

# The Hole of the Pit

by F.B. Meyer

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*The sermon explores the life of Abraham, highlighting his faith, obedience, and loneliness, and offering hope for the future of the world.*

**Topics:** "Divine Calling", "Faith"

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## Description

F.B. Meyer reflects on the life of Abraham, emphasizing his unique relationship with God as the 'Friend of God.' He explores Abraham's early life in Ur, a city steeped in idolatry, and how he stood against the prevailing evil practices, preparing him for God's call to leave his homeland. Meyer highlights the significance of Abraham's faith and obedience, which serve as a model for believers today, encouraging them to embrace their divine calling despite loneliness and challenges. The sermon reassures that God is always aware of those who are faithful in difficult circumstances and will call them to fulfill His purposes.

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## Transcript

"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran; and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee." -- Acts 7:2-3.

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father." -- Isaiah 51:1-2.

In the gray dawn of history the first great character that arrests our attention at any length is that of Abraham; who would command our notice for this, if for nothing else, that he is spoken of as the "Friend of God." Surely it must be well worthy of our devout consideration to study the inner life, and outward carriage, of such a man: that we too, in our smaller measure, may become -- not servants only, but -- "friends"; the favored confidantes of God -- from whom He will not hide His secrets, to whom He will make known His will.

Many rays of interest focus in the story of Abraham. His portrait is drawn with such detail, that it lives before us, with the same hopes and fears, golden hours and hours of depression, that are familiar factors in our own lives. Then, also, his life is so constantly referred to in the Old Testament, and in the New, that it would seem as if the right understanding of it is necessary to give us the clue to many a difficult passage, and many a sacred doctrine in the succeeding pages of the Bible. Nor can it fail to interest us to discover the reason why the wild Bedouin of the desert and the modern Englishman -- the conservative

East, and the progressive and swift moving West; the Muslim and the Christian -- can find in the tent of the first Hebrew a common meeting ground, and in himself a common origin.

Our story takes us back two thousand years before the birth of Christ, and to the ancient city of Ur. And it may be well, by the aid of modern discovery, to consider the earliest conditions amid which this life was cradled. We like to stand in that lone spot among the hills, where, amid the bracken and the gorse, or from some moss grown basin of rock, there springs forth the river which drains a continent, and flows, laden with navies to the sea. We ask the biographer to tell us something of the scenes amid which a great life was nurtured; because we think that we can better understand its color, current, and drift. So would we thank modern discovery for having cast its lantern on the ruins of that old world city, which was the busy home of life when flocks browsed on the seven hills of Rome; and red deer, light of foot, roamed over the site of St. Paul's, or came down to drink the undefiled and pellucid waters of the Thames.

We must look for Ur, not in Upper Mesopotamia, where a mistaken tradition has fixed it, but in the ruins of Mugheir, in the near vicinity of the Persian Gulf. Forty centuries, slowly silting up the shore, have driven the sea back about a hundred miles. But at the time of which we speak it is probable -1- that Abraham's natal city stood upon the coast near the spot where the Euphrates poured the volume of its waters into the ocean waves.

[-1- The site of Ur is still a matter of discussion, into which I have no desire to enter. I have adopted the more recent suggestion because the distance from Charran seems to comport better with the narrative. The old site assigned to Ur was only a day or two's march from Charran, and surely Terah would not have broken up his home for so short a journey.]

"The present remains of the town consist of a series of low mounds disposed in an oval shape, measuring about two miles in extent, and commanded by a larger mound of seventy feet in height, on which are the remains of what must have been once a vast temple, dedicated to the Moon." [Professor Rawlinson.] In olden days it was a large and flourishing city, standing on the sea, and possessed of fleets of vessels, which coasted along the shores of the Indian Ocean, freighted with the products of the rich and fertile soil.

It would be foreign to our purpose to attempt a description of the luxuriance of that Chaldean land, watered by its two mighty streams [The Euphrates and the Tigris], and in which the grain crop was of marvelous abundance, and the date-palm attained to an extraordinary growth, repaying richly the scanty labors of the people; and where pomegranates and apples, grapes and tamarisks grow wild. Suffice it to say, that it was a long green strip of garden land, sufficient to attract and maintain vast populations of men, and specially suitable for the settlement of those shepherd tribes which required extensive pasture lands for their herds and flocks.

These sons of Ham were grossly IDOLATROUS. In that clear transparent atmosphere, the heavenly bodies blazed with extraordinary effulgence, beguiling the early Chaldeans into a system of Nature worship, which speedily became identified with rites of gross indulgence and impurity, such as those into which humanity always falls, when it refuses to retain God in its knowledge, and gives itself up to the dictates of its own carnal lusts. The race seemed verging again on the brink of those horrible and unnatural crimes which had already necessitated its almost total destruction; and it was evident that some expedient must be speedily adopted to arrest the progress of moral defilement, and to save mankind. This enterprise was undertaken by Him, whose delights have ever been with the sons of men, and who, in after days, could say, with majestic emphasis, "Before Abraham was, I AM." And He accomplished His purpose

then, as so often since, by SEPARATING to Himself one man, that through him and his descendants, when they had been thoroughly purified and prepared, He might operate upon the fallen race of man, recalling it to Himself and elevating it by a moral lever, working on a pivot outside itself.

