

(Genesis) Genesis 15-17

by Joe Focht

Joe Focht's sermon on Genesis 15-17 explores God's covenant with Abram, emphasizing faith, divine promises, and the significance of God's protection and judgment.

Duration: 56:06

Scripture: Genesis 15:1-17, Matthew 9:37-38, Colossians 2:6

Topics: "Genesis"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being active witnesses for Christ. He urges the audience to pray and share the message of salvation with their friends and relatives, as there will come a time when the last Gentile is saved and the opportunity to witness will be gone. The preacher also references the story of Abram and the covenant God made with him, highlighting the 400 years of affliction the Israelites endured in Egypt. He draws parallels between this historical event and the present-day issue of slavery, urging the audience to be aware of and fight against modern-day slavery.

Transcript

Genesis chapter 15 begins by saying, after these things, after Abram had had a great victory with 318 armed servants against these four kings, from Elam, from Persia, and three allies that evidently had a massive army, Abram pursues them and overtakes them at night and routs them. Evidently they think they're being attacked by a great army and they're put to flight and he chases them from Dan to Damascus and he retrieves Lot and the goods and some of the folks of Sodom and Gomorrah and the families and so forth and restores them. Of course, on the way back he's met by Bera, the king of Sodom, and Melchizedek, the king of righteousness from Salem, probably Jerusalem, Jebus.

And one offers him bread and wine, the other, of course, historically says, look, you can keep the spoil, we're just glad to have these folks back again, but in type, I think very interesting saying, take the goods and give me the souls. And Abram saying, you know what, I'm not going to touch a shoelatchet, I've sworn before the Lord, it's His victory, I have nothing to do with it, I shouldn't get any reward, there isn't anything that you can give me because I worship the living God who is the possessor of heaven and earth, all things are His, He's my God, He's the one who has given me the promises, you have nothing that you can give to me. And he turns away from that and asked only that he would give to Mamre and those that had traveled with him that were Amorites that lived in the high mountain country, his neighbors.

After those things, that's where we are now, it says, after these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless and the steward of my house is this Eleazar of Damascus. So, it's after these things it says the word of the Lord and it's the first time in the Bible that we have that phrase, the word of the Lord.

Jesus was the word and the beginning was the word. No doubt the word of the Lord pre-existed, but in God's record that he gives to us the first time we have the phrases here. This is the word of the Lord come to Abram.

And of course, it is the most significant thing in human history that God would speak to man. It is the most remarkable thing that man in his sin and his rebellion and his fallen condition would be pursued by his Creator and that his Creator would have a plan in place not only to be his Creator but his Redeemer. And it is remarkable to see this now interjected into human history, the word of the Lord coming to Abram, God initiating and saying to him, fear not, which tells us Abram then is probably wrestling.

He's probably thinking what will keep these kings from coming back once they realize what's happened. We know they're a great army and if they get news that there are only 300 of us they've come back to carry away Sodom and Gomorrah. Certainly.

And God is saying, no, Abram, fear not. For I am thy shield which is picked up all the way through the Bible now. We'll find the first time the word is used in the Bible, shield.

First time the word reward is used. First time the word of the Lord is used. Very interesting.

A common theme of the Lord is my shield and my buckler. Just all the way through the Bible now this idea of God being our shield. And what a great idea it is.

It's picked up and carried through. And thy exceeding great reward. In other words, you've turned down what Bera, king of Sodom, would have given you of earthly treasure.

And then whenever we renounce or set aside anything of this earth for God's cause, we're never going to... God will never be a debtor to us. He will never owe us. We're never going to out give Him.

If you sacrifice anything for His cause or to follow Him, it isn't like you get to heaven and God's going to say, you know, I really owe you. It's not going to happen. God says, Abram, you've given up earthly treasure, but I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.

Abram says to Him, very interesting, Abram said, Lord, that's Adonai, Lord God. It makes me wonder when it says that the word of the Lord came to Abram if it wasn't the word that had become flesh. If it came in a vision, the word of the Lord, was it the person of the word of the Lord that came to him in a vision? And no doubt Abram's eyes are open.

Many times in the charismatic church we hear that kind of jargon, you know, God's really given me a vision for this, really given me a vision for that. And we understand what they're saying. But in the Bible, when you had a vision, you had a vision.

It wasn't you really had a vision for something. You had a vision. Remember Peter, when he's in prison, the angel of the Lord there comes to him and he thinks he's dreaming.

He's saying, oh, this is a great dream. The angel's setting me free. Now the angel's taking me by the hand.

The chains are falling off the prison. Oh, this is a great dream. And the angel has to hit him and say, come on, get up.

The angel says, Peter, get with it. And he leads him out in the street and Peter's saying, oh, I hope this dream goes on all night. All of a sudden the angel disappears and Peter's standing in the middle of the street looking around and realizes that wasn't a vision, it wasn't a dream, it was reality.

