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## Genesis

### Chapter 20 - God's Grace Again

#### Back to Being a Blessing (vs. 14-18)

**Genesis 20:14-18:** Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. Abimelech said, “Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please.” To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared.” Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

When we come to this particular passage, we realize that God is raising up an intercessor. Abraham is beginning to intercede. We read this passage, and we go, “Yeah, yeah, we know what intercessory is about.” But the fact of the matter is that this is basically one of the first times it ever happens. The Book of Genesis is about the beginnings. And so, all the way through the Book of Genesis, we've seen the beginnings of things. And if you think about it, this Book of Genesis actually covers more time than all the other books combined. So, the amount of time that's actually covered in the Book of Genesis is that which really makes the other books seem small, as far as time goes. What we're seeing is the beginnings of God working in our lives. And you see the beginning, obviously, of creation at the very beginning of the Book of Genesis and all things. But then you see the beginning of sin. You see the beginning of man dealing with his sin. You see the beginning of families. You see the beginnings of all these things that we deal with in life. And I think that's one of the reasons why Genesis is so important, because we see where it begins and how God is fostering these things and actually bringing us to a point in which He is bringing us

back to Himself. As man sins, he has been separated from God. God, throughout the rest of the Book, is actually reconciling us back to Him. And so, as we go through this Book, we realized that this is the beginning of God's grace; it's the beginning of God's reconciliation.

When we think of that and we come to Abraham, we realize that Abraham is an interesting picture of God calling out an individual to become a nation, to become a people that would bear witness to God's grace. Why is that necessary? Well, what we've seen is man left to himself goes awry, whether it's the flood or building the tower of Babel, when just left to himself, things literally proceed from bad to worse. So, what God begins to reveal to us is He needs to call out one for this particular purpose.

And we keep going back to the fundamental text in Genesis 12. So, let's go back there because that's really where kind of it all began, in which He calls out Abraham for a particular work. And it's good for us to remember what the work is. Because as we remember this, we can understand what God is doing in our lives. Sometimes

things happen in our lives, and we go, “What in the world is God doing?” And all you actually have to do is open up the Bible and you can see what He's doing.

So, in Genesis 12, if you look with me in verse 1, it says, as the Lord calls Abraham out,

(Genesis 12:1) “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;

(Genesis 12:2) 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.”

That sounds pretty emphatic, doesn't it?

He goes on and says,

(Genesis 12:3) “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.”

Wow, that's quite a promise, and it's quite a calling.

God calls His own, and we're chosen by God. And we've oftentimes talked about the efficacious work of God, but I want to go beyond that and talk about, in that realm, the sovereignty of God. God is doing a work. And if you think about it, God is saving in spite of us. It's not necessarily because of us. We're not very cooperative in the whole saving process. It's not that we seek God. As you know, Romans 3 so aptly puts it, there's not only none righteous, no not one, but it goes on to say, there's none that seeks after God. So, we don't have the proclivity to go after Him. And it is His graciousness that goes after us. You kind of see that in John 10, don't you? Where Jesus says, "I'm the good shepherd. I know My sheep. My sheep hear My voice and they come. I must go get them." And you realize that as Peter says, "All we like sheep have gone astray," really kind of quoting out of Isaiah 53, right? We've each gone our own way. And it's the graciousness of the Lord to lay upon Himself our iniquities, our sins, that He might forgive us and bring us back to Himself. God initiates salvation, clearly not us. So, as He calls out to Abraham, he's chosen by God. What's interesting is, as we follow this individual's life, we almost have to step back and go,

“He just doesn't look blessed.” I mean, there are a lot of things that happen to him that just doesn't look like God is blessing him. And we realize that a lot of this is his fault, but in the midst of God choosing him, He is literally making him a blessing, once again, in spite of Abraham's bad choices.