Four centuries had passed away since the Flood; and they must have been centuries abounding in emigrations. Population multiplied more rapidly than now, and all the world was open where to choose. Leaving the first seats of life, swarm after swarm must have hived off in every direction. Surging waves of men, pressed on by hunger, love of conquest, or stronger hordes behind, spread outwards over the world. The sons of Japeth pushed northwards, to colonize Europe and Asia, and to lay the foundations of the great Indo-European family. The sons of Ham pushed southwards, over the fertile plains of Chaldea, where, under the lead of the mighty Nimrod, they built towns of baked clay; reared temples, of which the ruins remain to this day; and cultivated the arts of civilized life to an extent unknown elsewhere. They are said to have been proficient in mathematics and astronomy; in weaving, metalworking, and gem engraving; and to have preserved their thoughts by writing on clay tablets.

Now, it so happened, that into the midst of this Hamite colonization there had come a family of the sons of Shem. This clan, under the lead of Terah, had settled down on the rich pasture lands outside Ur. The walled cities, and civilized arts, and merchant traffic, had little attraction for them; as they were rather a race of shepherds, living in tents, or in villages of slightly constructed huts. And if Noah's prediction were verified (Genesis 9:26), we may believe that their religious life was sweeter and purer than that of the people amongst whom we find them.

But, alas! the moral virus soon began its work. The close association of this Shemite family with the idolatrous and abominable practices of the children of Ham, tainted the purity and simplicity of its early faith; and it is certain that a levelling-down process was subtly at work, lowering its standard to that of its neighbors. Joshua (Joshua 24:15) says distinctly that the fathers of the children of Israel, who dwelt beyond the flood of the Euphrates, served other gods. And there are traces of the evil in the home of Laban, from which Rachel stole the images (TERAPHIM), the loss of which so kindled her father's wrath (Genesis 31:19-35). It is a heavy responsibility for godly people to live amid scenes of notorious godlessness and sin. If they escape the snare, their children may be caught in it. What right have we heedlessly to expose young lives to foul miasma, which may taint and defile them for ever more! And if through the claims of duty we are compelled to live in any such baleful and noxious atmosphere, let us ask that the fire of Divine purity may extent like a cordon of defense around our home; and that our dear ones may dwell in the secret place of the Most High.

Amid such scenes ABRAHAM was born, and grew from youth to manhood. But, from the first, if we may credit the traditions which have lingered in the common talk of the unchanging East, he must have possessed no ordinary character. According to those stories, which, if not literally true, are no doubt based on a substratum of fact, as a young man Abraham offered an uncompromising opposition to the evil practices which were rife, not only in the land, but in his father's house. He employed the weapon of sarcasm, used so effectively afterwards by the prophets to his own descendants. He broke the helpless images to pieces. He refused to bow before the subtle element of fire at the bidding of the monarch, and under the penalty of martyrdom. Thus early was he being detached from the quarry of heathendom, dug from "the hole of the pit," preparatory to being shaped as a pillar in the house of the Lord.

There is nothing of all this in Scripture, but there is nothing inconsistent with it. On the contrary, as the peculiar movements of a planet suggest the presence of some celestial body of a definite size, which is

yet hidden from view in the depths of space: so the mature character, the faith, and the ready obedience of this man, when he first comes under our notice, convince us that there must have been a long previous period of severe trial and testing. The mushroom is the child of a single night; but the oak, which is a match for the tempest, is the result of long years of sun and air, of breeze and storm.

At last, THE GOD OF GLORY APPEARED UNTO HIM. The light had been growing on his vision; and finally the sun broke out from the obscuring clouds. In what form of glory Jehovah revealed Himself we cannot guess; but we must believe that there was some outward manifestation which dated an epoch in Abraham's life, and gave him unmistakable basis of belief for all his future. Probably the Son, who from all eternity has been the Word of God, arrayed Himself, as afterwards on the plains of Mamre, in an angel form; or spoke to him, as afterwards to Isaiah, from the midst of the burning seraphim (Isaiah 6). In any case, the celestial vision was accompanied by a call, like that which in all ages of the world has come to loyal hearts, summoning them to awake to their true destiny, and take their place in the regeneration of the world: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee" (Genesis 12:1). If we live up to our light, we shall have more light. If we are faithful in a very little, we may have the opportunity of being faithful in much. If we are steadfast in Chaldea, we may be called out to play a great part in the history of the world. God's choice is never arbitrary; but is based on some previous traits in those whom He summons from amongst their fellows to His aid. "Whom He foreknew, He also did predestinate."

It is impossible to tell into whose hands these words may fall. Young men amid the godless tea-planters of India, or in the wild bush life of Australia. Sailors on shipboard, and soldiers in camp. Lonely confessors of Christ in worldly and vicious societies; where there is everything to weaken, and nothing to reinforce the resistance of the brave but faltering spirit. Let all such take heart! They are treading a well worn path, on which the noblest of mankind have preceded them; and which was much more difficult in days when few were found in it, and specially in that day, when a solitary man, the "father of many nations," trod it.

One symptom of being on that path is LONELINESS. "I called him alone" (Isaiah 51:2). It was a loneliness that pressed hard on the heart of Jesus. But it is a loneliness which is assured of the Divine companionship (see John 8:16,29; 16:32). And though no eye seems to notice the struggles, and protests, and endeavors of the solitary spirit, they are watched with the sympathy of all heaven; and presently there will be heard a call, like that which started Abraham as a pilgrim, and opened before him the way into marvelous blessedness.

Despair not for the future of the world. Out of its heart will yet come those who shall lift it up to a new level. Sauls are being trained in the bosom of the Sanhedrin; Luthers in the cloisters of the Papal Church; Abrahams under the shadows of great heather temples. God knows where to find them. And, when the times are darkest, they shall lead forth a host of pilgrim spirits, numberless as the sand on the seashore; or as the stardust, lying thick through the illimitable expanse of space.

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