

Abraham Friend of God - Another Blunder

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon explores Abram's blunders in faith and the consequences of doubt and unbelief in his relationship with Sarai and God.

Duration: 56:32

Scripture: Genesis 16:1-14, Psalm 139:7-10, Matthew 10:29-31, Luke 12:6-7

Topics: "Abraham"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the destructive power of envy and its impact on relationships. The story of Hagar, Abram, and Sarai is used as an example of how envy can lead to bitterness and conflict. The preacher emphasizes that when envy enters a home, it brings chaos and destruction. However, the sermon also highlights the mercy and intervention of God, who provides for Hagar in her distress. The preacher encourages the audience to have faith in God's presence and to expect His intervention in their lives.

Transcript

It is good to greet you all this morning and to find so many present in our service, in our morning worship, to wait upon the Lord. May he enable us as now we come to meditate upon his word, to hear again his own gracious and sovereign voice, addressing us as surely as he did, Abram and Sarai of old, as recorded in Genesis 16. Now our subject this morning, Abram, friend of God, another blunder.

Sounds contradictory, does it not? The man who earned for himself the title, friend of God, should on the way to the acceptance of such a title make many blunders. Well, that's exactly what happened. And it has something to say to us.

The biblical characters are never men and women of straw. Biblical characters, the godly personalities of scripture, are real men and women facing the realities of daily life. And the scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit to be recorded for your profit and mine relate to realities, not to mythical concepts.

And I trust that we can already sense something of the promise that lies in this fact, that a man such as Abram, one of the great men of faith of all times, blundered hopelessly, terribly, dismally, on the way toward a full understanding of the will of God and in order to come into the way of a perfect, implicit obedience to the God who had called him. Now regretfully, therefore, we have to descend from the lofty heights of spiritual excellence marked out in chapter 15. We've got to come down now, down to the valley

below, and it's rather dismal and it's rather dark.

And if you're afraid of looking at the things of the darkness, well, I guess you'd better read chapter 15 whilst we're going on with chapter 16. But the fact is, you see, you and I do not simply have our mountaintop experiences. If we are living a real Christian life with its battles, there are times when we go through dark places.

Some of us tease ourselves and blind ourselves to the realities. It's a very bad thing to do. May the Lord help us to face ourselves this morning, even as we look at the experience of this great man, our father Abram.

Now, the first thing I would like you to look at is, I would like us to see the picture that we have here of a doubt that became infectious. A doubt that became infectious. Abram's earlier unbelief and fear, and by the way, you remember chapter 15 began with that.

God addressed that kind of situation. May I refer back to chapter 15? After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, Fear not, Abram. Now, God is not addressing himself to a non-existent situation.

God, knowing the heart of Abram, saw there a reigning, ruling, overwhelming fear. So great that it needed to be immediately addressed by God himself. And that fear, as we read the chapter, we will discover, that fear was particularly related to the fact that Abram could not believe that God would fulfill his promise of a seed to him.

Fear and faith are always very closely related. Now, Abram's earlier unbelief and fear, then, had not only rubbed off on Sarai, but the renewed promises of God that we to become steady again. You remember that beautiful word, how he steadied himself upon his God, and God reckoned that to him for righteousness.

Now, the unbelief of Abram rubbed off on Sarai, but the faith of Abram never got through to her. It is always easier for us to influence other people in terms of unbelief than it is to create faith. And I think there is something here which is exceedingly important, especially for those of us who are in the wedded state.

This incident has much to say about the spiritual influence that husbands and wives have on each other within the marriage bond. It indicates how doubts can be so easily transferred from one to another, almost unconsciously, and how they can even become stronger by the process of transmission, because Sarai's doubt was even stronger than Abram's at any point. But she got it.

She caught it from Abram. Now, let's look at the picture just a little. Sarai appeared to interpret God's delays in providing the first seed, the first child that was ultimately to become a race, a nation.