I think of Paul when we go into the New Testament, and Paul will make a statement in Galatians 1. His statement will be, “I was actually chosen in my mother's womb.” I'm not sure how he knew that, but here's a guy that really was convinced that God had called him out for that particular purpose. Now, all the way from age 1 to age about 40, he's really rebelling against the Lord. In fact, he becomes a nuisance to the church. More than a nuisance, he begins destroying the work of God. And what we realize is that God had called him for the purpose of actually being as he will ultimately define the call to Paul, He says, “I called you not only to go to your people, but to go to the Gentiles.” And Paul realized that as he tells Peter that very point. Going to the Gentiles, how is he going to do that? Because he's a Jew of Jews and he's

been very zealous to actually attack the church. And God says, "Yeah, I'm going to actually use you to spread the gospel." Well, this is God's sovereignty, right? God said He's going to do it. He's going to do it. He realized that he was chosen. And so, how is He going to do it when Saul, Paul at that point, is so rebellious against God and so hostile against Christianity? How is He going to do it? Well, God is doing it while he's hostile. What do you mean? Well, God is using him to spread the church out. If you remember, the church was growing rapidly at the time of Pentecost. And 3,000 were almost immediately added to the number, and were meeting in a house. It's an amazing point. But you have all these people coming together, and soon after that, another 5,000, and the church is growing exponentially in Jerusalem. It's the church in Jerusalem. How do you get people out there to share the gospel? You bring in a Saul. He starts going after them, and they start running. And Scripture says in the Book of Acts that the church kept growing and the word of God kept spreading. What I'm saying is that in Paul's rebellion, God was using him to spread the gospel. Then, of course, He brings him to Himself, even in Paul's zealous

state, where he's almost making enemies by proclaiming the gospel once he's transformed. (They have to sneak him out so that there can be peace in Jerusalem once again.) But in his zealous state, God is using him. And finally, God molds him into a place in which he becomes a servant. And he actually declares himself like a father, like a mother, to these different churches. And you go, "Wow, God is using him every single stage."

The same thing is true with Abraham. As we come to Abraham, and we realize that in the initial stages, oftentimes in our life, God has chosen us, and God is using us. Once again, at the beginning, I think, in spite of ourselves, but at the end, He begins to grow us into the work in which we really are defined by that marvelous work. So, Abraham is called to bless. Is he doing that? No, it doesn't seem like it, and yet he is, and God is using him in that place. Now, when I make this statement as well, I want us to consider the fact that this blessed person doesn't seem to be so blessed in many of the things that happen to him. And let me just mention a few of them as we consider Abraham. And I'm sure Abraham was

probably dealing with these particular thoughts, "If in fact I'm so blessed, why am I dealing with so much sorrow?" I mean, one of the first things that happens when he's called is God brings a famine in the land. So, "Why do good things happen to people that are supposed to be blessed? Why am I going through this?" And so, he has to deal with that; he has to deal with the fact that he falls flat on his face.

Of course, we're going to actually use the passage in Genesis 12 to parallel to Genesis 20 because it's fundamentally the same mistake, it seems like, that Abraham's making. And that is he tries to pass off his wife as a sister so he protects himself. And then in so doing, he finds himself in dire straits with those in authority, in particular with the Pharaoh in the passage in Genesis 12. And in Genesis 20, he finds himself at odds with the king Abimelech in that particular passage, but makes the same error of judgment and does it willingly, does it wittingly, and even brings his wife in on the plan. And they work through this, "Now, you're going to play like you're my sister, right?" "Yeah, we got it." And so, he does this. In

every case, God pulls him out with greater supply. When he leaves Egypt, he has camels, because the Pharaoh goes, "You've got to get out of here. You're trouble. I mean, your God came to me and said, 'You don't mess with that guy's wife.' I mean, we're all sick because of you, because you came into our land, you need to get out of here." And as he first came into the land, he actually gave him all kinds of stuff just so he can meet his wife. She must have been beautiful. Here again, it's hard to imagine that somebody in their perhaps 70s at this point or late 60s, is that beautiful. She's so beautiful while she's 90 when she comes to Abimelech that he wants her to be his wife. But anyway, we won't go into the details of that. But this particular pattern is already set. Nevertheless, in the midst of that, God works in his life and blesses him. It's an amazing picture. And then you come into the fact that he has to separate from Lot, and in that separation, there's sorrow. I mean, here's somebody that you felt like it was your job to protect, his nephew Lot. He wasn't necessarily supposed to bring him with him, but he does. And in so doing, he feels like he's his protector because, you know, his dad died, and this is Abraham's brother.