And in the Bible, when we see men and women of God who come into that experience, a genuine experience where there's a vision, it seems to be with our eyes open, where they're cognizant, they're awake, they're alert. It isn't the charismatic jargon that we love to attach to the idea, I really have a vision for this or that. It's a genuine spiritual experience.

Not that I think we should seek them. We should seek the giver, not the gift. But now this word of the Lord, the word of the Lord, comes to him in a vision saying that I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward.

And Abram says to him, God, what will thou give me? He was already wealthy. He said, what are you going to give me, Lord? I'm childless. And right now the heir to my estate is this Eleazar of Damascus.

Lord, you're my shield, my exceeding great reward. I have no lineage. I have no child.

I have no heir for the wealth that I already have, let alone the fact that you're going to be my exceeding great reward. What will I do? And in that tradition, by the way, you know, slavery in America was a cruel thing and slavery in much of the world today. As we have the photographs, if you'll take note, maybe on the way out tonight by the bookstore, of some of the people that are being sold into slavery in the Sudan now as we were part of supporting a team that was over there.

And there's actually a picture of the slave trader paying \$1,000 for 15 kids. You see the money in his hand giving it to the slave trader. The photos are out in the hall.

Well, in this culture, a servant or a slave in the family was part of the household. And if the master had no children, it was his most faithful servant or his most faithful slave who was treated like a son and he became heir and the inheritor of all that the master of the house had. And he's saying to God, Lord, what am I going to do with the exceeding great reward? Now, this man Eliezer is my steward.

He right now is the closest thing to a son that I have. Now, this is where God wants to take him, by the way. It's exactly where God wants to take his mind.

He's setting him up. God will do that to you if you don't look out. I have no heir.

Verse 3, Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed. Now, that's where God's taking him. And lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

Eliezer, a servant born in my house. And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him saying, This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad and said, Look now toward heaven, to Abram, and tell the stars, or count the stars, if thou be able to number them.

And he said unto him, So shall thy seed, which is singular, Paul tells us in the New Testament, not of seeds, plural, but of one. So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Now, it's interesting because God certainly is ministering to him that a multitude will come for him. He's using the word seed, singular. When he talked to Abraham about the inheritance in the land, he said, Count the dust of the ground.

If you can count that, then you'll be able to count your offspring that will be in the land. Now, when he's dealing with the seed, singular, and he's dealing with, no doubt, those that will be born of faith and thereby being Abraham's seed, as it tells us in Galatians 3, now he has them looking to heaven. He says, Look to heaven.

Look at the stars. Can you count them? They say there's over a hundred million visible on a clear night. I've never counted them.

The pollution here narrows that down. But if you get somewhere where you can see, if you count them sometime, let me know if I'm right. I'd be curious.

A hundred million. So shall thy seed be. And then it says, Abraham believed and it was accounted him righteous.

Now, did he believe before? I mean, he left Ur of the Chaldees. Packed up his family. He left the land of his birth.

He moved on. No doubt he believed in God. He believed he was being led of God.

He believed that God was real. He believed that God was giving him the land. We've already been through that.

Now there's a peculiar thing that happens that God begins to minister to his heart about thy seed. And Abram now is beginning to see Christ in all of this. And now when it says, Abraham believed in the Lord, now it's accounted to him for righteousness.

And it says in Galatians that any of us who believe that have received Christ are Abraham's seed by faith. Same thing that's happening here. So, yes, God is promising him that his offspring, that nations will come from him.

God is ministering those things to him. But there's something now that transpires between Abraham and God. We're not there to see it.

We're here reading it thousands of years later that causes Abraham's heart to believe in a way in regards to redemption that now God accounts that to him as righteousness by faith. Interesting. And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it.

And he said, Lord God, how shall I know that I shall inherit it? Now, for me personally, if the Lord appeared to me and told me he was going to give me something, I'd believe him. Abraham says, How shall I know that I shall inherit it? And I believe God leading him there too. And he said unto him, Take me a heifer, three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.

And he took unto him all these and divided them in the midst. He cut them all in half down the middle and laid each piece one against another, but the birds he divided not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

Now, Abram divides these animals, not the birds, but the calves and the she-goats and so forth, cuts them in half, lays them out on a rock, and then is waiting for God to speak to him, for God to move. We have a great insight into what's taking place here in Jeremiah 34. You don't have to turn there.

I'll read it to you. Jeremiah 34, verse 18, and you should probably have that reference if you have a Bible with references. It says this, And I will give to the men that have transgressed My covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof.

So clearly we're told that what's taking place here, it was a way of making a covenant to cut these animals in half, to spread them out, and then pass between the parts with another individual. You would shake hands or whatever you would do. You'd shake on it, and then you'd go between these parts together.

And the idea is, I guess, the two halves made one thing. You passing between the parts, you're making a covenant. Well, the interesting thing is here, Abram never passes between the parts.

