

(Genesis) Genesis 12-13

by Joe Focht

God calls Abraham out of his country and family to make him a great nation and bless him, and Abraham's journey to Canaan is a testament to God's faithfulness and power.

Duration: 1:02:02

Scripture: Genesis 12:10, Exodus 16:4, Matthew 6:8, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 2:2, 1 Corinthians 10:11, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Topics: "Genesis"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of making decisions based on God's word rather than worldly influences. He highlights the constant bombardment of worldly standards and the temptation to rely on our own resources. The speaker encourages listeners to turn to prayer when faced with difficult situations and to seek new revelations about God's character and provision. Drawing from the example of the Israelites in the wilderness, the speaker emphasizes the necessity of learning from God's discipline and relying on His word for sustenance rather than worldly sustenance.

Transcript

Genesis chapter 12, we'll back up and take a running start in it from verse 27 of chapter 11. These are the generations of Terah, Abraham's father. Terah begot Abram, and as we go his name will be changed to Abraham.

Abram has two brothers, Nahor and Haran. Haran is the father of Lot, it says. But Haran died before his father Terah.

He died early. He died in the land of his nativity in Ur of the Chaldees. Now this is where this family is drawn from.

October 26th, 1922, Sir Leonard Woolley was drafted by the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania, right here in town, to excavate Ur of the Chaldees. And if you are a buff on that kind of thing, and you're interested, Sir Leonard Woolley is the one who's done the greatest work and excavation in Ur of the Chaldees. The University of Pennsylvania Museum is wonderful here in Philadelphia, if you ever get a chance to visit.

Their library and bookstore is wonderful. He excavated Ur of the Chaldees to a great extent and found evidence of tremendous things. He found evidence of human sacrifice there, as part of their worship.

He found great wealth and servants buried with the rulers of that place. They believe that Ur of the Chaldees was in existence hundreds of years before Abraham was ever born there. There was canals, there was irrigation, trigonometry, an advanced civilization, a set of laws that they live by similar to the law of Hammurabi and some of the ancient codes that we've discovered in the semi-informed tablets.

So Abraham is being drawn from a place where he has grown up in the city. He's grown up around civilization. He has grown up exposed to not being a shepherd somewhere on the side of a hill, but science of the day, technology, architecture, geometry.

They had medicine. A lot of the things they did were bizarre, no doubt. If you were congested in your lungs, you would chew up a mouse or they'd put a ground mouse in your mouth or a live mouse in your mouth for a while.

Some of the things they did, cheaper than a prescription, but some of their medical things are very interesting. In fact, in the laws of Hammurabi, they tell what a doctor should do if he does brain surgery on someone and works on a tumor and the patient isn't healed, the things that need to happen. And this is 2,000 years before Christ.

So very interesting to look at some of these cultures. This is where Abraham comes from. And he is called, again, in Acts chapter 7 is where it tells us the God of glory appeared to him when he was still in Ur of the Chaldees, revealed himself to Abraham.

And Acts 7 too. So Abraham is called out of civilization and he is called to come into this land of Canaan. His father, Terah, comes with Nahor.

Haran, his brother, died. Lot, his nephew, comes with. Verse 29 says, Abram and Nahor took them wives.

The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, the name of Nahor's wife, Milca. She was the daughter of Haran, the father of Milca, the father of Isca. Sarai was barren.

Very important verse that will come to play all through this record of Abraham. She had no child by design. I know that there are many in the church that struggle.

And there seems to be, you know, as Christians, oftentimes we look at the world and see 34 million abortions in the last 15 to 20 years. And we see people who abuse their children and care so little. And we see Christian families right here in church that struggle with infertility and their hearts are broken and they pray and they desire to have children.

There are times, and we find them in the scripture, when it is through the hand of God that the conception is at least delayed and sometimes withheld according to his plan. And this is a very important verse here that Sarai was barren. God would wait until it was beyond human reason and possibility for conception to take place so that this child would be a reflection of the one who would come who would be the Messiah.

It would be a miraculous birth, a child of promise. So God is withholding at this point in time. She is barren.

And Terah took Abram, his son, Enlot, the son of Haran, his son's son, Terah's grandson, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife. And they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan. And they came unto Haran, which is not the same Hebrew word as his son Haran.

It's written the same in English. And they dwelt there. And that's about an 800-mile journey from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran.

And you can take your strongs and look up Haran, and it tells you there that it means parched. And again, it was the last way station for some of the caravans before they headed across the desert was this oasis, this town of Haran. So it took the name of parched because it was a long desert journey from that point across towards what would become the Viamari over towards the Mediterranean.

So they take this 800-mile trek now from Ur of the Chaldees, and they come to Haran, the Bible tells us. And they dwelt there, which is a mistake. God had called him to come into Canaan.

The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran. Now, again, by the way, as we go, there are those who struggle, there's some seem to be some difficulties with the genealogy. Those of you love to dig those things up.

Haran would have have to have been about 130 to 135 when Abram was born. And Abram is named first in his sons because he has the preeminence. It doesn't seem, though, that he was the first born.

Haran died before him. He probably was the oldest. And if we line it up that way, it works out perfectly when we find out about the death of Terah.

For those of you who've been digging and wrestling there, most of you don't know what in the world I am talking about. Now the journey, hundreds of miles again from Haran to Canaan. They are in Haran for over five years, at least five years.

And again, very interesting, Terah means delay, Haran means parched, and Abram is called by the Lord, and again, to leave his country, to leave his family, and to come to Canaan. Now, he's got one out of three, he's left his country. He took his family with him and he went to the wrong place.

And we'll find out as we study this man's life that he's human. He makes errors, he makes mistakes, he has struggles like us, but again, remarkably, they are all in relationship to heaven. His struggles all seem to be attached to God's calling on his life and how he is trying to process this encounter now with a new and living God.

