

# BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

## “Let’s Make A Deal!”

Genesis 17:1-27

2002

### Introduction

Some of you may be old enough to remember the game show hosted by Monty Hall called “Let’s Make A Deal” where contestants would be given the opportunity to trade an initial prize for the chance to get something better. Would it be behind door number one, door number two or door number three?

As believers, we are daily faced with the choice to hold onto what we have, or to trade up for the promises of God. But, letting go is not always so easy ...

God promises us abundant life	We settle for mediocrity
God promises us eternal riches	We settle for the American Dream
God promises us joy everlasting	We settle for a weekend of parting
God promises us friendship with Him	We settle for friendship w/ the world
God promises us eternal life	We settle for temporal pleasures

In Gen 17, we find God calling Abram and Sarai to let go of what they had in order to receive something far better, something far more divine and eternal.

### I The Reaffirmation Of The Covenant

And 13 years had passed since Abram and Sarai attempted to help God by producing an heir through Sarai’s handmaiden, Hagar.

A. The Lord **appeared** to Abram and said: [Verse 1]

1. “I am God Almighty”

*El Shaddai* = “The all-sufficient, all-competent, all-powerful God”

This is a Christophany (16:7), a preincarnate appearance of God the Son.

Abram had spent the last 13 years living with the strife and turmoil that his carnal, sinful, unbelieving decision had produced in Ishmael. Now God was about to teach Abram that the promises of God are fulfilled “not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD Almighty.” Zch 4:6  
It would be El Shaddai, Almighty God, who would accomplish this!

a. “**Walk** before me”

What does it mean to walk with God?

1. It means to go in God’s **direction**

Amos 3:3 “Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?”

The man who walks with God is the man who knows which way God is going and goes the same way.

2. It means to keep in **step** with God

You cannot walk with someone if you do not keep in step with him.

Gal 5:25 “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

**Illustration:** Training my dog Christy

b. “Be blameless”

**Blameless** = Tamiym = “Whole, perfect or complete”

God was calling Abram to leave his life of double-mindedness and to be wholehearted in his commitment and devotion to God.

1 Kings 18:21 “Elijah: “How long will you waver between two opinions?

If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”

Josh 24:15 “... choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...”

B. The Lord confirmed His covenant: [Verse 2-4,6]

25 years had passed since the promise was first made, and 13 years since Abram had heard a word from the Lord. But God had not forgotten His promises! The Lord affirms the terms of the covenant by the repetitive phrase, “As for Me” or “as for you” - Gen 17:3, 9, 15, 20

1. To greatly increase Abram’s numbers - Heb 6:14
2. To make Abram the Father of many nations - Gen 12:2
3. To make Abram very fruitful - Gen 1:28
4. To make nations and kings come from Abram - Gen 35:11

### Application:

God’s ultimate goal was not to simply fill the earth with Abraham’s offspring, anymore than it was for Adam and Eve. God’s ultimate goal is to fill the new heaven and the new earth with worshippers!!

What’s His strategy?

1. He wants you to bear fruit

John 15:8 “This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

Matt 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

2. He wants you to multiply yourself

2 Timothy 2:2 “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

C. The Lord gave Abram the new name, “Abraham” [Verse 5]

Abram means, ‘Exalted Father.’ For a man with no children of his own, “Exalted Father” was undoubtedly a great source of embarrassment to Abram.

So, I'm sure when God informed him of an impending name change, he was probably relieved – until God told him what the new name would be; Abraham, which means, “father of a multitude.”

### Application:

God has a wonderful habit of elevating us beyond anything we deserve, beyond anything we could ask, beyond anything we could imagine!  
2 Cor 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

And part of the new life in Christ is that we are blessed with a new identity!!

You are no longer sinners but saints!

You are no longer enemies of God, but friends of God.

You are no longer orphans, but adopted sons and daughters of God.

You are no longer rejected, but “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” (1 Peter 2:9)

And God isn't finished! In Rev 2:17, He promises to give a new name written on a white stone to believers who overcome. A name so wonderful that it would seem preposterous to you now if you were to hear it, but our Almighty God will make you adequate for it.

#### D. The Lord defined the terms of the covenant: [Verse 7-8]

##### 1. It is an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his heirs

##### a. To be their God

Jer 32:38-40 “... this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ... They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.”

##### b. To give them the whole land of Canaan

##### 1. It will be an everlasting possession

Gen 15:18 “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates ...”

Gen 48:4 “I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.”

## II The Requirements Of Abram

#### A. The Lord established the covenant of circumcision [Verse 9-13]

**Circumcision** = “The cutting away of the male foreskin”

Why circumcision?

##### 1. It was a physical identification of God's covenant people

It assured a wife of her husband's submission to the Lord.

It reminded a husband that he belonged to the Lord.

No Israelite man could ever engage in the sexual relations without being reminded of the fact that he belonged to God.

2. It was a physical reminder of sexual and spiritual fidelity  
The male organ of procreation was to be set apart for the Lord's purposes rather than for sexual immortality. Abram had committed sexual immortality by sleeping with Hagar. Now he was to submit it to God. The male organ of procreation would be the vehicle through which the seed of man would pass, ultimately preparing the way for the Messiah.
3. It was an illustration of God's approach to dealing with the flesh  
Col 2:10-12 "In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ ..."

Circumcision didn't save Abram or make him righteous before God. His righteous standing before God was conferred 14 years earlier when he simply believed God's promise.

Rom 4:9-10 "Is this blessedness [of salvation] only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!"