God tells him to lay them out. God will pass through these parts alone because it is God establishing the covenant. He says to Abram to do this.

Abram lays them out. He's waiting for God all day now. He's beating off the vultures and so forth.

It says, When the sun, verse 12, was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, after chasing vultures all day, I guess so, and lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. Now, evidently this is reflecting the 400 years of Egyptian bondage. This horror of great darkness, it seems, as we go into this.

Verse 13 says, And he said, God said to Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in the land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them for 400 years. Now, if you're a buff on these numbers and so forth, you know that in Exodus 12, I believe, it says there that they would be afflicted. They were in Egypt for 430 years.

Here it says they'll be afflicted 400 years. Well, the difference is they were afflicted 400 years. They were in Egypt for 430 years.

The first part of those years was under Joseph and they had favor. It was after that that a pharaoh arose that knew not Joseph so evidently out of the 430-year period that they were in Egypt 400 of those years. They were afflicted.

They will afflict them for 400 years, and also that nation whom they shall serve, Egypt, will I judge, and afterwards shall they come out with great substance. You saw the Ten Commandments and Charlton Heston and those guys coming out with all those carts and donkeys and everything. They shall come out with great substance.

And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace. Thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they shall come hither again, back to Canaan is the idea, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Now, it's a very interesting verse for several reasons. First of all, God says in the fourth generation. Then He says 400 years, the fourth generation, at least at this point in the Bible, a generation is 100 years.

You know, because everybody likes to take that verse in Matthew 24 and kind of wrangle it around. This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. And they come up with a 40-year generation, and they try to add it to 1948, and they try to back up seven years because we all want to get out of here before the Tribulation, and that's not working, so they move it to 67.

And you go through all this meandering, you know, trying to get this to happen. Look, here a generation is 100 years. I don't want to be around 100 years from 1948, so I don't buy any of that.

I think there is just genos, race, very simply. These Jews will not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Here, a generation is 100 years.

God says they're going to be in Egypt for 400 years afflicted, and then I'll bring them back to the land because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. Now, the Amorites were the major Canaanite tribe that inherited the highlands, but they reflected the other tribes that were also there in the land. And what God is saying is in 400 years, the Amorites will have come to the point where I'll use Israel to wipe them out, every man, woman, and child, to bring judgment, because it will be at that point where there will be no longer any redemptive quality at all to this people.

My grace will be extended to them for 400 years. I will wait for 400 years, and in 400 years, they will get worse, and they will get worse, and they will get worse. Now, there were those still who had opportunity because God is gracious.

Rahab, for instance, turned to the Lord and became part of the lineage of Jesus Christ Himself. There were those in the land, evidently, who heard. Caleb was a Kenite or a Kenizzite.

He was not part of the nation of Israel who became part of Caleb and received part of the inheritance in the land. But the interesting thing is to see God measuring time morally. And what He's saying is it's not time for my judgment yet.

My grace will be extended 400 more years. And then when their iniquity has come to the full, when it's full bloom and there's no more any redemptive purpose and we continue to allow them to go on, then Israel will be used as God's cleansing force to wipe out the Canaanite, and there will be some strange things going on when we get there. In 400 years, this will be here.

And for now, God says we're waiting. Now, by the way, I think as we look at the world around us, God is waiting for the iniquity of this world to come to its full. God is waiting the same way as we look at the United States, as we look at the injustices around the world.

How much longer will it be before the iniquity of this world comes to its full bloom? And you know, very honestly, I think the way the church is being treated by the press and by our government is a great evidence that we are dividing. Light and darkness are taking their place. There's no longer that middle ground, that gray area.

If you're going to take a stand for righteousness, for morality, for the Scripture, for Jesus Christ, you are going to be politically incorrect. You're going to be a troublemaker. You're going to be narrow-minded.

You're going to be a bigot. You're going to be the one who is infringing on the rights of other people. The rest of the world wants to live with its own morals and its own standards and its own gods and its own pleasures.

And it's very interesting to see that divide coming. And the world is getting to the point where they just don't want us around anymore. And I hope God gives them their wish.

And He will. But this world we live in, its iniquity is coming to a full. The laborers are few.

The harvest is great. I think that all of us should pray and be keen. You know, the people that are working around us, our relatives and friends, those that we kind of got fed up with and maybe stopped witnessing to, we need to get back on the case.

And we need to start witnessing again. And we need to start sharing Christ with our friends and relatives because at some point the last Gentile is going to get saved and we're going to be out of here. And you may be holding up the whole show.

So witness to your mom, would you please? Or whoever it is. Maybe the one we're waiting for. And the fourth generation, shall they come hither again for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

And it came to pass that when the sun went down and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. And in the same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying unto thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates. Notice, God passes between the pieces alone.

He is making the covenant. He will uphold the covenant. Abram doesn't pass through with him.