And there's another thing. Why does Abraham's brother have to die? I mean, if he's so blessed, why does he have to go through that kind of sorrow? And so, he takes his nephew; he probably feels like he has to compensate in some way, his nephew, and he takes him under his wing. But then he can't even be kind of a good father to his nephew, because he rebels and goes into the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, and kind of loses his whole family. And now Abraham has to watch the destruction and the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. And at the juncture that we are, he's not sure whether or not Lot made it out. So, you have the ambiguity and the concern of, "What's going to happen or what happened to this person that I love so much? Why does my world seem so unblessed? And why am I going through all these troubles?" Of course, we know that Sarah says, "I know you can't have a kid. I mean, you're supposed to be a great nation yourself, and you don't have any kids. Everybody else around you are having kids, you don't have any." Can you imagine maybe one of the conversations with God? "If I'm so blessed, how come I don't have any kids?" God says, "It's coming, it's coming." "I'm 100 years old. Where's the

kid?” You know, so 25 years. I mean, how long do you wait for stuff? Have you ever waited for something 25 years? So, once again, “If I'm so blessed, why am I having to wait? Why am I having to deal with these issues?”

What we realize is, all the while in all these things, God is training him to be a blessing. And that's what's so hard for us to comprehend, that God is training an individual to become a servant. He actually, literally, is training him to be an intercessor to the nations. But he has to go through these things in order to do that.

There's an interesting passage in Isaiah 42, and Isaiah 42 actually starts off this way, God says,

(Isaiah 42:1) “Behold, My Servant...”

And it's a prophetic statement as you go on and read that particular chapter. It's a prophetic text in which it points to the Messiah coming. And of all the titles to give the Messiah, “Servant”. It is the Gospel of Mark that will emphasize this, that Christ came to serve. And you'll see all the way through the Gospel of Mark, His willingness to minister to people tirelessly, even to the point that his family turns to Jesus and they go, “You've got to be crazy.

All these people are coming, they're inundated, we can't even eat." But it displays His servanthood. And we realize that that in order to be a blessing, there has to be a servant's heart in us.

Now, that's not going to come easy. And one of the things necessary in order for us to become a servant is you've got to go through rough times. And I'm going to tell you the reason why. Because if you didn't, you wouldn't feel empathy or care or concern for anybody else. That picture is seen at the beginning in Genesis, "Okay, I'm going to give you everything you want. You're not going to have any need. You're going to live in perfect land." And so, Adam and Eve live in perfect land. Okay, so how do they relate to one another? Well, she messes up and he throws her under the bus. So, what we see is that when you have everything, there is no sense of care for those around you. Peter will actually tell us in 1 Peter in particular in Chapter 2, you go into Chapter 4, he'll emphasize this as well, that we were chosen, and we were called, fasten your seatbelts, to suffer. Do you know you were actually called to suffer? I know that people,

they receive the Lord, “Whoopie, I'm a child of God,” and they go, “Now, everything's going to go easy.” Oh, you didn't read the fine print. You were actually called to suffer because God is molding you into the image of His Son. And this is why He turns to His disciples, and He says, “Okay, you want to follow Me, take up your cross, let's go.” See, that's the plan. So, the difficulties that come in your life are the very things that God is using to mold you into the person that is like His Son. You are children of God. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God. You come into Hebrews, and He says, “Look, I know that you feel like you're getting discipline and you're having to suffer all these things, but who the Lord loves, He disciplines. I mean, if you're without discipline, you're not His kid.” So, God is doing a training work, and the same thing is happening here.