As Moses writes, he tells us about Abraham's relationship with the Lord, and Moses uses the term that he knows of Yahweh. We get the sense though as we study that it was El Shaddai that Abraham knew, that he didn't know the Yahweh God that would be revealed to Moses and to Israel, that he knew God as the Almighty. And he went through a process of learning who he was.

Now, Jesus does tell us, Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it. And it does tell us in Galatians that the Gospels communicated aforetime to Abraham, so he had no doubt great insight into the person of God. He was the one who was walking with the true and living God, unlike the world that was around him.

Now, God had destroyed the world in Noah's day. God had sworn he would never destroy all the earth with a flood again. The world had become idolatrous and now instead of destroying it, he calls a man out of it and he draws Abraham to himself to continue the Messianic line and to begin the nation of Israel.

Abraham is not a Jew. There are no Jews. When we use the word Jew, it was assigned to the Israelites later, around 2,000 years ago, and it's really a shortened version of Judah, the tribe.

That is where we get our idea of Jew from. The Israelites, or the children of Israel, were the 12 tribes or the 12 sons of Jacob. They're called the children of Israel because God changed Jacob's name to Israel, and they were his sons.

But a generation before that was Isaac, and a generation before that is Abraham. Abraham is an idolater from Ur of the Chaldees, and God has drawn him now to begin this wonderful process. Now, the Lord had said, chapter 12, unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee.

Now, again, whatever we might say about Abraham, I mean, it is amazing that he leaves everything. He leaves an environment where civilization is to go through the desert, and no doubt in my mind that terror went in him. He was concerned.

Here's Abram, his son, saying, the true and living God appeared to me. He's called me. He told me to leave this country and to leave my family, and he's going to show me where I'm going.

He doesn't have a lot of information. I'm heading out. I'm not sure where yet, and again, but that will tend to keep you in touch with God.

So Abram now, it says to us, was told by God, had said, and it reads like past tense in English, the Hebrew gives us the sense of had said and was continuing to say. It isn't a present perfect tense like we have in Greek, but the sense of the word is that God had said to Abram and was saying to Abraham, get out of your country, away from your kindred, to this place, that this was still on his heart. Now, I appreciate that because I know, you know, oftentimes people will ask, how do I know if God's speaking to me? How do I know if it's the enemy, or how do I know if it's my flesh, or how do I know if it's the spirit? And I hear them asking that question.

I'm thinking, I have no idea. I don't know why you're asking me. Because when I go through that struggle, I'm saying to myself, now, is this the enemy, or is this my flesh, or is this the spirit? Now, there's no doubt about it if it's written in black and white.

If we have it in God's word, we know for sure. Then there's no argument. You know, people say sometimes in counseling, well, you're judging me.

I say, no, the word's judging. I'm just fruit inspector. You know, the Bible's what is judging you, not me.

But there are other times when God is leading us as an individual in a personal and particular way that, you know, when we were looking for a building we couldn't find in the Bible. Go on down to Philmont Avenue, make a right, you'll see an old meter factory. That wasn't written in here anywhere.

So, you go through that process of praying, and Lord, are you speaking to me? And it's wonderful for me to observe some of that in the Scripture, because it seemed that God said to Abraham, and five years later he's still saying to me. Now, I think I'm thick. Usually God's got to talk to me for about a month, you know, before I'm done saying, is this you, is this you, is this you? You do the same thing.

Don't look at me like you don't know what I'm talking about. You know, Lord, I'm busted. I need \$122.22. Lord, I need \$122.22. An envelope falls in your mailbox, you open it up, it's \$122.22, and you say, Lord, is this from you? You know, you're just like I am.

You know, it's wonderful in Jeremiah when he said, God said to him, your cousin, Hananiah's going to come to you, he's going to buy a parcel of ground from you, and I want you to buy the ground from him. And it was trusting God that God would restore them to the land again. So, Jeremiah says, then my cousin, Hananiah, came to me and asked me if I wanted to buy the ground, and Jeremiah says, then I knew that the Lord had spoken to me.

See, because I think Jeremiah knows all the time. He's a prophet. Well, he's just like us.

He needed to be confirmed in his heart. As I look at the book of Acts and I see the early church with James and the apostles in Acts chapter 15, and they're making a decision about what would be required of the new Gentile believers, and then when James writes the letter, he says, it seemed good to us and to the Holy Ghost. Now, I like that, because I can do that with my staff.

Well, it seemed good to us. I mean, you know, we prayed about it, and it seemed good to us, and it seemed peaceable. And I like the fact that as I observe Abraham, now, it is God that's faithful.

If he had been perfect, it would be very discouraging to look at his life to learn lessons. But he was so human. And yet, as we read about his life in Hebrews chapter 11, because there it's under the blood.

You know, there it is through the filter of God's faithful in the New Testament. We don't read about his flaws. We read about the observations of God, of Abraham's faith, and how he loved him, and how he was the friend of God.

But here, God is honest enough always, as he displays a human life in front of us, to not hide the flaws of those even that he loves. And Abraham, now, has taken a five-year delay. Five years.

You know, and he's already 70 years old. You would think he's not going to delay five years. Of course, maybe when you're 70, you're thinking, what's five more? I don't know.

I'll tell you when I get there. Now, again, this voice is speaking to him. Get thee out of thy country, from thy kindred, come into the land, that I will show thee.

I will make of thee a great nation. Now, you have to understand, Abraham's hearing this. He's childless.

He's 75 years old. I will bless thee and make thy name great. Again, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, the majority of the world finds this man's name great.

Thou shalt be a blessing, which is imperative. That part is almost to come in. You are going to be a blessing.

It's like God's going to pull this off, whether you like it or not. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Now, by the way, I don't get any sense that that's been removed.

It's very interesting to study the nation of Israel and her history, because through her history, those who have cursed them have been cursed. Those who have blessed them have been blessed. God has not revoked that.