Sarai appeared to interpret God's delays as if they were necessarily denials to her. And Sarai said to Abram, verse 2, Behold, now the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go into my maid.

It may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. Assuming that she believed that God's promise still applied to Abram, she doubted the relevance of God's promise as far as she herself was concerned.

Abram may still have a place, a very central place in the purposes of God as the father of a multitude, and the head of a race. All right. But she says, looking at Abram, You, but not me.

After all, they have been in the land for ten whole years. And the promise was made soon after they arrived in the land. And there is no sign of a child.

And she concludes that God's delay in fulfilling his promise must now be interpreted as God's denial to her of the privileges of motherhood. Sarai failed to see, you see, the full significance of a marriage bond in his, in God's sight. When God brought Sarai and Abram together and made them man and wife, he had a purpose for both of them.

God never brings men and wife together in this way, except that he has a purpose for the two together. In Peter's immortal phrase, we are to look upon one another as heirs together of the grace of life. Now that's the biblical portrait.

But dear old Sarah, she couldn't see it. God may still have a purpose for Abram, but not for me. I've waited ten whole years and there's not one child.

What's this talk about the seed as multitudinous as the stars in the heaven or the sand by the seashore? It's no good. It must be for Abram, but not for me. The next thing I want you to notice is that though Sarai took God's delay as his denial of the privilege of motherhood to her, yet she still dutifully desired the fulfillment of God's promises to Abram.

What I want to stress is this. She didn't turn sour. She didn't sulk.

There was absolutely nothing selfish about Sarai. She dearly loved her husband and she was pledged as best she then knew how and knew herself. She pledged herself to be loyal to him and to help him to achieve God's purpose for him.

Now that very unselfishness and affection was the key in measure to the disaster that ensued. Oh, we live in a queer and a crooked world since the fall. You see, knowing her unquestioned loyalty to him, Abram in turn received some suggestions from Sarai without examining them objectively.

Now had they not been so much in love with one another, had they not had such respect for one another, Abram would have critically examined what his wife suggested. But dear old Sarah now brings some suggestion to Abram and Abram, because he loved his wife and he knew that his wife was loyal to him, uncritically, uncritically accepted the notion and as we shall see he proceeds to act upon it. Now this is something that can often happen where genuine affection reigns.

Such people cease to be properly critical of one another. You know there is a place within the marriage bond for an honest appraisal of one another. And if we are to be helpers fit for one another, there must be some time in our lives when we can really speak to one another and say to one another, look, such and such a thing is wrong.

The moment we become so infatuated with one another that we are incapable of doing that, the marriage enters into a dangerous situation. And so what happens here, we're going to see it in a moment, is this. Abram had turned down the suggestion that Lot should be his heir.

Abram had also turned down the suggestion that Eliezer of Damascus should be his heir and would believe God to fulfill the promise he had made concerning a seed. But when Sarai suggests something, Abram gullibly takes it in and he walks into a trap not meant to catch him, not meant to hurt him, meant by Sarai to do him good and to bring about the fulfillment of God's promises, but nevertheless hatched out of sheer unbelief in God. And what is born, what is conceived out of unbelief in God cannot be good for man or for God.

That brings us to the second thing here, the design that appeared ingenious. Brooding over the problem, Sarai thought over a plan that appeared quite ingenious to her. I ought to add, of course, given the moral climate of the day, and that's important, she must have thought long about this issue.

How on earth is it possible for Abram to be the father of a multitude and I am incapable of producing the first link in the chain, the first child? And because she loved him, she wanted him to be the father of the nation and to enter into the enjoyment of what God had apparently had in mind for her. She didn't want to be the stumbling block. She wanted to be the partner.

If she couldn't be the partner in one sense, in the primary sense, she would be in a secondary. At last she thought she had a plan. From the gloomy dungeon of her unrelieved unbelief, there was one way whereby God's promise could be fulfilled perhaps, and that was for her to give her own maid, Hagar, to Abram in the hope that she, Hagar, would bear a child instead of, or rather for Sarai.