God passes through in the person of this smoking furnace, this flame, this torch as it were. You know, it says that our God is a consuming fire in Hebrews 13 or the end of Hebrews 12, I believe. So now God passing through alone, establishing the covenant.

He doesn't need anybody else to pass through the parts with him. And he says to Abram in the perfect tense, as though it's already done, in the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying unto thy seed have I given, not will I give, have I given this land from the river of Egypt even to the river Euphrates, the Canaanites and the Canaanites and the Kadmonites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Rephians and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Girgashites and the Jebusites. They're all his.

Now, Sarai, Abram's wife, bear him no children. Now we're going to see at this point, by the way, Sarai is 75 and Abram is 85. He came into the land when he was 75, so he's been there 10 years.

Several times he's come to Sarai now and said, guess what? God appeared to me again and told me that our seed is going to be like the dust. Our seed is going to be like the stars of heaven. And by now 10 years have gone by and Sarai has gone, Abram, stay out of the heat of the day.

She's struggling with listening to this experience. He's having it with God, no doubt. She had borne him no children.

She's 75 years old. She had a handmaid, an Egyptian, who no doubt came to be part of their family as they were down in Egypt, as Abram had taken the wrong course there. Her name was Hagar.

And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing. I pray thee, go in unto my maid, and it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarai.

Now, by the way, in the Codes of Hammurabi and some of the Seneiform Tablets and so forth, this was a tradition in the day. If the wife was barren, quite often the handmaid or a concubine was given to the husband to produce children and the wife would actually raise up the child on her knees, as it were. This is before the law was given.

Obviously, it is the will of God for one man and one woman to forsake mother and father and cleave to one another. Here at this time, Sarai says to Abram, Take Hagar, my handmaid. Now, it says, Abram hearkened unto the voice of his wife.

Sometimes that's good. Sometimes that's bad. In chapter 21 or 22, God will say to Abram, Hearken unto the voice of thy wife, Sarai.

So there are times, and you know, wisdom is always in the feminine gender. You guys, don't you hate that about your wives? They're so much smarter than you are, aren't they? And they're just more sensitive. And there are definitely times to hearken.

But there are times not to hearken. That's the problem, isn't it? We won't stay here long. I'll be in trouble.

I can see that already. I'm just saying what the Scripture said. Abram got in trouble.

The whole Middle East problem today is because he listened to Sarai. You'll see. It's in the chapter.

I'm not making it up. I'm not making it up. Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar, her handmaid, the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband, Abram, to be his wife. Now, Sarai has become God's little helper. And Abram is cooperating.

Now, have you ever heard that God needs our help? Personally, my Bible says that I am the Lord that helpeth thee, that He helpeth our infirmities. I appreciate serving a God who I need to help me. If God needed me to help Him, I wouldn't serve Him.

I'd be looking for a real God somewhere. But you see these guys on TV telling you how poorly God has handled His finances, and He needs your help to bail them out. He's had a poor fiscal advisor, and He squandered some of His budget for this year, and if you don't help things, the kingdom will be going... You hear these guys.

Isn't that stupid? I can't help but remember when Oral Roberts was asking for... How much did he want? Three million? Or God's going to kill me? Is that what it was? And I thought, well, let's see what happens here. He said, if I don't get three million dollars, God is going to kill me. That's what God told him.

Remember that? And some dog track owner bailed him out. Some heathen thought, poor guy, you know, got himself into this one. Anyway, I remember somebody gave me this video clip of Saturday Night Live, and Charlton Heston was on.

And they had this guy sitting in his office portraying Oral Roberts. And he's kind of sitting there worrying, and all of a sudden, you see this light and smoke coming under the door. You see the light and the door

goes... Here's Charlton Heston in white, white hair, light shining.

He's God. And he kind of floats into the room and Oral Roberts is sitting there like this. And Charlton Heston says, got the money? And I'm glad the unbelieving world can see the foolishness of that.

It's remarkable that the church doesn't sometimes. We got stupider after we got saved. I think, hey, when I was in the world digging LSD, I wouldn't have listened to these guys.

And now we're in the church and we're thinking, gee, should we or shouldn't we? Oh, come on. Let's wake up. God doesn't need our help.

He's our helper. But Sarah decides, I'm tired of hearing of the stars. I'm tired of hearing about the dust.

I'm tired of hearing about the seed. We've been here 10 years. We left over the Chaldees.

We had a nice duplex there. Everything was going fine. Here we are.

Take Hagar. Let's see if we can get this program on the road. And he went in unto Hagar and she conceived.

Now, he's 85 years old. Anthony Quinn, you know, just 83. He just had one.

So it's not far-fetched. We will get far-fetched as we go on, but this isn't. He went into Hagar.

She conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived her mistress, which was Sarai, was despised in her eyes, or lightly esteemed. You know, Hagar must be thinking, well, obviously, Sarai, the problem is with you and not with Abraham because, you know, I'm with Abraham here.