#### **Application:**

Circumcision, water baptism, confirmation classes, communion, being born in a Christian home, being a part of a certain denomination, or even saying the sinners prayer are outward symbols of an inward faith. But apart from a changed heart and life, these religious symbols have no spiritual value whatsoever.

1. It was required of Abram and his descendents  
The enjoyment of the blessings of the OT covenant was conditional. Only by keeping these conditions could man enjoy the blessings of God as guaranteed in the covenant.
2. It would be the **sign** of the covenant  
**Sign** = 'owth = "A signal or evidence"  
Rom 4:11-12 "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised."

**Illustration:**

Circumcision was an outward sign of an inward commitment. It was to a Jew what a wedding ring is to a marriage. Circumcision was of great value and significance if a Jew understood and lived out its intended significance. But, if its genuine meaning was disregarded, it was as meaningless as a wedding ring on an adulterer's finger.

## 3. It applied to every male 8 days old

Acts 7:8 “Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.”

Why the 8<sup>th</sup> day?

The 8<sup>th</sup> day is the day when an infant's immune system is at the optimum level for such a procedure. Important blood-clotting agents, vitamin K and prothrombin, are at their highest levels in infants on precisely the eighth day of life, making the eighth day the safest, earliest day to circumcise an infant.

- a. To those born in Abram's household
- b. To those bought from a foreigner
- c. To those not his offspring

4. It was an **everlasting** covenant in their flesh

## 5. It carried with it a punishment for non-compliance: [Verse 14]

- a. Violators would be **cut off** from God's people

**Cut off** = Karath = “To cut asunder (the penalty for covenant breaking)”

Jer 34:18 “The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces.”

- b. Violators would be breaking God's covenant

**Break** = Parar = “To break up, violate, or make void”

Is 24:5 “The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant.”

**Application:**

In the New Testament, the physical act of circumcision is no longer required for believers. Instead, we are to be circumcised in our hearts.

- 1. It is an expression of our identification with Christ
- 2. It is an expression of spiritual fidelity to the Lord
- 3. It is an expression of cutting off or putting to death the sinful nature

Paul says to the Philippians, “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3). We are to have no reliance upon ourselves, but rely totally upon him. That is the circumcised life.

B. The Lord gave Sarai the new name, “Sarah” [Verse 15-16]

There is only a subtle difference between **Sarai** and **Sarah**, but it is important;

**Sarai** = “Princess” which confines her dominion to one family.

**Sarah** = “Princess” absolutely without restriction – “Princess of a multitude”

1. He would **ble**ss her and give Abram a son by her

**Bless** = Barak = “To confer benefit”

This is a renewal of God’s 1<sup>st</sup> blessing on Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28.

Abraham’s heir would not come about by the scheming plans of man, but by the divine, miraculous intervention of God Himself.

2. He would make her the mother of **nations** and kings

### III The Terms Of The Covenant Are Finalized

A. The counter-offer of Abraham

1. He fell facedown, **laughed** and said to himself: [Verse 17]

a. “Will a son be born to a man 100 years old?”

b. “Will Sarah bear a child at 90 years of age?”

**Laughed** = Tsachaq = “To laugh in a mocking scornful way”

Abraham’s inner and immediate response to God was disbelief!

In Gen 18:12-14, we find that Sarah’s response was identical laughter prompted by disbelief!”

**Application:** “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” - Gen 18:14

2. He requested that Ishmael **live** under God’s blessing [Verse 18]

Here’s a sobering truth: If you insist upon having your own way, God will often let you have it, till you are sorry you asked for it.

Ps 106:15 “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”

B. The counter/counter-offer of the Lord [Verse 19-22]

1. He would give Sarah a son named Isaac

**Isaac** = Yitschaq = “To laugh in mockery”

His name would be a reminder to Abraham that he laughed at God’s promise to give him a son through Sarah in their old age.

Gen 21:6-7 “Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”

a. “I will establish my everlasting covenant with him”

2. He would bless Ishmael according to Abraham's request

- a. "I will make him **fruitful** and increase his numbers"
- b. "He will be the father of **12** rulers and a great nation"

**Rulers** = Nasiy' = "A king or sheik"

Gen 25:13-16 "These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps."

3. He affirmed His non-negotiable covenant with Isaac

a. Who Sarah would bear within a year

Rom 9:8-9 "In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

C. The acceptance of the terms **[Verse 23-27]**

1. On that very day Abraham **obeyed** the Lord's command

a. He circumcised every male in his household

1. Abraham's obedience was complete: **Every male in his household**
2. Abraham's obedience was prompt: **That very same day**
3. Abraham's obedience was daring: **It rendered his family defenseless**  
Circumcision is quite painful and disabling - Gen 34.

**Application:** The evidence of true faith and love is always obedience.

John 14:21 "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me."

Ps 119:60 "I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands."

2. Abraham was **99** and Ishmael was 13 years old

Rom 4:19-21 "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-since he was about a hundred years old-and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

## Conclusion

What are you holding on to? What is keeping you from experiencing the abundant life and joy God has promised? Are you really satisfied with your life? If not, God is offering you a choice. You can hold onto what you have or you can let it go and trade up to the everlasting divine promises of God.

1. Repent of your sin

**Repent** = Metaneo = "To think differently and to change course."

Romans 3:23 "... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death ..."

Acts 3:19 "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord ..."

## 2. Reconcile with God

**Reconcile** = Apokatalasso = "To put right a broken relationship"

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

## 3. Realign your heart to God (your loyalties and allegiance)

2 Cor 5:15 "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."