Now we need to fill in the background there. According to the custom of the age, of course, the mistress of the house, the wife, owned her slaves. And any child born to a slave in these circumstances did not belong to the slave at all.

On the contrary, the child belonged to the mistress of the house, the lady of the house. So you see the Bible is quite right. This is really what Sarai had in mind.

It was a humbling thing to do. Not many wives who loved their husbands would ever dream of this. They were sacrificing it.

She was sacrificing her own position, and she was giving the girl to Abram to be a second wife. She was introducing polygamy into the situation. I won't say anything about that other than that it was not commanded nor commended by God.

But she introduced it, and she did it because she wanted the best for Abram. Then we must notice that this practice was not only possible, but it has happened a myriad times in history. We have records of it being acted upon in places as far apart as Ur of the Chaldees and Cappadocia.

And in such cases, there was no stigma at all upon anyone concerned. It was done. It was the done thing in certain places and at certain times.

It is clearly contrary to the biblical principle and to the biblical idea, but it was done. So we read that Abram agreed to what Sarai said. Here you see is where he was gullible.

If he did not love her as he did, if he were not as sure of her affection for him, she might have questioned the whole thing. But Abram believed that she loved him, and she respected him, and he trusted her. And so he did not now sift what was right from what was wrong.

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai, his wife, took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. Now as to the intention, Sarai's plan was clearly meant to benefit Abram and posterity.

As to its inspiration, Sarai's plan was the product of her unbelief in God and of her genuine loyalty to her husband. I'm stressing these things. As to the application to ourselves, it takes little imagination or ingenuity to see how very, very relevant it is.

The precise circumstances may not apply in anyone's life present here this morning, but the principles most certainly do apply in the lives of all of us. Out of the many possible applications of the passage, suffice it now to refer to one only, namely, the ever-present tendency of unbelief to use carnal methods to bring about God's will. If you want me to put it differently in the language of King James, to use fleshly methods to bring about spiritual ends.

Now what I have in mind is expertly set forth by Paul in his letter to the Galatians, and that in direct reference to this very passage. In Galatians 4, 22 and 23, he writes in this way, for it is written that Abram had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

The one child then was born in the ordinary way, as the NIV puts it, or as the King James Version puts it, according to the flesh. And the other was born through promise. Faith, trusting the promise.

The former was born according to the flesh, not simply because he was the offspring of the normal processes involved in procreation, but also and especially in as much as he was the produce of human reasoning, the product of human reasoning, human planning and scheming apart from faith. He was the product of basic unbelief in God, and out of unbelief, human beings set about to scheme and weave their own plans. He was born according to the flesh in that sense.

Ishmael, let me put it to you very bluntly, was a forced child. Hagar had no say in the matter. She was put in the arms of Abram, and as a slave girl, she had nothing to do but to accept what was coming.

She was a forced child. Isaac was a child of promise. Abram and Isaac had to wait and wait and wait until God, when everything seemed absolutely impossible, when God put the little babe in Sarai's barren womb, and then she gave birth.

Now, if you want concrete illustrations, I could go further. I can give you two, for example, from the Old Testament, which are very relevant. First of all, there is Jacob.

You remember how Jacob robbed Esau of his birthright? Now, that birthright, according to the Scriptures, was meant for Jacob. God planned that Jacob should have the birthright, but in due course, in God's time. But Jacob wasn't prepared to wait for God's time, so he took matters into his own hands.

You remember the story. I don't need to go into the details. Jacob decided, okay, those promises are too long being fulfilled.

I'll get it and I'll get it now. You see, he acted according to the flesh, rather than by faith in the promises. You have the same kind of thing, different, but the same kind of thing nevertheless, in principle, in the life of Moses.

Seeing the Egyptians smite a Hebrew slave, Moses took matters into his own hands. And he says, we can't have this kind of thing. I'm a Jew, I'm a Hebrew.

