

Confirmation of the Covenant

Genesis 17: 1-27

As we continue to examine the life of Abraham, it is apparent that he walked by faith as he journeyed with the Lord. At the conclusion of our previous study, Ishmael had been born unto Abraham when he was eighty six years old. Our text today reveals that Abraham is now ninety nine years old. While we cannot say with absolute certainty, it does appear that Abraham had not heard a significant word from the Lord in a long time – somewhere around thirteen years.

Most cannot imagine walking solely by faith for thirteen weeks, much less thirteen years; and yet that is exactly what Abraham was forced to do. No doubt he wondered on many occasions if God would speak again and offer additional information about His divine plan for Abraham's life. However, it His time and according to His sovereign will, God spoke again to Abraham. When God was ready, He spoke. Those long periods of silence are difficult to endure, but we too can trust the Lord to speak at the right time in our lives. You may feel as if God is no longer interested in you or your situation, but He is always faithful to those who seek Him.

God would again provide additional information regarding His plans for Abraham, confirming the covenant He had made earlier in Abraham's life. I want to look at the [details](#) revealed by God as we consider: [Confirmation of the Covenant](#).

I. The Beauty of the Covenant (1-5) – Abraham endured a season of silence, but God eventually revealed the blessings associated with this covenant. Abraham was reminded of:

A. God's Person (1) – [And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.](#) This is similar to the reminder Abraham received earlier in life, following the announcement of the covenant, [Genesis 15:7](#). Again God offered a reminder of His divine character. He referred to Himself as the Almighty God. This is the Hebrew term, *El Shaddai*. It speaks of God being our “*nourisher, strength, and satisfaction.*” Jehovah referred to His being self-existent, and the Almighty God refers to His being the All-sufficient One. He was all Abraham would ever need, and more than able to provide for him.

- God demanded Abraham to walk uprightly before Him. This is an appropriate request. If God truly is our strength and satisfaction, we should have no need to look to another or offer our submission to another.

B. God's Promise (2-4) – Here God reassured Abraham of the covenant made with him.

Because of his favor with God, Abraham would enjoy the abundant blessings of God. He was promised to be the father of many nations. While Abraham had yet to receive the promised son, God had not forgotten His promise, nor had He changed His mind. He had a plan for Abraham and assured him that He would fulfill the promise according to His will.

- Notice the choice of words in [Verse 4 – As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations](#). Similar to the reception of the sacrifice, as God alone walked through the offering and confirmed the covenant, this too reveals the covenant rested in God alone. God had chosen Abraham to receive the blessing, and this covenant would be fulfilled by God. This covenant did not rest in the faithfulness of men or depend on human abilities. God had entered into this covenant with Abraham, and He would ensure its fulfillment.

C. God's Purpose (5) – [Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee](#). Abraham had struggled while waiting for God to send the promised son. A sovereign delay had not meant that God would not keep His word. God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, since he would in fact become the father of many nations. This affirmed God's plans for Abraham and would serve as a continual reminder of the covenant between them.

- In the flesh we often become impatient. We want God to move in our lives according to our desires and within the timeframe we choose. Those who have walked with God for any length of time know that is rarely the case. God works according to His will and within His time. In Christ, we now belong to Him. We have a new name written in heaven. We must continue to trust the Lord, even when we fail to understand what He is doing or where He is leading.

II. The Basis of the Covenant (6-8; 15-22) – As God talked with Abraham, He offered additional insight to His plans for Abraham and his descendants. God spoke of:

A. Exceeding Fruitfulness (6) – [And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee](#). Clearly Abraham had grown impatient waiting for the promised son. He and Sarah had taken matters into their own hands, resulting in the birth of Ishmael. While God had permitted this to happen, it was not part of His divine plan for Abraham and Israel. As of yet the promised son had not been born, but God promised that Abraham would be exceeding fruitful, the father of nations and kings. All of this was yet future, but Abraham had God's promise.

- While walking in the valleys of life, growing more impatient with each passing day, it becomes harder to remember and focus on God's promises. Much of what we are promised in the Word is reserved for our future. Like Abraham, we must learn to trust the Lord to provide. He has a plan for our lives and will fulfill that plan according to His divine will.

B. Enduring Faithfulness (7-8) – God made a covenant between Him and Abraham, but this covenant would last beyond the life of Abraham. This covenant would be an everlasting covenant between the Lord and Abraham's descendants. God had a plan for Israel; He intended to produce a people through which His Son would come to redeem the world from sin. The land Abraham had been given would remain the possession of Israel for an everlasting possession. God promised to be their God, just as He was Abraham's God.

- We live in a world of constant change. There is very little in this life that we can genuinely depend on. Most of what we possess is temporal and will eventually decay. In the midst of certain change, the believer can rest in one absolute – the enduring faithfulness of our Lord. He purchased our redemption on the cross, bringing us into His body through salvation, and provided eternal life. While I am forced to deal with continual change, I can rest in the enduring faithfulness of my Lord and Savior!

C. Expanded Favor (15-22) – As God promised blessing and favor to Abraham, He had not forgotten about Sarah. Her name was also changed, and God reaffirmed the promise of a son born unto Sarah. Through her womb, the promised son would be born. She would become the mother of nations and kings.

- Abraham had not forgotten Ishmael either. Although he was born through an ill-advised plan, Abraham still loved his son. He asked God to bless Ishmael, and God granted his request. God promised to raise up a great nation through Ishmael as well, but Isaac would be the promised son through which the plan of God would be fulfilled.
- It is impossible to exhaust the grace of our Lord. We face situations that seem final, and yet God is able to provide for our need. We can't begin to comprehend the power and compassion of our Lord. We must walk by faith, trusting Him to meet our needs according to His will.

III. The Boundaries in the Covenant (9-14; 23-27) – Finally we see that God revealed to Abraham the specifications for the everlasting covenant. Notice:

A. The Requirement (9-11) – God declared that every male within Abraham’s family, including those who would come in future generations, must be circumcised. This would stand as confirmation of the covenant between the individual and God.

- This physical practice identified the Israelites as the people of God. Through the New Covenant, we are not required to perform this physical act, but there must be a circumcision of the heart, revealing the new birth in Christ. We are identified with our Lord and Savior through our relationship with Him. [Col.2:11 – In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.](#)

B. The Responsibility (12-14) – The practice of circumcision was to be performed on the eighth day following birth, and included all who were born within the house, whether bond or free. None were exempt from the requirement, and all were responsible to do so if they were to be identified with God.

- This same principle remains for those born today. Again, this does not require the physical act of circumcision, but all must be saved by grace, receiving the gift of salvation through Christ the Lord in order to identify with the Savior. Attending a Baptist church or being born in a Christian home does not grant acceptance to God. Every individual is responsible for their personal relationship with Christ. Apart from salvation in Christ, one remains condemned in sin and separated from God.

C. The Relationship (23-27) – Abraham and all the males within his house submitted to the requirement of God, affirming their relationship and identification with Him. Abraham held great influence over those within his house, convincing them to participate as well.

- This was God’s requirement, and the only way they could enter a covenant relationship with Him. The same principle applies today. God has not ordained many ways of acceptance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In order to enter into a relationship with the Lord, one must come in repentance and faith for salvation. There is no other way!

Conclusion: When the situation seemed hopeless for Abraham, God showed up and promised a secure future. Our lives appear hopeless at time with difficult situations, but the believer is promised abundant life in Christ. If there are needs in your life, especially regarding salvation, come to Christ for the hope and help you need.