Look at what happened to Egypt. Look what happened to Assyria. Look what happened to Babylon.

Look what happened to Rome. Look what happened to Adolf Hitler. Look what happened to every nation that pulled back from Israel and tried to double-cross them or curse them.

There they are today, existing in the land, remarkably. And all of those nations, when was the last time you spent an afternoon with a Babylonian? So, I don't see that that's been revoked at all. It is still a promise that stands.

And I, then, as a believer, and I think you should do, I think we should all pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We should pray for that nation. You know, we're told in Romans chapter 11 that we've been grafted in, that they, the Jews, Israel, have been temporarily blinded, that the Gentiles might be grafted in.

And if we are a wild branch, and they're the natural branch, we shouldn't be haughty. We should realize that God has used this people and this nation, and they've been persecuted through the ages, to bring the Messiah according to the flesh and bring salvation to the world. So, I don't see where that's been revoked at all.

Now, the amazing thing is, here's Abraham. Abraham's an idolater, or the Chaldees, Joshua 24-2, and his whole family, Terah, by rabbinic tradition, an idol-maker. And God, boom, appears in his bedroom, or wherever, just appears to him one day.

Says, get out of your country. Now, that's a strange thing to hear from God, the first thing, if He appears to you. You know, get out of your country, get away from your family, go to a place I'm going to show you.

And then this God says, I'm going to make you into a great nation. I'm going to bless you. I'm going to make you a blessing to others.

I will bless them that bless you. I will curse them that curse you. And through you, all the families there are going to be blessed.

I'm going to bless your socks off. I'm going to blow your mind. I'm going to bless you and then bless your blessings.

You know, I mean, this is pure grace. This is election. This comes from nowhere.

It comes out of heaven. It comes out of the blue, and boom, on to Abraham, by God's divine choice, by His election. And I think it's wonderful, by the way, as we look at that.

God calling him now, out of Ur of the Chaldees. All of grace. So Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken unto him.

That probably should say over and over and over and over. And Lot went with him, and Abram was 75 years old when he finally left Haran. Now, by the way, that means you're not beyond God's call.

Don't think I'm 70, it's too late to accomplish anything for God. I don't want to hear about it. Abraham's 75 years old when he answers the call and comes into the land.

And how over the years we've heard wonderful stories of people up in age that have yielded to the Spirit and changed people and tribes and nations, as a matter of fact. So Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken to him. Lot went with him.

Abraham was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai, her name will be changed to Sarah, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, his nephew, and all their subsistence that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran. Now, 1414 tells us Abraham had over 320 armed servants with him.

And the idea is that they had a sense of, they were keen in battle. It wasn't just slaves. He had over 320 armed servants with him.

Now, you figure, those servants, plus slaves, plus wives and children, Abraham comes into the land, no doubt, with at least a thousand people as he comes into Canaan. Took Sarai, his wife, Lot, his brother's son, all their subsistence they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran. And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came, 600 miles from Haran.

Now, they've gone all tall, over 1,400 miles on foot. That's quite a walk. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the plain of Moreh, and the Canaanite was in the land.

That will be an important verse. The Canaanite was in the land. Interesting.

He comes into the plain of Moreh. Moreh was evidently, the Terabinth was named after a famous teacher. There's an oak of Moreh.

The plain of Moreh meant instruction. It became synonymous with the idea of instruction. Abraham comes into the land, and he's come there now, to the plain, to the place of instruction.

He doesn't realize that, because he's going to learn his first lesson very shortly. But he's coming into the land now. Interesting.

Shechem means shoulder. The idea, and it's wonderful, a place to lean. And Moreh means instruction.

And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, it's the first time we have the word appeared in the Bible, it related to God. Now, Acts tells us that he did appear, but that's the New Testament, in Ur of the Chaldees, the first time we read in the Old Testament that God appeared. Appeared unto Abram, now this is in the plains of Moreh, and said, unto thy seed will I give this land.

And again, Abram's childless. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. No evidence that he appeared in Haran.

You know, he had appeared in Ur of the Chaldees. Years had gone by until Abraham brings his life to where God asked him to be. During that time, he was still Abraham's God.

And you have to understand that too. God saves us. He becomes our Father.

If you go away from His path, if you take a detour, if you go AWOL, if you backslide, the fellowship you have with Him will break down. The relationship remains. When I moved to the West Coast, my father was still my father.

The fellowship wasn't there because we didn't sit in a living room and talk anymore, but the relationship remained. And it's very interesting to see Abraham going out of God's will. God said to go to Canaan, he goes to Haran.

He's there for years. Evidently, God is prodding his heart. And though the prodding is there, he doesn't have this, what he had in Ur.

It's when he gets into Canaan there and then God appears to him again in the plains of Moreh and says to him that his seed shall inherit the land. And Abraham does what all of us would probably do. He builds an altar.

Now, no doubt God has taught him unto the Lord who appeared to him. Abraham, right away, he sheds blood. Very important when God's appearing to you.

And he removed from there unto a mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar unto the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. Now again, as we go through, we just constantly find these meanings to names.

There's nothing by chance here. Abraham now comes and he camps between Bethel and Ai. Bethel means house of God.

No doubt in Abraham's day it was named something different. Moses, as he writes, says he was camped with Bethel on the west and Ai, which means heap of ruin, on the west. And there he is camped between the house of God and heap of ruin.

And there he puts his tent and he builds his altar again. Now, this morning we mentioned, look, the tent and the altar will be the things that identify the life of Abraham. As we get to the next chapter, we'll see he is extremely wealthy by the time he comes back from Egypt.

He could have built a house that looked like the Beverly Hillbillies house. He could have built a mansion. He could have done whatever he wanted.

And yet Abraham stays in a tent and he journeys his entire life. He never gives up his pilgrim nature. He's looking for a city as builder and maker as God.

