

Abraham - Only God Matters

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes that only God matters, urging believers to prioritize worship and faith in their lives.

Duration: 23:54

Scripture: Genesis 15:1-6, Genesis 15:13-14, Genesis 15:18, Genesis 17:1-5, Genesis 17:17, Genesis 17:19, Genesis 17:21

Topics: "Abraham"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the weight and responsibility of preaching the word of God. He expresses the need for prayers and acknowledges the challenges and effort that go into delivering a sermon. The preacher then focuses on the story of Abraham from the book of Genesis, highlighting the covenant God made with him and the promises given to his descendants. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the purpose of creation and how everything has a specific purpose, using the example of our eyes being made for the purpose of seeing.

Transcript

What a crushing responsibility it is to be at my happy and to have resting upon my frail shoulders the evening preaching obligation. We take each other more or less for granted and we imagine that all we have to do is get up and put the needle down on the record and the sermon is preached and it's all well. So, I want to tell you that I sweat under preaching and I suffer and every sermon is a burden.

If it isn't a burden, it's dead anyway. And I want your prayers. I definitely want your prayers.

I haven't anything, only a good intention. God laughs as I direct. Now, I want to talk to you tonight about a dear old man who lived a long time ago and still living, for that matter, though he doesn't have an earthly address, Crete, 15th of Genesis and a little out of the 17th of Genesis.

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy steed in great reward. And Abram said to the Lord, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless? The steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus. Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bow shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, that is, God brought

Abram forth abroad and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, that is, number the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

And Abram believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness. And he said unto him, in the Old Testament these hymns and he sometimes get all jumbled up, and it's almost necessary in reading it to put the noun in. And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of the earth of the Chaldees, that giveth thee this land to inherit it.

And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he, God said unto Abram, Take me an heifer three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove and a young pigeon. And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another. But the birds divided he not.

And from the fowls came down upon the carcasses Abram, that is, Abram, I'll probably call him Abram all night, but that's his name, so pay no attention. He got an extra letter or two on there later, where his degrees God put on him when he got him blessed. But verse 12, And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo, in a horror of gray darkness fell upon him.

And he said unto Abram, Know this surely, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. Also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge. And afterward shall they come out with great substance, and thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace.

Thou shalt be buried in a good old age, but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again. For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. It came to pass that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lantern that passed between those pieces.

In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this man from the river of Egypt unto the great river of the river Euphrates, the Canaanites, the Canaanites, the Cadanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Raphaelites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Zergeshites, and the Jebusites. Then in chapter 17, verses 1-5, 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 these are perfect, and I will make my covenant between thee and these, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

Imagine that. Ninety-nine years old, one more year he'd be a hundred. And I will multiply thee exceedingly.

Time for multiplication was over, subtraction had set in. But God said, I am Almighty God. Walk before me, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.

And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Now it will become us to veil our faces before this burning bush, because we have here the beating heart of true religion. If I might mix my figures a bit, I would say that we have here in this that I have read to you, the ancient silver fountains of true worship.

We go back here to the very grassroots of religion, the back of all denominations and back of all translations and all Bibles and all hymn books and all evangelists and all founders and promoters and evangelists and preachers. We go back of all the trappings of religion, peer back to these very beginnings of things, and find an old man who had been in Ur of the Chaldees, they said, a maker of idols, who had had no Bible, no revelation, no preacher, no evangelist, no Bible teacher, no Nyack, no help of any kind. But we find this old man engaged in the happy, eternal business of worshipping God.

And this is every man's judgment and every man's condemnation, because if this old man without any help in the wide world, if this old maker of idols, now converted, now humble, if he could kneel at the very grassroots and beginnings of religion and there acceptably worship God Almighty, then I want to know what answer you're going to have. Why? We who have been brought up on Protestant religion, who have had our Bible from the time we can remember, who can tell more stories about more preachers, and who have been to more camp meetings and more churches, and who have had all the help that ingenuity can devise, I want to know what excuse we're going to have if we do not emulate this old man of God and get on our faces and worship the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, here were God and Abraham, and God steps over the threshold of Abraham's experience.

That is, Abraham lived in the little world of his own that was called Abraham, and certain things got over the threshold into his living heart. I think Sarah did a little partway, and perhaps some of his foremen, maybe over his cattle, and a few interests he had that came into the realm of his experience. But up until that time, God hadn't stepped over that threshold.