And he got hold of the Egyptian and he just slew him. Downright slew him in cold blood. Now, God had given certain promises to those very slave people and to that very boy or man that was slain.

God had given promises to the Jews in Egypt that after so many years of captivity, he would bring them into the land. But the time had not yet arrived, you see. And so God had not yet called Moses to get on with a job.

The time was not ripe. There are specific statements in the Old Testament which refer to that. We won't go after them this morning.

But the time was not right. But dear old Moses, full of carnal enthusiasm at that point, steps in and tries to do it in the power of the flesh. And he nearly lost his own life.

Now, to apply to ourselves the principle as a wide application, but none so important as in the realm, shall I say, with bated breath of claiming God's promises for the salvation of our own children. Oh, mothers and fathers here this morning, I know how every one of you would dearly tear out both eyes if only you saw your own sons and your own daughters dancing to the tune of grace. Rejoicing in the joys of the Lord.

Acknowledging him as Savior. Standing out as soldiers of the cross. Making a clear confession.

What would you not give? What would you not do? If the grace of God is in your heart and the spirit of God is within you, then you'll give anything, you'll do anything, you'll go anywhere for that. But you see, the tragedy in that situation is this. That we can have forced children as well as children of promise.

And there is a way psychologically and otherwise even to force our own children and our own loved ones and the people in our homes and the people in our offices. Sometimes there is a way whereby we can almost force them to make a decision. Just as dear Hagar was forced to make, she didn't make a decision.

It was made for her. God has given the saints a promise, a covenant that relates to our children. Now we Reformed people believe that.

And the thing that he wants us to do is to hold on to the promises and to plead the promises and to guard our children and to bring over and over again his promises back to him and say, we trust you. And sometimes we have to leave our children to wander into the wilderness until they become scarred and scared. And in their own time, and as they think of their own will, they come back in penitence and recognize the God of glory that covenanted with their parents.

Oh, this is a very important principle that we have here this morning. And I refer to it because I believe it is as relevant this morning as ever it was. Don't, don't for God's sake, for the glory of his son and the well-being of his church, don't force your children to make premature decisions.

A church of Ishmael's is a church that will bring no glory to God and very little joy to the home. Wait for Isaac to be born. Exercise faith in the promise.

Let God do his work. Let him break down the rebellion and let him change the heart and let him breathe his Holy Spirit. Wait for the babe to be born of the Spirit by the promise.

That brings me to the last and the main point here. The damage that proved unspeakably injurious. We can hardly conceive of a greater failure and tragedy than that which accompanied Sarai's successful scheme.

Excuse me. You see, looking at things from the superficial point of view, Sarai succeeded. But her success was the greatest failure.

Oh, it produced a child to be Abram's seed, all right, albeit not the seed of promise. But at the same time, it brought a host of unwanted and desolating ingredients into their married life and the life of the race. We still reap a whirlwind harvest and we don't know where it's going to lead us to as nations because of this act.

The damage wrought by Sarai's faithless act can be seen in part in the inspired record of this very chapter, but only in part. Let me just mention two or three things. First of all, the damage emerging from Sarai's scheme is seen in the marring of a much-blessed marriage.

Her success led to a tragedy in the marring of a marriage that had been much-blessed. The act that produced a child also produced much else beside Ishmael. It produced fruit in the form of pride, envy, jealousy, strife, and domestic friction, domestic friction that brings no glory to God and no good to anyone.

The marriage of Abram and Sarai became clouded and overcast even before young Ishmael was born whilst he was still in the womb. These two that had been so infinitely blessed by God now find that their whole life is overcast, that turbulent and jarring note begins when Sarai, between Sarai and Hagar. Let me read to you verses four and five.

And he went into Hagar and she conceived and when she saw that she had conceived she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, May the wrong done to me be on you. I gave my maid to your embrace and when she saw that she had conceived she looked on me with contempt.