He's not looking to settle down. There was something that God had put in his heart that was greater than the real estate itself. There was a promise attached to it that was more important to him than the dirt that he walked on.

And the tent and the altar become the two things that define the life of Abraham. Now, the tent defines his relationship with this world and the altar defines his relationship with the next world. You know, it is the tent that defines Abraham's relationship.

He is holding on loosely. He is learning to let go. He only owns, by the time Sarah dies, one piece of real estate in the land in Mekphila, and that's a place to bury her.

He drug this poor girl from Ur of the Chaldees. God appeared to me. God spoke to me.

Sometimes it's hard to get your wife to follow you. When you say, God appeared to me, God spoke to me, and your wife is saying, are you sure God spoke to you, you know? We're walking 800 miles through the desert. Are you sure God spoke to you? And then they come into the land, and it's going to say, as soon as they get there, there's a famine.

And Sarah may have been saying, are you sure this is the place God told you to come to? In fact, when we get to chapter 18, the Lord comes to Abram there in Mamre with angels, several angels, and sits and talks with him. He says, Abram, this time next year, your wife will bear a son. And Sarah still does not have hold at that time of this whole promise thing, and she starts laughing.

She's in another part of the tent. It wasn't proper for the women to come out and socialize with the guys while they talked about important things. Different culture.

And God says, what's your wife laughing about? Abram must yell back, what are you laughing about? She says, I'm not laughing. Now God's sitting out front, you know. She still doesn't have hold of the program.

And God says, really? Well, why don't we name the child Laughter, Itzhak, to remind you for the rest of your life that you weren't laughing. He's in the land. He's now between Ai and Bethel.

The tent defined his relationship of his earthly pilgrimage, his journey. The altar defined his relationship with heaven. This is a man who constantly cut the throat of a lamb, took a lamb from the flock, and watched the blood flow down upon the stones.

And somewhere deep in his heart, as Jesus said, Abraham longed to see my day, and he saw it. And he would get deeper revelation as he went on. This man understood somehow there was an innocent substitute to come.

And substitutionary atonement was God's way to heaven. And there would be a price that would be paid. So he always travels.

The tent and the altar follow the man everywhere, camped between Ai and Bethel. Now, we find ourselves camped there a lot, between the house of God and a heap of ruin. Abraham journeyed, going on toward the south.

And he ends up to be a man that lives near Hebron and Mamre, loves the desert. God gave him the whole land. He seems to be a man who loves the desert.

And certainly it has its own beauty. And there was a famine in the land, and Abraham went down to Egypt. Now, that's an awful lot confined in a few words.

Here's Abraham in the promised land. He's building an altar. God has appeared to him there.

We don't know if any of his servants or his wife has seen God appear. Was it Abraham alone with God? Now he's journeying. He is making his tent.

He is building his altars. And now all of a sudden, there's a famine in the land. And with a famine in the land, by the way, it was common in that culture for those ancient civilizations, during a drought, and no doubt that's the reason there was a famine, for them to go down to Egypt.

Many cultures did that. Again, on Sunday morning, I shared not too long ago, they excavated a Yemenite tomb in Yemen of a Yemenite princess. And they found the inscription in her tomb that during seven years of drought, she had sent her servants to Joseph in Egypt and sent money to buy grain.

And Joseph had refused. She sent back her camels loaded with pure gold. Joseph had refused.

She sent back her camels loaded with jewels, rubies, and jewels. And Joseph had refused. And the inscription in her tomb, she pronounces a curse on anybody who trusts in earthly riches.

Because in the bottom line, they meant nothing. Beautiful thing for us, bearing out the realization and the reality of Joseph. And it was common for these cultures to go to Egypt because Egypt was flooded in the Nile Delta.

They built their canals and their irrigation during the season when the river ran low. They had pedals. They would sit and pedal with their feet and would draw these cups up and dump the water into the canals.

And Egypt was fertile year round and had growing season year round. So when there was drought in other countries, it was common to head that way. Abram now heads to Egypt.

Now, he's wrong. God told him to go to Canaan. And I think it's difficult for us to understand sometimes.

God loves us. God reveals himself to us. He tells us to come into the promised land.

We get there. He appears to us. We build an altar.

We have fellowship. And all of a sudden, everything dries up. And we think, Lord, you know.

And then we start racking our brain. OK, I know he doesn't forget. So he couldn't have forgotten me.

He's getting me. I was mean to my Aunt Sarah when I was five years old. Now I think about it.

And we start racking our mind. Did I do this? Did I do that? Is he getting me because of this? Did he pull back his presence before this, for this reason? Is he getting me for this reason? And you know, the amazing thing is, as you study the scripture, there are deserts that are prescribed by God. There are famines.

There are droughts. The places where God takes us. You see, because Sarah's womb was a drought, it was a famine.

And the nation of Israel would walk through a desert and be fed by manna from heaven. It would fall from the sky. And the very great part of what God would become to his people was only discovered in those circumstances.

Paul would say in the New Testament, I rather glory in my infirmities now, because I've discovered that in my weakness, God's strength is made perfect. So he said, when those difficult times come, I'm not there yet. I'm telling you what Paul said.

He said, I just rejoice. When everything runs out, all my natural resources run out, and I end up in a pickle, and there's nothing I can do to squirm my way out of this. Because that's the first thing I do when I get in a difficult time.

I try to worm my way out of the situation. When I can't worm my way out, then I'll try to scream my way out. It doesn't work.

When all else fails, you pray. But Paul said, well, I've learned. When everything dries up, it's time to learn something new about God that I've never discovered if I'd been left to my own resources.

There's some facet of his being, and of his love, and of his provision, that now I'm going to experience that I've never known if it had been left to me, because I'd have been happy just feeding myself on worldly sustenance. And God will say in Deuteronomy 8 that he led their forefathers in the wilderness to teach them that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And that he disciplined them.

