

ESF, Lord's day service message
2/8/2015

Life in God's Faithfulness and Grace

Text: Matthew 1:1 -6

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² *Abraham was the father of Isaac,*

Isaac the father of Jacob,

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ *Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,*

Perez the father of Hezron,

Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ *Ram the father of Amminadab,*

Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ *Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,*

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ *and Jesse the father of King David.*

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

When we open the New Testament in the Bible, we see the genealogy of Jesus Christ on the first page. We start reading of it from the first verse: *A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

And we continue reading of Jesus' genealogy in the verses that follow. There we see some familiar names such as Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. But we also see many unfamiliar names about whom we don't know much. Then, we may lose interest in reading further. We may think that there is not any meaningful truth in the names. So we may just skip all those verses and go to the next section.

However, in these names, God is revealing one of the key truths in the entire Bible. The truth is that in His Son Jesus, God faithfully fulfilled all His promises and blessings through all kinds of people, even the worst of sinners by His grace.

Life in God's faithfulness

A reason why many people are living in misery is that there are broken promises in their lives. When young people get married they are promising each other: I will love you until death 'do us part'. But some years later, both of them or one of them, may not want to keep the promise. When people make business partnerships, some partners don't keep their promises and they break the hearts of the other partners. Men's promises are fragile or deceptive. If you live your life by men's promises, you will get disappointed.

It doesn't mean that we should not trust each other. We have to trust each other. But we should not trust each other as if we have the power and ability to keep promises at all times.

Psalm 146:3-4 says:

*Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortal men, who cannot save.*

*When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;
on that very day their plans come to nothing.*

Isaiah 2:22 says:

*Stop trusting in man,
who has but a breath in his nostrils.
Of what account is he?*

Through Abraham's blessed life, God is showing us what we must trust. It is God's promise. And it is the faithfulness of God who always keeps His promises.

Abraham was a very old man who did not have a son. In ancient time, an old man without a son was a miserable man. Because in ancient time, a son could mean everything for an old man. A son could be his protector, his provider, and his primary caretaker. So an old man without a son had no primary caretaker, no provider, no protector, and no one he could depend upon on earth.

But one day Abraham heard God's word. God told him two things. One was a command and another was a promise. The command was that he had to leave his home and go to a place where God would instruct him. The promise was that God would give him a son and through the son, God would make a great nation and would bless all people.

Abraham believed in the promise and left his home. He went to the place where God told him to go. As an old man he expected that God would fulfill His promise of a son soon, probably in a few years. But God did not fulfill the promise as Abraham expected. After he received the promise, a few years passed but nothing happened. 5 years passed. 10 years passed. 15 years passed. 20 years passed. 24 years passed. The promise was not fulfilled. So from time to time, Abraham's faith became weak. When his faith became weak, he did not know what to do. Once he tried to have a son through a servant woman who had nothing to do with God's promise.

But God helped him regain his faith again and again. And then finally, 25 years later, God gave him a son just as He had promised. God helped him see the Savior who would come through the lineage of his seed. Although Abraham was a miserable, hopeless old man, by God, who faithfully kept His promise, he became a blessed man. It was neither his

own strength nor his own effort which made him a blessed person. It was God's faithfulness.

In this genealogy of Jesus, He is also the son of David. Why is this significant? Even though David made some mistakes— and some very big sins— he loved God with all his heart and God loved David in return. God made a promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:16, *“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”* God promised David that his kingdom would endure forever, that one of his household, or descendants, would be king forever. But there was a time when it seemed that this promise would not stand the test of time. After David's death, his son caused a rift in the nation, and by the time of his grandchildren the nation of Israel had split apart. Before too long there were two nations, Israel and Judah. And then, in the course of time, the two nations would be destroyed, carried off into exile. It would seem that God did not keep his promise, because there was no earthly throne and no earthly king from David's line. But God was sending a king, and he would indeed be descended from David. Matthew 1:1, *A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David.* As Galatians 4:4-5 says, *“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under to law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of son.”* In the fullness of time God sent his son. He sent Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Through Jesus, God confirms that everyone who comes to Jesus and believes in Him will receive the same blessing. God is saying to us: *If you come to Jesus my Son, and live by faith in Him, I will let you trust in my promises. And when you trust in my promises, you will never be disappointed. I will surely keep all the promises. You may feel hopeless now because of your difficult condition. But don't give up. Keep trusting in my faithfulness. Wait until I fulfill the promises.*

When we live in God's promise, our lives can stand upon a solid rock. Although, the promise may not be fulfilled as we expect, it will surely be fulfilled. While we are waiting for the promise to be fulfilled, God helps us grow in faith. God convinces us that He is faithful and He will surely fulfill His promise. God strengthens our faith to see His mysterious world more deeply, widely and highly. So, while we are waiting for God to fulfill His promise, we can live with hope.

Numbers 23:19

*God is not a man, that he should lie,
nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.*

Does he speak and then not act?