May the Lord judge between you and me. Now you notice Hagar's alleged contempt for her mistress. That is as clear from the scriptures as well as from what she herself says.

Even if such contempt had been absent, even if it had been absent, there would have been days of strain and stress between Abram and Sarai almost necessarily at that point. Because Sarai was sorely disappointed that she herself had not been the mother of a child whilst this young girl Hagar was jubilant that she had been given the privilege. Only grace could have averted the ensuing tensions and the trials even if Hagar had been reasonably placid and Sarai as wise as she had previously been unselfish.

But the arrogant pride of the young prospective mother was gall to the bitter disappointment of the aging Sarai and sparks began to fly. Hagar's pride and contempt was a burning match that set alight a corresponding envy and hatred in Sarai's soul. And my friends, when once you get envy in a home, you have hell coming into a home.

When envy is set loose, anything can happen. Anything can happen. Di Bondone Giotto, the pioneer of fresco painting, has put the world in his debt for his artistic representation of this and of some other vices.

You remember how the medieval church used to speak of the seven supreme vices and the seven supreme virtues. Well, now we are not concerned with the virtue of that classification, but with the way in which this great man depicted envy. In the arena chapel in Padua, he has given us his brilliant allegorical

representation of the seven deadly vices and their opposites facing each other in pairs on opposite walls.

Now, this is an artistic representation. Envy is a female figure. Now, in case there are any feminists here, so also is charity, so don't want you to switch off.

Envy is a female figure who has long, wide ears to catch every breath of rumor that may hurt a neighbor's reputation. That's envy. Envy's got big ears.

And then, out of her mouth issues a serpent tongue, swift to poison all things sweet and tender. This serpent coils back on itself and stings the eyes of the envious person with blindness. And the figure stands in flames, representing the fierce fire that consumes the heart that takes pleasure in another's injuries and is made bitter by somebody else's prosperity.

Blinded by envy, Sarai becomes unjust in her judgment, irrational and harsh in her dealings with Hagar and Abram, too, though previously she found no fault in him. The next thing I want you to notice is this. Turbulence and strife soon emerged, even between Sarai and Abram.

Sarai said to Abram, you are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. This is the NIV for verse 5. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows that she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.

You are responsible. You are responsible, she says to Abram. Now you can't miss the irrationality there.

She isn't thinking straight. She says at the one breath, I put her into Abram's arms. I put her in Abram's arms.

I was responsible, and yet you were responsible. This is what happens when you have envy reigning. A person becomes incapable of rational thought.

Gone is the large-heartedness and the genial liberality that only a little while ago was prepared to abandon anything for Abram's sake. And the object of her previous love has become the butt of her infamous charges that he somehow was responsible. She tries to blame the blameless, and she does so simply because the balance of her judgment has been disturbed by envy.

She both takes the blame and gives it to another. Now, if Sarai attempts to blame the blameless, Abram loses his balance, too, and proceeds to allow the unjustifiable to take place in his tent, casting all the blame upon the young maid, putting no blame at the hands of Sarai, whom he so dearly loved, casting all the blame on the young maid, Hagar, and blindly turning away from its true owner. Abram unworthily says to Sarai, Your servant is in your hands.

Let's put it literally. Your slave is in your hands. Do with her whatever you think best.

Then Sarai mistreated her, and she fled from her. Now this was most unworthy. You see, this is Abram lost his balance.

This is Abram incapable of acting judiciously and honestly and spiritually and justly. What happened? Well, you see, this is what happens when sin enters a home. So the wrangling proceeds, and a hitherto much-blessed marriage is marred and at least temporarily very spoiled.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, there are some relationships in life that simply can't be played about with, not for a moment, and one of them is marriage. Let's move on. The damage incurred by Sarai's apparently ingenious plot did not only result in the marring of a much-blessed marriage, but it also resulted in the misery of this much-abused girl whose experience is described in the second half of the chapter.