God was still on the outside. Now, suddenly, God moved in across the drawer threshold into the warm presence of the man Abraham, and it says here that the word of the Lord came to Abram, and the Lord appeared unto Abram, and the Lord went up from speaking unto Abram, and Abram said unto God, I quote only a few of those active, verbal passages, to show that here were two personalities in warm, living, intelligent communion in communication with one another. There was a live and intelligent conversation going on between the God of Abraham and Abraham.

Abraham was lying face down, and that was proper that he should have been there, and God was standing high and lifted up. But there was intimate, warm fellowship there. The two were touching each other, and this affected Abraham terrifically.

Down he went on his face, and God talked with him. Now, Abraham found himself in the conscious presence of the awful mystery that surrounds heaven and earth. Ladies and gentlemen, they call men like me a mystic, as if that was a mistake, but I say to you that at the beating heart of Christianity, at the beating heart of religion, is the inward spiritual appreciation of the presence of the great God who made heaven and earth.

I was telling some of the brethren here at the supper table that a certain lady, or rather a certain woman, said about God, she said, I love God, and when you get to know God you'll find him a living doll, a living doll. Now, imagine God being called a doll, a stuffed dummy that somebody likes and cuddles up to her curvaceous chin and says, God gets a living doll. Brother, that wasn't Abraham's concept of God.

Abraham fell on his face and was afraid to look up. He was in the presence of the awful mystery that filled heaven and earth, that presence pressing in like the atmosphere, pulling down like gravitation and pulling up with magnetic attraction, deceiving and overwhelming and inviting and calling and drawing and breathing and making himself heard. And Abraham was hearing him, and God was talking, and heaven came close and earth shrank and shrank until it was no bigger than a grain of corn.

And Abraham saw nobody but God, and heard nothing but God, and lay face down and quivered and laughed and leapt into the dirt and beat his old fist on the grass and cried, O Lord God, Lord God, this was Abraham. My brethren, it's a terrible thing not to have these experiences with God to walk on earth simply animals and little better. What is a man better than his cow when the world around him isn't filled with God, when his heart isn't in tune with God, when the night in which he walks is not populated with God, and the

day no so shadow of the Almighty? What is a man better than the cow when he has no thought of God in the day, and no prayer of God in the night, and no sense of God's presence at any time? I tell you, I'd rather be my yellow-cockered spaniel yapping at the diesel engines than I would to be a man made in the image of God, and yet be so dead inside that I could walk in beautiful Pennsylvania and not know God made it.

That I could breathe his air and see his sunshine and not be overwhelmed with his presence. Now, I say I'd rather be a pagan. I would.

I'd rather be a pagan, a red Indian, stretching my arms up toward the Great Spirit and be a true pagan, and the best I knew, worshiping the Spirit that made heaven and earth and thanking the unknown God for his gifts. I'd rather be a pagan and take my chances in that terrible day and plead my ignorance before the fire of God's judgment than to be an American, filled with automobiles and bank accounts and radios and TVs and business and going places and knowing things and enjoying myself and yet not giving God a chance at my heart. Hell isn't going to be one great black square, not one great black pit into which everybody goes exactly the same as everybody else that's lost.

Hell is going to have its degrees of suffering as hell, as heaven above, has its degrees of enjoyment. And the pagan that dies and goes to hell with his ignorant arms upstretched to a God he doesn't know won't have such a tough time in the hell below as the American man who's been brought up from the New Testament and yet turns his hard heart against God and walks away. And the night settles down and there is no light, and he hears no voice and knows no God.

Now, Abraham had a conversion. He had two conversions, in fact. He had a conversion, and then he had an extra conversion.

And Abraham's testimony, or Abraham's concept of the whole thing can, I think, be put into three words. If you'd have said, Abraham, wait a minute, after Abraham had got up and walked around the house, chopped at the sound of his own football, prayed he'd miss an accent that God was speaking, you'd whisper to him, Abraham, what have you learned? What have you learned? Put it in a few words, I'm an ignorant man and I want to know, Abraham. This presence, this worship, this faith down, fearful, trembling, Abraham, what have you learned? I think Abraham could have said, son, I've learned one thing that can be put in three English words, only God matters.