We've got a kid already. You must be the one who's infertile, or whatever. And in that society, it was considered a curse not to be able to bear, to be barren.

So, now, evidently, Hagar cops an attitude and Sarai cops one right back again. Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee. You know, this is a husband and wife thing, you know.

She said to Abram, Take my handmaid. And he said, Oh, all right. He took the handmaid.

She gets pregnant. And now Sarai's coming back saying, You know, this mistake is yours. You know.

He's probably going, My wrong be upon thee, she says to Abram. I have given my handmaid into thy bosom. And when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes, and the Lord judged between me and thee.

You know, Abram, you're going to, you know, the Lord's going to decide between me and you. You got her pregnant. Now she's your second wife.

And Abram's going, Wait a minute. Abram says to Sarai, Hey, look. Behold, thy handmaid.

She's in your hand. Do as it pleaseth thee. Do whatever you want to do.

And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she afflicted her. We're not sure in what way. She fled from her face.

And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way of Shur, going down to Egypt. Now, this is the first time in the Bible we have the phrase the angel of the Lord. Many times this is a theophany.

It's a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. And how beautiful the first appearance we have is to this Egyptian handmaid who was wrongly brought into this entire situation. God is gracious to her.

And I want you to take note of it too, because there is the ridiculous teaching about the curse on Ham. This is Mitzrayim, this woman. Genesis 10.6 She is an Egyptian, and she is under the blessing of God.

It is strictly Canaan, not Ham, one little facet of Ham's family that is cursed and becomes a perennial enemy of Israel. Here is a woman of Ham, of Mitzrayim, of Egypt. The angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? He knows exactly who she is. And whither wilt thou go? How did you get here and where are you going? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress and submit thyself under her hands.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly that it shall not be numbered from multitude. Certainly, many of the Arab nations in the world today. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael.

Which means that God hears or the Lord hears. Because the Lord hath heard thy affliction, and he will be a wild man. Interesting word study there.

His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him. He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And certainly, the Middle East crisis today, it's interesting to study the scripture and sort out Elam, which are not considered Arabs.

Those are Persians, which are Shemites, and not Hamites. From Mitzrayim, from Egypt. From Muslims, which can be from all of those different backgrounds, and we would just call them generically Arabs, which is wrong.

And in Israel, you have Palestinians. Anybody born in Israel before 1948 on their birth certificate said they were Palestinians. Every Jew in Israel born before 1948 was a Palestinian.

You have Palestinians that are natives of Israel, not Jews today. Some are Christians. Some are Druze.

Some are Bedouin. Many Muslims. And it's very interesting to trace out some of these families here.

I think we do an injustice by just kind of putting them together. But certainly, there is that condition in the Middle East. Many of them are still very tribal.

Interesting today, the Bedouins in Israel, when you travel, you'll see a Bedouin tent with an antenna sticking out the top of it. They've got a Honda generator and a TV inside, and an antenna sticking out the top of the tent. And still today, they have a code.

They can leave their tent for a month, and no one will touch it. Because if you touch that tent, and they find out who you are, they will mince you without a blender. They'll load up the sheep and come to the sheep market.

They get to the sheep market in a Mercedes, open their trunk, and the sheep are in there, because it's hot, and they drag them out. You know, open the back door. I mean, it's a very interesting culture still.

You know, there is an interesting mixture of ancient, ancient times, and customs, and the present mingled together. And great hostility, not just between Jew and Muslim, but between different Arab factions, between Shiites and Sunni Muslims. It's very interesting to see how this was fulfilled in such an incredible way.

And the wildness, as it were, of Solomon, which I think reflects a stubbornness or an independence, really. And she called the name of the Lord that spake under her, Thou, God, seest me. For she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? Wherefore, the well was called Bir Lahayroy.

Behold, it is between Kadish and Birid. Bir Lahayroy means the God who liveth and seeth me. First time a well is mentioned in the Bible.

Very significant. It needs to be a well that we all draw from. The well of the God who liveth and seeth me.

The God who hears me. The God who knows when I'm in despair. The God who knows when I'm in the desert.

The God who knows when I thirst. And we get in those circumstances where we feel like He's forgotten about us. He doesn't care about us.

He doesn't see us. He doesn't hear us. And all of a sudden, we're overwhelmed with His presence once again.

And we drink in that place. It's the well of Bir Lahayroy. It's the well of the God that liveth and seeth me.

And He is there, living, seeing, and hearing all of us. Just a beautiful thing that this is the first well mentioned in the Bible. And, of course, we have the conversion here of Hagar.

She's no longer a polytheist, I'm sure, after this. And Hagar bare Abram a son. Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare Ishmael.

Now, we're not given all the details. Obviously, Hagar goes back to the camp and submits herself to Sarai and tells Abram, I encountered your God, Abram. I encountered Him and He cared for me and He ministered to me and He loved me.