I can only refer to it. Yes, you tamper with marriage, the marriage bond, and you will discover to your dismay that not only will your previous fellowship with your partner become foul, but your spirit will soon fester, and that to such an extent that everybody else is hurt. The most innocent people will be dragged into the meshes of the unholy mess that happened here.

Now look at dear Hagar. If anybody was innocent, here she was. She had the fault of being proud of what had happened, but she had been pushed into it.

See her, first of all, escaping in terror from the home of a saint and his spouse. Now the very statement of that fact makes me shudder. I don't know that we are capable of really taking this in this morning.

Listen. Abram and Sarai were the most spiritually honored people on the face of the whole earth at that time. The God of glory had appeared to Abram, not once nor twice, and spoken to him, and entered into covenant with him.

And however far his wife was involved in the same response, she was in some measure involved with him, though she lagged far behind and sometimes doubted, as we've seen. Now there was no other couple on the face of the earth in this same category. But see what happened.

Though now pregnant and expecting her firstborn from Abram, Hagar dashes from her angered mistress in a bid for release from her clutches. Better brave the bleak wilderness between her and her home in Egypt than be subject to Sarai's harshness and Abram's apparent neutrality any longer. Deeply hurt, this homeless, helpless stripling of a mother-to-be prefers the prospect of that hazardous journey with her unborn child, her firstborn in her womb.

With all the mystery appertaining thereto, she goes out into the wilderness, and she'd rather give birth to a child in the desert than live in the home of the godliest people the world ever knew at that time. Oh, men and women of God, let's be careful how we treat those in our homes. Their color may be black or white.

They may be rich or poor. They may be cultured or illiterate. But I tell you, you and I cannot evade the judgment of God when this kind of thing takes place, when some little Hagar that we perhaps have involved in sin is running away from the home of a saint and would rather go to the wilderness to die or to give birth to her treasure than live with us.

Can I put it to you in a slightly different way, but it's the same principle. If you would prefer to see it like this, look at that helpless pagan youngster with her forced child in her womb, running back through the desolations of a desert toward a hospitable paganism in Egypt. That was her ultimate destiny.

And she argued with herself, I would rather be with the pagans of Egypt than with these two that know the God of glory. Is there someone leaving your home in that condition? Is there someone who would rather be with the pagans of the 20th century than bear out your bitter tongue and spleen and misunderstanding and other things that only heaven alone knows? I say to you, the book of God is a book that's alive. Genesis speaks today and it speaks to men and women in the pulpit and in the pew in Knox today.

I find a haunting complacency shattering challenge in the spectacle of that young mother running away. Now I must close. The damage incurred by Sarah's apparently ingenious plan served to mar a much blessed marriage and to intensify the misery of an already much abused girl.

But there's one other thing and I want you to notice it. The only redeeming feature in this record is that it so clearly points also to the mercy of a much maligned God. You know, there is only one ray of hope and one ray of glory in this chapter 16 and that ray is the revelation of God as a God who cares.

Misrepresented by Abram and Sarah, I am doubtless misunderstood if not maligned. God brightens the scene with a glory of his presence. He steps into the mess to transform it.

The very wilderness changes its face as God steps on the scene. Its forbidding features fade into insignificance as the God of glory who appeared to Abram now appears, albeit perhaps not in that character, but to Hagar, the slave girl. God is infinitely better than the best of his children, you know, and infinitely kinder than the kindest of his people.

And God came down in the person of his angel. Just a look and we're through. The God of mercy appears to Hagar.

In his mercy, he provided a well in the wilderness for this parched, half-dead little girl. I don't know how old she is. Perhaps I shouldn't have said little girl, but at least she was pretty young.

But God provided for her a well in the wilderness and brought her to the well. I think this is precious. The angel of the Lord found her by the spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shul.

