

# The Call of Abraham

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon explores Abram's call as a pivotal moment of separation from the world, highlighting the importance of faith and obedience in worshiping God and understanding His promises.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:1, Hebrews 11:8

**Topics:** "Faith and Obedience", "Separation from the World"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of Abram's call as a public separation from the world, marking the first instance of God claiming an individual for His purpose. Abram's journey illustrates the necessity of fully surrendering to God's will, as lingering ties to his family delayed his entrance into the promised land of Canaan. The sermon draws parallels between Abram's call and Israel's exodus from Egypt, highlighting God's power and grace in establishing a relationship with His chosen people. Darby encourages believers to recognize their own call out of the world, fostering a deeper communion with God and understanding of their heavenly position. Ultimately, the message underscores that true worship and fulfillment of God's promises come from a life of faith and separation from worldly ties.

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## Transcript

The call of Abram, the father of the faithful, is evidently of special importance in this respect, that it is the first public separation of one called out of this world, and this gives a very particular position to the one so called out. The people of God were always morally, and must necessarily be, a people separate from the world. But Abram was the expression of something different. He was not merely to be a godly man in his family, but a godly man called out of his family. It was God exercising and establishing a title over those He had morally and spiritually called which broke the ties of nature, claiming them and calling them out into public testimony of separation. This distinguished the call of Abram - the public assertion of the claims of God over His people. The call of Israel out of Egypt is somewhat analogous, though it was not said to Israel, "Come out," but to Pharaoh, "Let my people go," because it was the assertion of the right of power over the prince of this world regarding God's own people. Therefore it was said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go," and on his refusing to do this God shows His power in redemption - first by blood, then by leading them out by the Red Sea. Thus it was not in the case of Israel the invitation of the power of grace to those who were its subjects to break the tie, but the assertion of the power of God over the enemy, breaking down every claim of the world. In the case of Abram it was not precisely that, it was an address to Abram himself - the claim of God over the person thus called. It was love working, not a claim of power. It was grace made effectual in its working in the heart of Abram.

For a time, however, the tie of nature was not broken: Abram went out with Terah his father. He did not leave his father's house, he lingered after something; he did not fully surrender himself to the Lord's will at once, and therefore the Lord could not show him the land of Canaan. Abram had left a great deal, but he stopped short of Canaan. It is true he had left his country and his kindred, but he had not left the nearest tie of nature - his father's house - therefore God could not show Canaan to him while he was clinging to Terah, and going but half way with God. Thus he stays in Haran. So it is with us, if there is still cleaving to us a desire after that which naturally belongs to us, there will not be the full entering into those things that God is ready and waiting to show us. All the communications of God to Abram, as to what Canaan was, took place after, or consequent on, his arrival in Canaan. God puts the position he is to be in, in direct contrast with natural ties; He said to Abram, "Get thee out into a land that I will show thee." He knew that natural ties were mixed up with what Abram had to leave, but he was to leave his country and all, having no other warrant for it but God's word. God had called him, and the call implied a claim. It was not merely the question of the public government of the world, Abram is entirely separated from that; he is to be a stranger to his father's house, and a stranger still when brought into Canaan. It was the Lord's love resting on an individual, and associating him with all that he had in His mind, and putting him into the place of all the promises of blessing. We see what he was called out from Joshua 24:2: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." Men were not merely wicked, but God having manifested in the deluge the power of government in the world, Satan got hold of that power in the minds of men, who were thus led to worship devils, to whom they ascribed the power, and not to God.

It was this which formed the occasion of this public testimony for God in separating Abram from all around him; it separated him totally from every tie which was recognized in the world. He was not merely to be righteous and to be a worshipper, all that is true, but he was to be connected in his own person with a glory the world had lost sight of, for it had put the devil in God's place; thus it says in Acts 7:2, "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." God calls Abram out from the world to a glory set before him. Glory is revealed, and one called out by the knowledge of it. We have thus in principle the public call of God of the heirs of glory out of the world; the world is not set right, but left just as it was, and we find now a special link of connection set up between God and Abram. God reveals Himself to him, and says, "Come out unto a land that I will shew thee." The life of Abram depended on a present communication from God, an immediate present connection between himself and God, which was to be kept up by the Lord making good all He has promised. So the Lord reveals Himself to our souls, and gives His word as a sure ground of our conduct; and, blessed be God, we can count upon His infallible faithfulness, and live by faith in daily, constant, unceasing dependence on Him, to lead on to the possession of the desires of our hearts. But we find also that the Lord's promises involved the acting of Abram likewise, for while he does not leave Terah, God cannot bring him into Canaan. He could not enjoy Terah and Canaan together. God took care of that; if the father's house be not left, Canaan cannot be shown. The blessing to faith is only found in the path of faith. God's call gives the warrant for acting, and so far as Abram acts in dependence on God, the promises are made good to him.