And He renewed me and He strengthened me and He quenched my thirst. And He told me that I'm going to have a son and that his name should be Ishmael. And obviously, Abram Harkins understands her sincerity.

I don't know if he said, don't tell Sarai, please. We don't know. But the boy is named Ishmael.

And Abram was four score and six years old. He's 86 years old when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. So that's a year after the verse 1 here in the chapter.

And when Abram was 90 years old and 9, the Lord appeared to Abram. So now in going from the last verse of chapter 16 to the first verse of chapter 17, 13 years go by. It didn't seem like that, did it? Here we are 13 years later.

Abram is 99 years old. This is 24 years after he had come into the land of Canaan. He was 75 when he came in.

Here he is, 99 years old, 24 years later. During this 24 year period, he has been sojourning. He has kept to his tent in his altar.

Through the years, he has a number of experiences with God where God is telling him, Abram, I'm going to bless you. No, your child from your own bowels is going to be your heir. Sarai is going to give birth.

Now Abram is 99 years old. And Sarai is 89. He's going to be 100.

Sarai is 90 years old. And Abram is thinking, I can't tell her one more time. And what God has done is he's waited and waited and waited and he's allowed all of the natural juices to dry up.

She's passed menopause. He's 100 years old and everything that means. God has let all the natural springs dry up because when this child comes, he will be the child of promise and he will be a reflection of another miraculous birth that will take place and of a miraculous coming out of the tomb, of a miraculous resurrection because Sarai's womb comes to life again.

So there are many things reflected in Isaac and it was necessary for God to wait until there was no other way but a supernatural way for this to take place. And I think, again, sometimes we tire of God's waiting. We tire as we pray and we seek him.

I can't imagine 24 years. I'd pray for two months and give up. I remember hearing someone on television, a Russian family being interviewed, and the father said, We have been praying for Billy Graham to come to our town for 18 years.

And Billy Graham was finally there. Imagine praying for one thing every day for 18 years. That's pretty remarkable.

Well, Abram now has been praying for this for 24 years. We don't have any record what happens between the last verse of chapter 16 and the first verse of chapter 17. Did God appear to Abram at all in those 13 years? Had he heard from God? Was there silence for 13 years? You see, sometimes we think of Abram and Isaac and Elijah and Isaiah, and we think that they have a Vulcan mind meld with God every day.

They hear from Him. Certainly, Elisha was remarkable. Some of the men are remarkable.

But it seems to be that with these great men of God, there were also periods that we would consider dry or desert experiences where they went sometimes maybe for years without hearing from the Lord in a specific way. Here we are 13 years later now. Abram is 99 years old.

And now again, look. Yahweh, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. Yahweh appears to Abram. That has got to be a shocking experience at 99 years old.

It's a wonder his heart didn't stop. Yahweh God appeared to Abram and said unto him, I am the Almighty God. Imagine this.

Imagine God appearing in front of you and the first thing He says to you is, I am the Almighty God. You know, okay. I am the Almighty God.

And look what He says. Walk before Me and be thou perfect. Let's bring this into perspective.

It's be thou sincere or be thou upright. Let me tell you what He's saying because none of us have an excuse. God is saying to Abram, I am the Almighty God.

Walk before Me and stop messing around. You know, if you are a Christian tonight, calling yourself a Christian, living in sin, smoking dope, stealing money, whatever. Are you calling yourself a Christian and trying to live a double life with the same God? The Bible says He's the same yesterday, today and forever.

He says, I am the Lord. I change not. And He would say the same thing to us.

I am the Almighty God. And He is. Walk before Me.

Be sincere. Be upright. Stop messing around.

Walk in My presence. Be genuine. This is not a game.

It cost Me the blood of My Son to walk with you and to talk with you to make you My son, to make you My daughter. And it is very simply that. It isn't perfect in the sense that any of us would think.

Again, it was Oswald Chambers that said, Christian perfection is not a perfection of performance, but it's a perfection of relationship. It's not a perfection of performance because we're imperfect, but it's a perfection of relationship that we quickly go to Him, that we stay prayed up, that when we confess right away, that it's a perfection of relationship knowing that His grace is there, knowing that we will never be perfect in this world, but that doesn't lower the standard. It was always what we'll be shooting for.

We'll always be being conformed in the image of His Son. He appears to Abram at 99 and says, I am Almighty God. Wow.

Walk before Me. Stop messing around. Be sincere.

Be upright. Let's do this together. What a privilege, by the way.

You know, isn't it a privilege for me if I'm home, I'm alone, I have a place. I have this little world, little sewing closet. I have some bookshelves there and a sofa.

That's all that's in there. I used to have a desk in there. Every time I walked in and looked at the desk, I walked back out again.

I'm not a desk person. I put the sofa in there. I'm there all the time now.