So, when he comes into Genesis 20, and Abraham makes the same error in which he is afraid. Once again, he's disoriented. Probably the reason he's disoriented, as we were talking about, he just watched the destruction of

Sodom and Gomorrah. Thousands, if not close to a million people, were destroyed in this. You have 5 main cities. They just went to major meltdown. He doesn't know what's going on with Lot, although he had been intensely praying for Lot. And you remember the prayer as he comes before God and God actually visits him. It's an amazing point. And he stands before God, and he goes, "Now, I know You're really, really just, so here's the deal. If there are 50 righteous, You would not destroy these cities if there were 50 righteous. I mean, I know You wouldn't do that." And God says, "No, I'll preserve it." And then he goes into 45, and then he starts jumping in the 10s, and goes into 40 and 30 and 20, and you realize he finally gets down to 10, and he goes, "What if there were just 10?" "No, I won't destroy it if there were just 10." But He has to destroy it, because the only people that come out is Lot, his wife, and the two girls; their fiancés won't come out because they don't take Lot seriously. He doesn't know that this is happening. He doesn't know that the angel was sent to rescue Lot, but he does know that he prayed intensely, and I'm talking about he literally talked to God about this and was

begging him on behalf of Lot. Scripture tells us that God rescued Lot because, and it actually tells us in the text, He remembered Abraham. So, what we see in that particular setting is intercessory prayer working, so to speak. Now, the tendency of all of us is to be a lot better at intercessory prayer when it comes to somebody we like, or somebody that we care about, or more specifically close family and friends. So, if we feel very close, we hear that something's happening to them, we might even get on our knees, if in fact it's somebody close to us. But if it's somebody else, "It's not my problem." It kind of goes to the Pharisee, "So, who is my neighbor?" So, you see that wonderful picture with the Samaritan. So, as you think about these things, you realize that God is not only molding him to bless his family, which kind of is a natural thing that comes into play, but God wants him to be a blessing to the nations. In order for that to happen, he's going to have to care for the nations.

Well, It's just the way that the Lord works that in the midst of our mistakes, we like to call them mistakes, I'll call it sin; in the midst of sin, when we begin to rebel

against God and go our own way, God's still training us. And so, He brings him, as Abraham finds himself wandering into the land of the Philistines, he finds himself before the king, Abimelech being the name of kingship at that point. "Ab" being "father," once again, "*melech*" being "king," well, "father king". He talks to "father king" in this particular land in the Philistines, and once again, tries to pass off his wife as his sister. God then reveals Himself in a dream to Abimelech and warns him and says, "Don't touch that woman or you're a dead man." And when God says something like that, you take it seriously. He does take it seriously within the passage. But what's interesting is that Abimelech begins to come before God, and he says, "You know the integrity of my heart. I didn't know this was true. I mean, he told me that it was his sister, so I thought it was a sister. I wouldn't have done it if it was his wife." And God says, "I know the integrity of your heart." He says, "That's why I kept you from doing it." And once again, we read all that.

If you look in verse 6 of Chapter 20,

(Genesis 20:6) “Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.””

So, Abimelech was frightened. He calls all of his men and he goes, “Look, God has shut up the womb of all of our women. We can't have any kids or anything until we restore this woman. And so, he brings them all together, and he tries to make things right in this.

Abraham tries to, in some way, as we were talking last week, he comes before Abimelech, and he says, “I have good reason to lie,” which I'm sure we all have a good reason to lie, but that's why we call it “rational-lies”. But we all have a good reason to do that. And so, Abraham begins to reveal why he was lying in the text. It probably sounded good in his head, but when he finally said it, he goes, “That was a really a stupid reason.” But one of his statements was, “I knew this to be an ungodly place, and I knew the fear of God wasn't here.” And you can almost hear it echoing in your ears, “Really? Because this man fears God more than you do.” And you realize that this

place of the Philistines, you would never think to find a man of integrity with the Philistines. And yet, we did. It's the king. And he does care.

So, we come to this passage, and we realize that God knows those who are His. And God's going to use Abraham to bless Abimelech. Once again, in spite of his initial sins, He's going to bring him out, and He's going to reveal through Abraham that He's going to bless Abimelech. He's actually going to rescue him. He's going to save him because of this. And Abraham's going to be a blessing; whether he had planned to do it or not, he ultimately ends up being there. It is where we pick up in verse 14. It was kind of an interesting introduction, wasn't it? But that's where we end up in verse 14.

So, verse 14 begins this way,

(Genesis 20:14) "Abimelech..."

Once again, because of all the things that have been happening,

“... took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him.”