And I want you to write that across your heart, young people. Only God matters. In this busy day of advertising, when there are a thousand things calling our attention, and we're always hearing, attention, please, attention, please, somebody wanting to get our attention, I want you to hear my words most solemnly tonight, only God matters.

Only God ever did matter, and only God matters in heaven, and if we were even half awake, only God would matter at my happy, and only God matters back in your church, brother preacher. Only God matters. You're running to your superintendent, what do you know about what to do about this and what to do about that? Let the man alone.

Only God matters. You can play it through if you'll take that model. Only God matters.

And Abraham said, only God matters. That's, I'm putting those words in his mouth, but I think his life will bear it out. Now, we'll reason a bit from the known to the unknown.

You know, that's the way we find out things, and it's the method Jesus used. He reasoned from the birds to the spiritual man, and I will reason like this, and say that everything that is created or made has a purpose. For instance, we have an eye or eyes in our head, and those eyes have a purpose back of them.

God made our eyes for a purpose, and everybody knows what for. He made them to see. They might have secondary purposes.

They do add to the general contour, I suppose, and look of a fellow's face, but it isn't the purpose that they're put there for. They're put there to see with, and they are best when they're seeing best, and worst when they're seeing least. The eye was made to see, and the ear was made to hear with.

God put these ears on the side of your head not to hold your hat up, but to hear with. That's the purpose of those ears, and they're fulfilling their divine function when they're hearing best, and they're failing just as they hear least. Take that piano over there, or that piano in your house.

It has a function. The man or men who put that together put it together for a purpose. That purpose was that it might produce music.

Now, you can use it for secondary purposes. You can use it to stand on to hang a picture. You can use it to put a flower pot on.

You can use it, I suppose, for any one of fifty different purposes, but it only has one primary purpose. Everything else is secondary, and so it is with a man. God made you, and the old Scotch Presbyterian creed had it that God made us to worship him and to enjoy him forever, to glorify him and enjoy him forever.

That's why you were born. Some of you don't know why you were born. If you can get an education in five minutes here at Manhattan, it'll put your head to all the Ph.D. ever hatched out of all the universities on the continent, because I've talked to Ph.D.s that don't know why they were created, and the simplest little old farm woman up the creek here that worships God every morning and sings out of an Alliance emblem reads her big print, New Testament knows that.

But a Ph.D. spent twelve, fifteen years in school, and he still doesn't know why God ever made him. He'd be as dumb in physiology as he is in spiritual things. He'd think his ears were made to hang his glasses on.

He wouldn't know God made his ears to hear with. Now, God made you to worship him, brethren. He made you and me.

He made us in his image. As I get older, and I hope more further into the things of God, the doctrine of the divine image is beginning to take shape in my heart as it never did before. I know that we've mired that image.

I know that every man who makes a repentance and is born again shall surely perish. I know that, and I believe it. But I also know that God made me in his image, and I'm not doing the right thing until I'm on my face worshiping the God who made me.

And instead of it being a crazy thing to do, to get on your knees and pray, it's the old first sane thing you ever did in your life. Somebody wrote in, that is, they wrote to Dr. Schumann, went over my head when he

was still president, and said, that man told her he's a modernist. And they said the reason I know he's a modernist is that he said in an article that when a man got down on his knees and lifted his hand to God and prayed, he was doing the natural thing.

Well, if that makes me a modernist, okay brother, because I still believe it. I still believe that when Abraham was on his face praying, it was the most wonderful thing he could ever do. It was the thing God made him to do, and he'd been upside down until God turned him outside up.

He'd been inside out until God turned him inside in and outside out. And my friend, you don't need to be afraid of the holy rollers and fanatics and mafias. You don't have to be afraid of them.

All that's wrong with them is that they have started doing the thing they were created to do. If a piano over here one morning, the birds would use it to roost on, and the painter would store these ladders on it, and the housewife would put her mop on it, and it had been used to stand on to paint the ceiling, and it had just been used for every old thing. And some fine pianist came along and cleaned it off and sat down and began to play.

And the melodies of near my God to thee began to float out from the keys or from the strings. Why, somebody gets up and says, oh, fanatical, fanatical. Why, that's the holy roller.

That's what the matter with that thing. They're not using it to put their paint buckets on anymore. They're using it and making weird sounds.

Well, that's what it was created for, man. And so, when a man gets converted and drops on his knees and with tears streaming down his cheeks,

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