It's great. And it is remarkable, all of a sudden, to sense His presence, to be reading the Word and all of a sudden have some of it just come alive off the page. Or to be, you know, sometimes as I do, kind of grumbling and complaining in prayer, talking about all the problems of the world.

And all of a sudden, to sense Him, just cut across all that stuff and speak to my heart. And to think, He's the same yesterday, today and forever. Here is the Almighty God who has paid the price with the blood of His Son so that we can walk before Him.

You know, it's interesting. It says that Enoch, in chapter 5, he walked with God and was not because God took him. God will say to the children of Israel to walk after Him, after His ordinances and so forth.

We're told in Colossians, as you have received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in Him. Here, He says to Abraham, Abraham, I'm God Almighty. Walk before Me.

The idea is, not just in front of, but in My presence. Realize that you live and you breathe and you walk in My presence. You're never out of My sight.

You're never out from under My scrutiny. You know, to me, it was the power of Elijah's ministry because he talked about the living God before whom I stand. That was his place.

When he stood before Ahab who could have taken his life like that, he challenges Ahab in the name of the living God before whom I stand. He wasn't in the presence of Ahab. He was in the presence of Almighty God.

And God's saying that to Abraham. He's saying to us. And we have more light than Abraham did in many ways.

I am God Almighty. Walk before Me. Walk in My presence.

Live in My presence. Be genuine. Don't be a phony.

If you're going to talk the talk, I want you to walk the walk, God says. That's the only way we're going to touch a world that is hopeless. Because this world has seen too many Christians that are talking the talk and then they get caught in adultery or stealing money or one thing or another.

What will change someone's life is when our walk matches our talk. What will affect our children's lives as we raise them up in our homes is not just the instruction, it's the observation of our lives and our genuineness. This is the challenge to Abraham.

It's the challenge to us. I am the Almighty God. Walk before Me and be Thou upright.

Be Thou sincere. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee and will multiply thee exceedingly. Now, Abram's hearing all this again.

He's 99. Here goes the spiel again. Imagine.

And Abram fell on his face and God talked with him. Here's Yahweh. Appears to him.

I'm Almighty God. Walk before Me, Abram. Just be upright.

Let's do this right together. I'm going to make a covenant with you. Between you and Me, I'm going to multiply you exceedingly.

Abram just collapses now. Boom! He falls before the Lord and God talks with him. I don't know if He said, Get up.

Abram's there. He says, As for Me, behold My covenant because He passed through the parts alone. My covenant is with thee.

Thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall Thy name any more be called Abram, which means the blessed father or that idea. Probably an idolatrous name that was given to him by his father, Terah.

Divine father. Speaking of one of their gods. He says, Thou shalt no longer be called Abram, but Thy name shall be Abraham, which means father of a multitude or father of many nations.

For a father of many nations have I made thee past tense. God sees it done. And it will tell us in Romans that this is the God who calls things that are not as though they were because He sees the end from the beginning.

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful. He's 99 years old. He said, You are going to be fruitful.

And I will make nations of thee. And kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee and their generations for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.

And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. And I will be their God. Now this is remarkable.

24 years after he comes in the land, he is still overwhelmed with the presence of Almighty God. Why would a king ever come to someone who is in one of his dungeons and make a covenant of blessing upon that person's life? When we look in the Bible and we hear of grace and mercy, and they go hand in hand in many ways, but there is yet a difference between them that is unsearchable because mercy is not getting what we deserve. When the governor calls the warden and the sentence is set aside and the prisoner is allowed to live, that is mercy.

He is not getting what he should get. And that is having mercy on someone, not getting what we deserve. But grace is when they unstrap that guy in the electric chair, they are ready to pull the switch, they take him out, take him into the prison shower, clean him up, give him a thousand dollar suit, put some gold jewelry on him, walk him to the front office, the governor is there with his car waiting with the adoption papers ready, adopts the prisoner as his own son, takes him back to his mansion and puts everything in his name.

That's grace. See, mercy is not getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we don't deserve.

It goes beyond that. And Abram is overwhelmed with God's grace. Here was an idolater from Ur of the Chaldees, now Yahweh God Almighty is standing in his presence saying, I have made my covenant with thee and thy seed.

It is election as predestination. We can wrestle with it until the cows come home and it is of God. And Abram's overwhelmed with it.

He's on his face. God is blessing. And he may be thinking, I've got to go home and tell Sarai this one more time.

Verse 9, God said unto Abraham, he had to go home and say, Sarai, would you call me Abraham from now on instead of Abram? Because God's making me a father of many nations. She must be thinking, oh, he's 99, he's still going on with this. God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations.

And this is my covenant. This is what he's asking of Abraham now. Which you shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee.

Every man child among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. Now, circumcision was not unheard of.