Now, I just want to say this, that our thoughts are that in Genesis 12, where Abraham did the same thing, trying to pass off his wife and sister to the Pharaoh in Egypt, we oftentimes put it as direct parallels. There are quite a few differences between the two. And one of the differences is that the Pharaoh gave Abraham all the stuff that he gave him because he wanted his wife. It wasn't to get things right; where Abimelech is giving all these things because he wants to make things right. So, it shows the difference in the integrity of the heart.

And if you look at the passage, it says,

“... and restored his wife Sarah to him.”

Now, Abimelech then takes it a step further in verse 15, and he says, “And you can live anywhere you want to. This is my kingdom.” And Abraham does start living in that particular region. We'll follow that through. But he says, “I don't want you out of here. You have the true God, so stay. I'll give you any place. You choose. Any place

your eye sees, you can choose.” Now, the difference between that and the Pharaoh is that the Pharaoh says, “Get out of here. I don't want you in my land. I don't want to have anything to do with you.” So, once again, you're not necessarily seeing a direct parallel.

It says in verse 16, I love the way this is put, because you can just see there's a little bit of sarcasm with the Abimelech. You know, “You try to pass off your wife as your sister, so obviously you're the brother, that's what you're saying.”

So, then he makes a statement in verse 16,

(Genesis 20:16) “To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver...” Don't kind of pass that off, that 1,000 pieces of silver. From what I understand, that's anywhere from \$600,000 to a million. So, pretty generous. Of course, he's already given him oxen, male, female servants, gave him male servants to Abraham, if you look at verse 14. But in addition to that, we're going to see that he gave him this large amount of money.

When you consider verse 14, and I was thinking about the fact that he gave him male and female servants, these people might even feel like they're just a commodity and they're being used, but God is actually bringing them into the household of Abraham. That's a pretty interesting thought. And of course, as we'll read a little bit further in Genesis, we'll see Joseph being sold into slavery for about 20 pieces of silver by his brothers to the Ishmaelites. So, he'll be sold. And of course, ultimately, according to the Law in Exodus, if you were going to sell your slave, for instance, if your ox gores a slave of somebody else, you would have to pay 30 pieces of silver. So, for a slave, it was 30 pieces of silver. Now, think about that when you go to Zechariah and it gives a prophecy in which God says, "So, how much am I worth?" And so, the prophecy is, you're only going to give 30 pieces of silver, what a slave would get. And of course, Judas then betrays Christ for 30 pieces of silver. So, oftentimes people feel devalued, but God begins to show the great value of the servant within the passage.

It's an interesting point here in verse 16,

(Genesis 20:16) “To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication...”

The word there in the Hebrew actually is, “Behold, it is your veil.” “It is your covering,” would be another way of putting it. And it's really displaying that he's concerned for her honor. In many respects, he's more concerned for her honor than Abraham is.

You know, I was thinking, there's a passage, Ecclesiastes 3, verse 16, and it reads something like this,

(Ecclesiastes 3:16) “Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness.”

His point is that just because you're in a holy place doesn't mean the people there are holy, or just because it's a wicked place, it doesn't mean there's not somebody there that has a right heart. And so, it is the graciousness of God to know who those people are and to send the ones that need to talk to them. Once again, Abraham was just kind of wandering aimlessly, but God goes, “I'll move him.” And you just see the sovereignty of God in the

midst of our choices, whether right or wrong; God is still saving people in spite of us.

“... behold, it is your vindication (covering or veil) before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared.”

“*Yākaḥ*” is the Hebrew word for “cleared” within the passage, which means made right, reproved, judged accordingly. The point seems to be that with this value so large that he's placed and that he's given Abraham on behalf, he would never do that, obviously, to a disgraced woman. So, obviously she couldn't be disgraced. But what he's doing in the passage is admitting his guilt. Now, albeit, it was unwitting. In other words, he didn't know. But it's like an accident, a car accident. You run into somebody, you didn't see it coming, you didn't see what was happening. Actually, on my way over, we were pulling out, the light turned green, and wow, the car just went right by us, just ran the red light. It was just the goodness of the Lord. But you didn't see it coming. You didn't know what was happening. It was an accident. Nevertheless, you might have to pay for that. And in this realm, he wanted to make it clear that he was going to be

clear. And so, he gives such a large amount that everybody in his kingdom would recognize, “Okay, even the king admitted that he was wrong.” Now, what this does is it sends a signal, “If the king would be this humble and go to this extent to give this amount of money to correct things, we better not touch that woman.” So, it was known in the kingdom, and it would become her protection. That's why he says, “Behold, it is your vindication, it's your veil, it's your vesture of clothing, for all who are with you, and before all men who are with you, you'll be cleared.”