Does he promise and not fulfill?

If you have a problem that nobody can solve, try to find a promise of God for the problem and hold on to that promise. If you have a problem of fear, hold on to God's promise of courage. If you have a financial problem, hold on to God's promise of financial blessing. If you have a problem of conflict and bitterness, hold on to God's promise of forgiveness and peace. If you have a problem of depression, hold on to God's promise of hope and joy. If you have a problem of sickness, hold on to God's promise of healing. If you have a problem of temptation, hold on to God's promise of victory over temptation. And God will surely fulfil the promise according to His faithfulness.

Life in God's grace

Another blessing in this genealogy is that when we live with faith in Jesus, we can live in God's grace. And a life in God's grace is a most blessed life. Why?

Here in Jesus genealogy, we can find people who had a shameful past. In verse 3, we can see a shameful family history. *Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.* Do you know what the relationship between Judah and Tamar was? The original record of their

relationship is in the book of Genesis chapter 38. Judah was the father-in-law of Tamar. Tamar was the wife of Judah's oldest son Er. But the son died without leaving a seed to succeed his name. The only way to inherit the name of the dead son was to let the widow get married to the dead son's brother. So Judah let his second son Onan marry his dead brother's wife Tamar. But that son also died without leaving a seed.

And Judah was afraid of giving another son to Tamar, because he thought if he gave another son to her, the son also would die. But Tamar was upset about Judah's decision. So she disguised herself as a prostitute and covered her face with a veil and seduced her father-in-law and slept with him. And she became pregnant and gave birth to the twin sons- Perez and Zerah. What an unthinkable sins they committed. But God put their names in Jesus' genealogy.

Look at another names, Rahab and Ruth in verse 5. Both were gentiles who had no right to belong to God's people. Rahab was a prostitute. However God allowed them to become wives of forefathers in Jesus' ancestry.

Also look at David and Uriah's wife in verse 6. David actually committed adultery with the wife of his own soldier Uriah, who was royal to him. Also, when David found Uriah's wife got pregnant, he killed Uriah to hide his sin (2 Samuel ch. 11). What dreadful sins David committed! But God permitted those names be put in Jesus' genealogy.

Why?

God does not condone their shameful sins but God shows that

"There is no one righteous, not even one" Romans 3:10.

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" Isaiah 53:6

God shows that man's shameful sin can be forgiven and wiped out in Jesus Christ. God shows that there is no sin which cannot be forgiven in Jesus. God shows that a man can be set free from his or her shameful past. God shows us that regardless of our shameful past, we still can have a chance to live a new life and we still can receive His blessings if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that Jesus died for our sins.

God shows us that we have to live by faith in His grace not by our own righteousness.

In Romans 4:6-8 Paul puts the truth this way:

David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

*"Blessed are they
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the man
whose sin the Lord will never count against him."*

There was a young pretty girl, Christine, who was living with her poor mom in a small village in Brazil. Longing to leave her poor Brazilian neighborhood, Christina wanted to see the world. Discontent with a home having only a pallet on the floor, a washbasin, and a wood-burning stove, she dreamed of a better life in the city. One morning she slipped away, breaking her mother's heart. Knowing what life on the streets would be like for her young, attractive daughter, her mom Maria hurriedly packed to go find her. On her way to the bus stop she entered a drugstore to get one last thing. Pictures. She sat in the photograph booth, closed the curtain, and spent all she could on pictures of herself. With her purse full of small black-and-white photos, she boarded the next bus to Rio de Janeiro.

"Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money. She also knew

that her daughter was too stubborn to give up. When pride meets hunger, a human will do things that were before unthinkable. Knowing this, Maria began her search. Bars, hotels, nightclubs, any place with the reputation for street walkers or prostitutes. She went to them all. And at each place she left her picture - taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, fastened to a corner phone booth. And on the back of each photo she wrote a note.

"It wasn't too long before both the money and the pictures ran out, and Maria had to go home. The weary mother wept as the bus began its long journey back to her small village. It was a few weeks later that young Christina descended the hotel stairs. Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes no longer danced with youth, but spoke of pain and fear. Her laughter was broken. Her dream had become a nightmare. A thousand times over she had longed to trade these countless beds for her secure pallet. Yet the little village was, in many ways, too far away. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back was this compelling invitation. 'Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. Please come home.' She did."

In this genealogy of Jesus, God is showing His own photo to all of us. When we are wondering without faith, God shows His face of faith. When we are agonizing in our own sinful ways, God is showing His gracious face to us so that we can come back to home, the home where we can have peace with God, where we can start a new life all over again, where we can receive the best blessing we need. It doesn't matter where you have been. It doesn't matter what you have done. What matters now is what you allow God to do in your life through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new*

creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

God wants us to see this morning that through Christ anything is possible. Through Him, even you and I can be used. Through Him, it does not matter how bad our past is. Through Him our lives can be changed although we don't deserve it. Through Him, our lives can have an eternal impact on many people.