There was a well in the wilderness and somehow or other the providence of God brought this needy soul to the well. A token of blessing already, but we must go further. In his mercy, God sent an angel to the well, so that by the side of the well, like another greater than the angels, the Lord of the angels, he spoke to this much abused girl as he did later to a much abused woman.

God sent an angel after Hagar, an angel who could speak to her by name. It is particularly worthy of note that the angel did not refer to her as Abram's wife, but as Sarai's mistress. As my only comment on polygamy, God doesn't acknowledge it.

The angel addresses her as Sarai's servant. And that's important. She is not Abram's wife.

Let's pass from it. God sent an angel who was really an embodiment of the divine concern for this runaway girl and said he, Hagar, maid of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going to? So somebody cares. I don't know whether we need a little bit of imagination here, but the thing that comes home to me is this.

You see, somebody's asking a question that betokens concern. The God of heaven and the angel from heaven was concerned. I wonder how Sarah had slept the nights since Hagar was put out of the tent.

I wonder how Abram got on through the day and the night. Was he able to sleep? Here someone was concerned and knew her by name. Moreover, the angel he sent came to take her out of the wilderness.

A wilderness into which she was blindly running. Oh, what infinite mercy. Did you notice how the angel does it? One with a command and then a promise.

This is generally God's way. He issues a command and then he gives us a promise. The command is, Hagar, go back and submit yourself to your mistress.

But I've got a promise for you. You too shall have children so many in number that you won't be able to count them. What? Yeah.

You're going to give birth to the child that is in your womb and you shall call him Ishmael. And he'll be a certain type of person. And you are thus going to be the mother of a vast multitude.

You too, Hagar. Hallelujah. Can you see it, my friends? Can you see it? Can't you see the grace of God? Don't you want to dance? God loved Hagar, the runaway slave girl.

And she at long last looked up in bewilderment. And this is the climax to the whole thing. Thou, God, seest me.

Me? Me? Insignificant me. I'm an Egyptian. I'm not circumcised.

I don't belong to the circumcised. I have none of the promises of the covenants for me at the moment. But thou, God of Abram, seest me, carest for me, hast a promise for me.

Hallelujah. And that's the climax. That the weakest character in the whole story, the character whom Abram has not been just with and whom Sarah would have got rid of and sent back into the darkness of the wilderness to death may be, she is loved of God.

And he comes and he leads her back and the story goes on and history moves ahead. And the God of all creation weaves the pattern of his purposes. You in a wilderness today, perhaps due to somebody else's sin, you're in a condition this morning that is a sad one.

And you've almost ceased to expect anything. Even when you come to the house of God, you don't expect anything more than to go through the routine. Nothing more.

You don't mind sitting in the pews and listening to a long dissertation like this from time to time. But you're not expecting anything. Time was when perhaps you did, but you're not expecting anything.

Listen, my friend. I want to come to you in the name of the almighty God this morning and I want to say to you, he sees you. His eye is on the sparrow.

And I know he watches me. You, Hagar. Hagar.

Or it may be a masculine name, it makes no difference. Yield to his command. Trust his promises.

And you will find that life will never be quite the same. He'll take you out of the wilderness and he'll lead you by a right way. Let us pray.

Oh, Lord, our God and our Father, thank you for your word. We sometimes use these words in our gratitude and in our prayers, not always with meaning, not always with thought, nor with feeling. Lord, we mean it this morning.

Thank you for your word. Were it only to come to us to warn godly men and women of things that can go wrong in the family and how. And also that it comes to a little girl alas, a stripling like Hagar with a child in her womb that she had not wanted.

And you are coming to her to be her God. Father in heaven, draw us to yourself this morning, each one of us in faith, that like Abram, not in this chapter 16, but in chapter 15 and later on again before the story is done and you finished with him. Until we, whether we be men or women, husbands or wives or single people, until we are able to steady ourselves upon God and trust and obey out of faith.

We ask it in his holy name. I'm in.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26574.mp3>

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