-step the devastation of sin seen in Genesis 3:14-19. His blessings overtake the curses. Compare these two passages. How does God's calling of Abram promise salvation through: 1. The difficulty of childbirth? 2. The curse upon the ground/land? 3. The conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent? God promises salvation *through* judgment. Where else have we seen that theme so far in Genesis? Can you think of other examples from Scripture?

Focus your attention on Genesis 15:6. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were to achieve righteousness (right standing and relationship with God) by their obedience, this is also known as the Covenant of Works. After the Fall and the pervasive corruption of sin, the fulfilling of that old arrangement would be impossible because "none are righteous" (Romans 3:10). In contrast with the old arrangement, how is Abraham "credited" righteousness by God? To what are you looking to make you righteous before God?

What parallels can you identify between God's promise to Abram and Jesus' command to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20? How do these passages help us understand God's mission and our role in it?

God establishes His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 and reiterates it in Genesis 17. The sign of this covenant with Abraham is circumcision. If circumcision distinguished Abraham's descendants, according to Romans 2:28-29, how does God distinguish the people of God in the New Covenant? Who then makes up the people of God?

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah vividly demonstrates the seriousness of human sin before the holy God. Where else in this week's reading do you see the damaging effects of sin? Try to identify sin's effect on 3 planes: 1. "Vertical" How does sin disrupt and destroy relationship with God? 2. "Horizontal" How does sin separate people and corrupt human relationships? Notice especially how sin effects family dynamics, for example in the episode of Abraham/Sarah and Hagar or in the dysfunction of Jacob/Rachel/Leah and Laban. 3. "Inward" How does sin disconnect us from ourselves? Meditate on Jacob's deception of his father.

Repeatedly in this week's reading God works through and around sinful people to keep His promises and further His purpose. How has God brought wholeness to your brokenness? How has He worked in your life even in, through, and around your sin? How does Jesus offer wholeness to us "vertically," "horizontally," and "inwardly"?

### **VOICES FROM THE PAST**

"Every thing in and of ourselves, under any consideration whatever, seems to be excluded from our justification before God, faith alone excepted, whereby we receive his grace and the atonement. And, on the other side, the whole of our acceptance with him seems to be assigned unto grace, mercy, the obedience and blood of Christ; in opposition unto our own worth and righteousness, or our own works and obedience."

—John Owen

**BE A DOER OF THE WORD**

“But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” -**James 1:22**

**Who can you bless this week? What is your plan to do so?**