He chastised them. But it's the Hebrew word for that which is considered necessary instruction from a parent to a child. It was necessary for them to learn those things.

And it says in all those years they didn't starve. And it says in all those years their clothes didn't wear out and their shoes didn't wear out. Imagine having a pair of sneakers that last for 38 years.

Their shoes didn't wear out. You know, when I read that, I think, you know, if you were a little baby when you started on a journey, did you have those great big white baby shoes by the time you were done? Of course, I'm just joking. But the idea is there is a continued revelation of who God is.

And a big part of that is in his provision. A big part of that is in his compound names in regards to him being their banner, in regards to him being their healer, in regards to who he will be in regards to them. And this is a famine, a drought that is prescribed by God.

Now, just as Hagar will learn, he is able to bring forth a spring in the desert. And I want to say to you that if you're going through an experience in your life right now where you're dry, now, no doubt, if you're in sin, if you're in fornication, if you're in rebellion against God, he reserves the right at that time to chasten you. And if you're a child of God, you will be chastened.

And it's unpleasant, but it yields a peaceful fruit of righteousness. And if you are living in compromise right now in sin against God, we're living in the last days. Jesus could come at any day.

And because he loves you, he will not give you rest. He'll give you ulcers before he gives you rest. And that will be better for you in the long run.

But there are times in all of our lives when our heart is towards God. And still we encounter those desert experiences, those dry times where we haven't sensed his presence and we haven't heard his voice. Very necessary part of our instruction.

And I think early on as a new Christian, I was very dependent on goosebumps or, you know, sensing his presence or the experiential side. And I think now after years, I'm convinced that whether I sense his presence or not, he never leaves me or forsakes me. When I sense his presence, it's wonderful.

When I don't sense his presence, he's right next to me, not wanting me to sense his presence. That's where he's at. The problem's with me, not with him.

He's still there. And he takes Abraham into the land. He appears to Abraham.

Everything seems wonderful. And all of a sudden, where's that abundant life, Lord, that you promised? We even have the little bread basket on our morning table with all those little promises you pull out and read every morning. But none of them say, you know, the world hated me, it's going to hate you.

Blessed are those who persecuted for righteousness sake. Those promises are not in there. All of a sudden, there's a famine in the land.

Abraham goes to Egypt. This is the first mention of Egypt in the scripture. Now he's moving out of God's blessing, the place where God will bless him.

It was grievous in the land. I'm not saying I would do any better. Imagine having the responsibility for a thousand lives.

No sustenance, no food. You're saying to a thousand people, God told me to come here. 999 voices are saying back, are you sure? Sooner or later, you'll figure, let's go to Egypt.

It's easier than listening to these 999 guys all the time. Came to pass when he was come near to enter into Egypt, they said to Sarai, his wife, she's 65, by the way, at this point in time. Behold, now I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon.

You're a good looker. 65, that's pretty amazing. She lives to be 137, so she's middle aged.

Chuck Missler said once, I'm 50 years old, and people tell me I'm middle aged. He said, I'd feel a lot better about that if I knew more hundred year olds. Well, she's 65.

She dies 130, 738. She's middle aged, but the longevity is still touching that there had been in the end of Deluvian, some of their lives, and evidently at 65, she is beautiful. Therefore, it shall come to pass, Abram says, when the Egyptians shall see you, that they shall say, this is his wife, and they will kill me.

And they will save you a life. Because even the ancient Babylonians, the ones who lived in Ur of the Chaldees over in Persia, the law of Hammurabi, the laws in Egypt, those ancient cultures frowned on adultery. It is remarkable to look at our culture today.

We call ourselves civilized. They frowned on adultery. If you were an adulterer in Assyria, sometimes they would take you, if you were a woman and committed adultery on your husband, they would cut your nose off.

Well, you see a few gals, you know, gals are concerned about makeup and stuff. You see a few gals walking around with no nose. It reminds you, we better not do this.

This is, you know, something that you want to take heed to. The law of Hammurabi said if you found a woman in adultery with another man, a married woman, that you would take them both and tie them together and throw them in the river. Tied together.

Drown them. Well, in Egypt they frowned on adultery. So if someone came to Egypt and the pharaoh saw a woman that was beautiful and she was a married woman and the pharaoh knew adultery was wrong, he would kill the husband, then she would be single.

You're laughing. Things were much simpler. He says, they'll kill me and they'll save you alive.

Say, I pray thee that you are my sister. That it may be well with me. The heck with you.

That it might be well with me. For your sake. He'll take you into the harem and he'll like me because he'll think I'm your brother.

And my soul shall live because of you. Now, by the way, some try to say this is a half-truth because in chapter 20, verse 12, it lets us know that Sarai is a half-sister to Abraham. It isn't a half-truth.

It's a whole lie. He was deliberately trying to deceive Pharaoh. He wasn't saying to Pharaoh, gee, this is a half-truth.

Kill half of me. Say thee you're my sister. That it might be well with me.

For thy sake. My soul shall live because of thee. Now, this is interesting because in 1 Peter chapter 3, ladies, the Bible holds up Sarah there and it says, Sarah called Abraham Lord.

Doesn't say she trusted Abraham. Says she called him Lord, fearing God. She trusted God.

She didn't trust Abraham. She trusted God. Abraham's a guy that's telling her, look, we're going to Egypt.

Do me a favor. Just say you're my sister if anybody asks. So they don't kill me.

And we'll figure out what to do with you later. So it came to pass when Abraham was coming to Egypt, the Egyptians beheld Sarah, the woman, that she was very beautiful. And the princes also of Pharaoh saw her and commended her before Pharaoh.

Said Pharaoh, it's a beautiful woman that just came into town. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Now, she's made part of his harem.

And he, Pharaoh, entreated Abraham well for her sake. He said to Abraham, this is your sister? Yeah, that's my sister. Man, she's beautiful.