It was practiced by certain of the Egyptians. It was practiced by certain ancient tribes. Usually, it was a ritual of puberty when a young man was becoming a full-fledged man in the tribe or whatever.

Sometimes that was involved. We just had a woman on the news recently from a tribe in Africa who fled because they circumcised the women there. So, it isn't something that was unheard of.

But God is saying, I will use this sign now and make it a sign or a token of the covenant between you. And the idea is there is a cutting away of the flesh. It is through that vehicle that the seed of the promise will come.

And the Messiah now is directly related to this line. And God makes this covenant. And every Jew that sinned with a Moabite woman was put in a position of her saying, what is this all about? You know, this was now to be a token of all the males in the nation of Israel.

This covenant of circumcision. You shall circumcise, verse 11, the flesh of your foreskin. It shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.

He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man, child in your generations. He that is born in the house or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Now, it's very interesting, God says when the child is eight days old, because on the eighth day is when the child produces vitamin K in their system for the first time. If you would circumcise a baby before that, they would bleed to death. It is on the eighth day that the child is able to take this as a young boy, eight days old circumcision.

Now, of course, today in the OBGYN ward, as soon as the baby is born, they give the baby a shot of vitamin K. And it will take place earlier. God is gracious now. Interesting as he makes this covenant.

Verse 14 says, And the uncircumcised man, child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people. Now, this will explain to us as we come to Exodus. And Moses, after God's instruction, is on the way to Egypt.

And it says that he comes to kill Moses because Moses' own sons were not circumcised. And this covenant was extremely important as a nation of Israel would come out of Egypt and go through the Red Sea for this to be established. So, we're going to see a very sober moment, and it's hard to understand as we read it when we get to Exodus, but know that it relates back here.

God says, Any male of your families that's not circumcised will be cut off. Put out of the family or put to death, the idea is. He hath broken My covenant.

God said to Abraham, Ask for Sarai, thy wife. Thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah. So he's got to go home and change her name.

And I will bless her and give thee a son also of her. Yea, I will bless her. She shall be a mother of nations.

Kings of people shall be of her. Sarai and Sarah both have the idea of princes. So it's fitting because she's going to have kings.

And Abraham's going to come home and says, My name now is Abraham. I'm 99. I'm going to be the father of many nations.

And your name now is changed to Sarah because you're going to be the mother of those nations with me. And Abraham fell on his face and laughed. Look at verse 17.

He thought, I'm going to go home and change her name. My name's changed. He fell down.

No. By the way, as we get to the next chapter, we see Sarah laugh and God takes note of it and there's a little bit of a reproof. Evidently, Abraham in his laugh here is a pure heart.

He laughs, but no doubt is overwhelmed with God's grace. There's a joy attached to this. There is not a cynicism it seems.

Abraham fell on his face and he laughed and said in his heart, Shall a child be born of him that is 100 years old? And shall Sarah, that is 90 years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee. Now, is he doubting? I'm not sure. He loves Ishmael.

Ishmael's 13 years old. His affections are certainly set on him. And God said, Sarah, thy wife, shall bear thee a son indeed and thou shalt call his name Isaac, which is laughter.

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed when they heard about this. You know, for the rest of their life. Laughter! Oh, laughter! Just what a reminder.

You don't laugh when God makes you a promise. Thou shalt call his name Itzhak and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him. I'll just finish this real fast.

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee behold. I have blessed him. I will make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly.

Twelve princes. We'll talk about that. Shall he beget and I will make him a great nation and my covenant I will establish with Isaac which Sarah shall bear unto thee, listen, this set time in the next year.

The waiting is over. At 100, Abraham, you're going to be a father. The waiting is over.

It will be at this set time next year that Isaac will be born. Now he's going to go home and tell Sarah, My name is Abraham. Your name is Sarah.

We're going to be the father and mother of nations and next year at this time our first son is going to be born. His name will be Isaac. And I wonder what she thinks.

And he left off talking with Abram. God left off talking. Look what it says.

And God went up from Abram. This is certainly God's way of saying all of this is serious. A year from now you're going to be a father and God went up from Abram.

That's literally what happened. God disappeared. Went up to heaven out of his presence.

As Elijah went up in the chariot of fire. God went up from him. Abram must have been standing there with his mouth hanging open.

Amazing. And Abram took Ishmael his son and all that were born in his house and all that were bought with his money. Every male among the men of Abram's house probably had to convince him a little.

And circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the same day as God had said it unto him. And Abram was 90 years old. 99 when he was circumcised.

25 says Ishmael, his son was 13 years old when he was circumcised. Verse 26, the same day was Abram circumcised and Ishmael his son and all the men of his house born in the house and bought with the money of the stranger were circumcised with him. So I encourage you to read ahead next week, chapter 18 and 19.

God comes back to visit Abram. Sarah hears now from God, not just from Abraham, that a child be born. We come to the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah.

We'll finish with a song real fast.

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