Watch verse 17,

(Genesis 20:17) “Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children.

(Genesis 20:18) For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.”

“Don't touch My anointed. Even though they do something wrong, don't touch My kids.”

I'm reminded of God's grace and the fact that you realize it in Genesis just how loyal God is. And you go, "How would He let somebody crucify His Son?" It would be one thing if we came with a preconceived notion that God's not loyal. But what Scripture is doing is kind of stacking it up. It's saying He's more loyal than anybody else. So, how in the world do you think He would let His Son get crucified? It's an amazing truth.

What the passage is revealing to us is that Abraham had to go through the difficulty with his nephew Lot in order to feel a sense of intercession. He had to care enough to go to God and say, "God, You've got to save my nephew." But God says, "Not enough, Abraham. You've got to care for those around you that way." And if you go back to Genesis 12, he doesn't pray for the Pharaoh. But in this particular passage, he now prays for Abimelech. It's probably one of the first times he ever prayed for another nation or people of another group but he now is beginning to feel. And God will bring us through these difficult times to train us.

There's a very touching passage, if you'll turn with me to Hebrews 2. Hebrews 2 reminds us that we have somebody that cares for us. His name is Jesus. And God sent Him and, we'll put it this way, brought Him through training that He might be the perfect intercessor.

The way that it reads in Hebrews 2:9 is this,

“But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

(Hebrews 2:10) For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.”

He had to go through the sufferings.

(Hebrews 2:11) “For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father...”

Now, what is he saying? We all suffer. He had to suffer with you in order to be a part of the family of humanity

and to bring us into His family. That's an interesting passage.

“... for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

(Hebrews 2:12) saying,

“I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.”

(Hebrews 2:13) And again,

“I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.”

And again, “BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”

(Hebrews 2:14) Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

(Hebrews 2:15) and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

(Hebrews 2:16) For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.”

Mark it, verse 17,

(Hebrews 2:17) “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God...”

Did you just hear what he said?

Now, let me give you a fundamental principle. The fundamental principle is this, and I don't know what God has called you to do. I know that God calls us to be like Him, there's no doubt about that. But I think that God will call us to serve in many different ways. But let me just say this, that He will cause us to go through many of the same things that He wants us to minister to, so that we might be merciful and know how best to minister to them. The passage is fundamentally the principle, verse 17, “

“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

(Hebrews 2:18) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

God is doing a work in our lives. I think that while we're going through the difficulties and the training, we don't feel so blessed. But God is bringing us through that so that we might be able to minister in the way that God has called us. And God has given us the same Spirit of Christ that He has. He became obedient in all things, suffered all things for us, that He might become a merciful High Priest, but He's also calling us to serve with Him. Paul will say, “And working together with Him.” And what a wonderful privilege that is.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we give You thanks for the calling in which You've called us. We realize that our whole life has been training. We have to admit that there have been times in our life we just haven't felt blessed at all. But as You have brought us through these things, we realize that not only have You kept us, but You've prepared us for a work that is going to

be far more rewarding than sitting in front of a TV and twiddling our thumbs. You have called us for a great work, and we thank You for keeping Your hand upon us and doing a work in spite of us, and then ultimately because of us.

Your head's bowed and your eyes closed. I don't know what you're going through, but I can tell you this, that if you're a child of God, you are a called one. I don't know what God has in store for you. I don't know the work that He's chosen you for. But I know this, that we're to be like Him in all things. And the suffering is a part of the deal. So, just thank Him for the training. And then start looking around for those opportunities that He begins to give you. He's going to burden your hearts for certain people. He's going to move you into certain circles. And God is going to use you greatly. How wonderful it is to know that God will do this.