You know, I've taken her to my harem. I'm going to marry your sister. I'm just, what can I do for you? She's wonderful.

And he had sheep and oxen and he asses and men's servants and maid's servants and she asses and camels. Sarah's looking out the window of the harem and Pharaoh's saying to Abraham, here, take she asses, take sheep. Abraham's going, oh, that's great.

Take gold, take silver, take camels. And there aren't that many then. We think that there were a lot.

This was a treasure to have camels. And Sarah's thinking, look, he's trading me away. He's getting camels.

He's getting sheep. Look how happy he looks. He's not getting killed.

He's getting all this stuff. And here I am in Pharaoh's harem. You know, the first time that I went to Israel, 1983, one of the pastors from Colorado, Calvary Chapel pastor and his wife, they were black.

His wife was very beautiful. And when we were in Bethlehem, a group of Muslims offered him 200 camels for his wife. I remember we were on our way home and they were arguing about something.

He said, you're lucky I couldn't fit 200 camels on this plane. So he's giving Abraham now for Sarah. Sheep and oxen and he asses and menservants and maidservants and she asses and camels.

And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with the great plagues because of Sarai, Abraham's wife. Now, this is God's grace. It doesn't tell us what kind of plagues as you read through Deuteronomy.

There are some strange ones. None of them were good. Whatever they are, it's enough to freak Pharaoh out.

Pharaoh called Abraham, this is not on the phone, and said, what is this that you've done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you tell me she was your sister? So that I might have taken her to me to be my wife. Now, therefore, here's your wife. Take her and go away.

So these plagues were not pleasant. Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him. They sent him away and his wife and all that he had.

He wasn't mean. He didn't kill him. He understood what the story was.

He's confronted with a true and living God. He takes Sarai, brings her back to Abraham and sends him out of the country with an armed guard. Don't let anybody hurt these people.

Whatever these boils, whatever he had, he said, I want this to go away. So get them out of our land. Give them an armed escort.

So Abraham went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had and lot with him into the southern part of Israel to the south, the Arbam. And Abraham was very rich. First time the word rich is used in the Bible.

Very rich in cattle and in silver and in gold. Now, again, the Angelus says that Abram was overloaded. That's the way they translate it.

He was overloaded with cattle and he was overloaded with silver and he was overloaded with gold. And I think isn't it hard to imagine being overloaded with gold? I guess when you have to load it on camels and donkeys, it could be that way. And he went on his journeys, plural Moses writing the journeys of Abraham, he went on his journeys from the south, even to Bethel, under the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and Ai, under the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first.

He's right back where he started. This is the long way around the barn. God had said to him, I want you to go and I want you to go to Canaan.

First he takes a five year detour to Haran and then when he gets into the land, he faces difficulty. Then he goes to Egypt. His wife goes into Pharaoh's harem.

Everything almost falls apart. God has to intervene supernaturally. Abraham comes right back to where he started, between the heap of ruin and the house of God, right between Bethel and Ai, right to the altar that he had made at the beginning.

Comes back to his first love, as it were, and there will be some beautiful types there. Abraham comes right back to that place where he was in the beginning. Now, he's increased with goods, he's very rich, but there's also some other problems.

He also brings Hagar with, which will be a problem in the future. And Lot, it seems, also brings with a taste for Egypt and a hunger for those things as he comes, and we'll see that. So they come back into the land where they had been at the beginning.

Abraham comes back to the altar, which he had made there at the first, and Abraham called on the name of, again it says Yahweh, we're not sure how he called, what he understood, what was revealed to him about God at that point in time. He's growing, he calls on the name of the Lord. Now, Lot also, which went with Abraham, had flocks and herds and tents and a taste of Egypt.

I added that. And the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together, for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. Now, if they went down with over a thousand people, they came back, there was added to them men's servants and maidservants from Egypt, there was added to them cattle and camel and sheep.

You know, we're looking at thousands of people. And there arises now a contention, look in verse 7, there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle, and very interesting, the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt in the land. Abram said unto Lot, let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, between my herdmen and thy herdmen, because we're brethren, the whole land is before you.

Separate yourself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if thou wilt depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. So, this contention starts.

We don't know, maybe the herdmen of Lot are saying, look, we don't want to follow Abraham. We followed him before, we had a famine, we came down in Egypt, then a big trouble, we're doing okay now, we have gold, we have cattle, look, why do we have to live with him? Maybe there's a contention there. We're not sure.

He's going to give Lot the choice. Why don't you pick where you want to go? The whole land is before us, let's not argue, we're family. You know, it's interesting to see family fight.

We've seen it here in the church, particularly if a grandmother, a grandparent, or a parent dies, and they all go to the lawyer's office to read the will. Even Christians. I can't believe she left, you know, that picture over the mantel.

I said I always wanted that. She promised me it would be mine. I can't believe.

And it's very interesting to see families get at each other's throat and get divided over stuff. I remember when we were hippies, we didn't have stuff. We were anti-establishment.

Now we've grown. We have stuff. We need houses to keep our stuff in.

We need police to protect our stuff. We've become part of the system, it seems. Abraham and Lot arguing over their stuff.

Abram saying, look, I don't want this to go on. And Abram, you know, he's just glad to be back in Canaan. The God of glory had appeared to him.

Abram's been told that all the land would be his one day. That nations of the world be blessed through him. And if that's in your heart, you're not going to see.

What's somebody going to take from you? You know that as a Christian now. It's easier to let go of things. You want this big deal, take it.

And as a Christian, sometimes we think it's so foolish to see the things that people get uptight over. And Abram is in that frame of mind, at least, where he says to Lot, whatever you want. I mean, choose the best for yourself.

You want to go to the right, I'll go to the left. You want the left, I'll go to the right. I'm not going to argue over it.