In all that is spoken of Canaan, it is not rest that is before us. Look at the book of Joshua; there it is conflict. Does Abram get rest? He had not so much as to set his foot upon, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob - a heavenly position, but with conflict, he gets as soon as he had left Terah, and come into the land of Canaan; for the Canaanites are still there. The thing that God calls us to we do not get now, and that which marks the completion of Christ's work is that He sat down. We sit down in heavenly places in Christ; but do we get rest? No; we have to fight with wicked spirits in heavenly places. The saint is called into a

place of rest, but as yet gets nothing. Thus we see that the worship of devils was not set aside, but that Abram was called out and brought into the promised land; but not to rest, because the Canaanites were there.

"And the Lord appeared unto Abram." (v. 7) He now appears to him in the land. It is not the call which sets us in the place of worship; but as soon as we enter the land, then we can worship, because our relationship with God is known and settled and enjoyed. Before it is the walk of faith; but that is not worship. So we, as seated in the heavenly places, can worship, knowing our relationship as sons. "And there built he an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord." In Heb. 11:8-10 we get three things as regards the power of faith in Abram. 1st (verse 8), "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." He went in simple present dependence, leaning on the promise of God. There was the life of faith. 2nd, when in the land (verse 9), "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." The Lord's appearing to him was the foundation of his worship, the Lord known in the land; and there he built his altar. The Lord further explains His purposes and intentions to him, and how they were to be accomplished. Thus he got prophetic knowledge. But it was not this which sustained Abram's soul. He could say, "I know now how it is all to be accomplished. It is in my seed, and not in myself. I am a stranger here." How then was his soul sustained while he was a stranger? 3rd (verse 10), "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Thus Abram's soul was not merely brought to worship, but he was sustained by a closer communion with that God who had chosen him, in faith that He would build the city Himself.

I have been struck that, in Rev. 4 where, speaking of the throne of God's government, there are peoples, and angels, and assemblies, and living creatures, &c., a whole population there; but when I come to the heavenly city (Rev. 21), there is a high wall, and streets, and gates of pearl; but where are the people? No one there, because the people are lost in the idea of the glory of God and the Lamb, and nothing else is thought of (though we know it is the Lamb's bride), for God and the Lamb are there. It was looking for this city which made Abram a pilgrim and a stranger. The world could not understand him, and might have said, "Now Abram is in the land, what has he got?" Nothing; for he could not explain to them how it was, but he had seen by faith that city of which God was the builder. We see then Abram is called, and having by faith entered into the conditions of the calling, he gets into the land, and when there he has a present revelation of the Lord, which is the ground of his worship; but it is not rest, the Canaanite being there.

If God has called me out, I must leave the world just as it is, and not think of setting that right. God has called me out of the world into connection with Himself, and I cannot connect any natural tie with such an association. You cannot hold relationship with Christ and the world at the same time. The worship of God is founded on the knowledge of the heavenly position we are in, being called out of the world into fellowship with Himself. We have not a single thing in common with the world. We can sit and sing of redemption, just as if we were now in heaven. My relationships with God will not be in the least changed when I get home; they will be just the same then as they are now; and there is no ground upon which we shall be there that we are not upon now. He has set us in Christ, and we can say, as in Deut. 26:3, "I profess this day unto the Lord thy God that I am come unto the country;" not shall come. We are there, and have the understanding of how God will accomplish His promises - "in thy seed." Not the earthly rest in the fulfilment of promise to man, but heavenly rest where He dwells, where the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof - that is where He has brought us.

God says to Abram, "I will shew thee," "I will bless thee." Thus it is now a particular relationship on a new ground with persons He has called, and has its existence in separation from the world. It is well for our souls to have the relationship into which we are called distinctly before our minds, that we may know how to worship and be sustained by the strength which it supplies. And if the foundations of the earth are out of course, I am not of it. Having the sentence of death in myself, I shall not fear death; but we shall have the comfort and joy of the place we belong to. The sweetness of a calm is better known when the storm is raging without. May the Lord give us the true revelation of Himself.

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