And God is using this contention, by the way. He used the contention between Paul and Barnabas and brought life out of it. And God will use this because God had said to Abraham, get out of my country, away from my kindred, to a land that I'll show thee.

Abram got out of his country. He still has Lot with him. And Lot is of a different mind.

In verse 10, Lot will look around and choose for himself the plain of Jordan. Let's look at that together. It says, Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan.

And the Hebrew is pretty emphatic. Lot, his eyes lifted up. You know, it gives you the idea that he immediately started to look for what he wanted.

No prayer, no considering Abraham, no saying, Uncle Abe, no, you've taken care of me, you've raised me. This is your land, it's your God. No, Lot lifts up his eyes, he looks around, and he beholds the plain of Jordan.

And this was important. We don't think it is. It was.

It was well watered everywhere. That's pretty remarkable. And then it puts in a little note before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

It's not well watered everywhere now. And at that point, it was as the garden of the Lord. So there was still record of Eden and how wonderful it had been.

And it was like the land of Egypt as one comest unto so. So Lot looks, he makes a choice, and he chooses the five cities of the plain. The Hebrew is the circle of the plain.

It speaks of the five cities. And that it was well watered. There was irrigation.

Maybe he's thinking, even if there's a famine, this place is remarkable. Did Abraham pass that place by before because he didn't want to get involved, because he knew of the moral condition there? We don't know that. But Lot at this point chooses for himself what he thinks is best, just with a natural mind.

He looks around. He says, I have hundreds of people to care for, maybe a wife, children. At that point, we're not sure of the ages.

He says, I will take this for myself. And again, the contrast we'll see here is between walking by faith, and that's what Abraham did, and walking by sight. And as Christians, you and I, I do it all the time.

So many times we're hurried. Things are going on. We make a decision in the natural, just by what we think is best.

And we find later saying, oh, Lord, did you tell me to do this? And now let me tell you the secret, and it's taken me years to realize it. Don't move until God says to move. Don't move and then say, God, did you

tell me to move? You got that? Don't move until God tells you to move.

Because wherever you go, there'll be warfare. And it's very important when things get difficult, that you can lift up your head and say, well, Lord, you told me to come here. It is a bummer to get somewhere and experience hardship and lift up your head and say, Lord, did you tell me to come here? It's a great consolation to know that he's led.

Lot chooses in the natural Sodom, Gomorrah, Zoar, the cities there. It tells us that he then ends up pitching his tent toward Sodom. He enters into Sodom.

By the time we're done with Lot, he's sitting in the gate of Sodom. Now, again, we don't want to judge him quickly because 2 Peter 2, verse 8 tells us that he was a righteous man. That righteous man, Peter says.

His soul was vexed from day to day. It doesn't say that Lot had not become a believer by this point in time, but I'll tell you this, I believe with all my heart, Lot was riding on the coattails of Abraham. He was a carnal believer.

Abraham was definitely the spiritual force. He followed along with Abraham. Through that, he was blessed.

But you know what it's like to have somebody in your life who even claims to be a believer and in your fellowship with them, they always want to make the fast decisions, the easy decisions. Let's do this or let's do that. And sometimes that's such a drag.

And God wanted to separate Lot from Abraham so he could finally bring Abraham to where he wanted to be. Lot made this choice. The natural man would make.

A righteous man, a saved man, but a wasted life. That's his epitaph. A saved man, but a wasted life.

Because when he chose Sodom without praying, his children watched his eyes. And your children watch your eyes. Abraham didn't lift up his eyes till God told him.

Lot lifted up his eyes and looked for what was worldly the best by the logical mind. And they learned to make choices like their father. He chose Sodom.

Even though when he got there, it was wicked. He kept it there. He stayed there.

He ends up to be a man. When you and I talk about Lot, there's no desire on any of our parts to emulate this man. No matter how much we know about him, we know that he's not a guy that we're going to look up to and emulate.

He ends up to be a man who influences really no one. He has no influence. Ultimately, even in the life of his wife, as they're leaving Sodom, he tells her not to look back.

The angel said not to look back. She looks back and is turned to a pillar of salt. Again, I'm amazed to see he has no influence in his son-in-laws.

They had two daughters. The daughters are married to Sodomites, two men from Sodom. And as the angels came, and as Lot spoke to them that the judgment of God was coming on that place, they mocked him.

He had no influence in their life. As the Sodomites, the homosexuals in Sodom wanted to break down the door and come in, and they wanted the men, they thought there were men that were there. Lot said, don't do this.

They said, who are you? You're a stranger. He had no influence. He thought he was sitting in the gate.

He had no influence in that government at all. And even his own daughters, after the mother was dead and their husbands were dead, they got their father drunk and seduced him and had sexual intercourse with their father. It was what they grew up with in Sodom.

It was perfectly normal. That kind of perversion was their life. He had negotiated away his children.

He had negotiated away his wife. He had negotiated away the most important things in life. Because he made his choices by looking, they watched his eyes, they saw his priorities, and they learned to choose like him.

And he made his choices by looking at the world. And again, when we die, if that's what we've left in the hearts of our children, we haven't left them anything. You can leave them a million bucks and worldly desire, you've left them nothing at all.

You can leave them a hundred bucks with a note that says, I love you with all my heart. I wish that I could leave you a million dollars, but I leave you this, Jesus Christ. I leave you this, that we have an inheritance that's undefiled, reserved, fading not away.

If we leave in the hearts of those behind us a realization of the true and living God, that there is a thing that is far superior to all the wonder that this world and all the riches this world could offer us, if we leave that in their hearts, though we may not be able to leave them much monetarily, though we want to, but we still then, we've left them everything. We've left them everything. And Lot is a sad story as we follow him.

And he ends up, finally, he can't even defend himself. Abram has to come and defend him. And he's a man who ends up living in a cave in the end.

He had chosen the best with a natural mind. He didn't know that judgment was looming over Sodom. God knew that.

And if he'd have sought God, he'd have made a different choice, and he'd have been blessed. And again, here we are in coming to 1997. It's remarkable that we're all here, that we've been alive this long, that Jesus hasn't returned.

And we're in a process of making decisions. Next week as we come to the 14th verse, we'll see God tells Abraham, you lift up now your eyes and you look. All the land that you see, I'm going to give it to you.

Abram was standing at Bethel. It was so rocky. Remember, Jacob had to put his head on a rock.

It was barren. When God said to Abram, I'll make your descendants like the dust of the earth, that's probably what he was standing on. Dust, desert, barrenness.

And yet Abraham has touched all the nations of the world. And it says you and I, if we're Christ's, then we're Abraham's seed. Heirs according to promise.

Abraham's children by faith. Same lineage, same inheritance. It's very interesting as we go on, even as we look at Isaac, and we look at Ishmael, and as we look at Jacob, and we look at Esau, and we look at the decisions all the way through.

There's such incredible insights into decisions that parents and husbands and wives are making. And yet God doesn't hide any of the mistakes. He lays them out for us to see that we might learn, as it says in 1 Corinthians, that we might receive instruction by their example upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

You know, my challenge is, again, we've come to this point, you're making decisions. Look, we live in a world where everybody's choosing by sight. The catalogs are put in front of us, the television commercials.

You can shop now by TV and credit card and phone. You know, everything's constantly barraged in front of us. A moral standard is put in front of us that is in contrast to the Scripture.

Teaching sexuality and homosexuality to small children in schools, and saying that that is right and someone who opposes it is wrong. As Isaiah says, right has become wrong and wrong has become right. And we have to come to a place, you and I, and I'm just going to speak for myself.

1997 is here. My heart is stirred. I'm saying, Lord, what does this year hold? Will the economy fall through? Will the Muslim world attack Israel? Will the prophecies that you've told us about begin to unfold before us this year? Will we see a year where the economy holds up and we see great evangelism with the Harvest Crusade and wonderful things? I don't know that, but my heart is stirred and I feel like this is going to be a peculiar year.

We're going to see some interesting things happen. And for myself, I'm saying, Lord, don't let me go to the right unless you go to the right. Don't let me go to the left unless you go to the left.

And I'm in grace. And that's not a point of being saved. I'm just saying, Lord, I want to be in the flow of what you're doing.

I want to be in the fullness of what you have for my life. I want to be the example I should be for my children, the husband I should be for my wife, the pastor I should be for the flock. Lord, take my life.

Let it be more consecrated to you than it's ever been. Because there will be many opportunities to make a choice simply based on what seems right. And oftentimes when I'm hurried, I'm very inclined, oh yeah, just do that, just do that.

And I'm not, you know, when I was first saved, it was funny. I found that, you know, we'd sit in a living room and, okay, what does the Lord want us to do? Or somebody would say, I think the Lord wants us to watch the 700 Club. I don't know.

Okay, put the 700 Club on. Okay, when we watch, what do you think the Lord wants us to do? Well, it's lunchtime. You think the Lord wants us to have hoagies or steak sandwiches? I don't know.

Let's pray about that, you know. And in the naivety of that, several things took place. Great things happened.

People got saved. I mean, we were just naive enough to actually seek Him for whether we should do a steak sandwich or a hoagie. I mean, after all these years, I know I should eat both, you know.

Early on, you know, I just remember the just early days, seeking Him for everything. Another thing that happened, I think early on, I experienced great personal fellowship with Him because my heart was so attached, you know. It was just, you get saved and you're freaked out and, you know, I came out of LSD anyway, but I mean, you know, this was more far out than anything.

The Living God was talking to me and leading me and speaking in my heart and making His Word alive to me. You know, I think how, you know, it's interesting, some time as the years go by, you seem to mature and you seem to be more dependent upon what you know and your study of the Scripture and your systematic theology and your, you understand grace and all this, you know. And yet in my own heart, I'm hungry and, Lord, bring me back to Bethel.

Bring me back to the first place I built the altar. Lord, bring me full circle back to that place where at the very beginning, all I knew was You. As Paul says, I don't want to be known for anything but Christ.

I'm crucified. Lord, bring me back to that place where I'm so dependent on You every day. Lord, that I should ask whether to go to the steak place or to go to the hoagie place.

Or maybe Chinese, Lord. And I encourage you. I think that's the year we're facing.

You know, look, if the economy falls through or if a war starts and we're driven from our homes, many Christians around the world are experiencing that. And we don't get to see each other. We know the privilege of gathering.

I hope that everybody in this room has that kind of relationship where they can hear His voice. Lord, should I go here? Lord, I have children. There's no antibiotics.

What should we do? Lord, certain people are gathering in school auditoriums. Other people are gathering. Lord, we're going to need that reality of His presence and His voice in our lives.

So, you know, I think, and I'm not prophesying, believe me. Pastor Joe did not say there's going to be war in America. That's not what my point is.

Who knows what the future holds? We know who holds the future. And we know He wants to talk to us. And we know that He wants to lead us.

That He loves us. That He has the best for us. And that He'll preserve us in our delays.

And that He'll preserve us in our backslidings. And He'll keep us in Egypt. And He'll bring us back.

And then He's faithful. And my heart, personally, is longing for an early experience. You know, coming back to Bethel in my own life.

I am longing for, and I appreciate the growing, and I appreciate the learning, but I'm longing for a stirring. For a time of refreshing. For a time of renewing.

I'm longing for a deeper reality in my own prayer life. I'm yearning for the Word to be alive to me. More alive than it's ever been.

And I think that the age that we live in demands that of us. That we walk circumspectly. Remembering the days are evil.

Buying up every opportunity. Sober. Vigilant.

Expectant. Let's stand. I'm just going to pray that for all of us.

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