

Practically Living the Heavenly Vision

by Lance Lambert

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living, working faith and understanding the heavenly vision to please God and grow in the Lord.

Duration: 1:30:25

Scripture: Genesis 15:1, Genesis 15:4-6, Acts 7:2, Romans 4:20-21, Hebrews 11:8

Topics: "Heavenly Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a living, working faith in order to please God. He highlights the need for believers to rely on God and seek His guidance rather than relying on their own common sense. The speaker uses the example of Abraham and Sarah, who trusted in God's leading and used their common sense to follow His instructions. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of holding onto the vision that God has given and not stifling it, using the example of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son as an act of faith.

Transcript

If you will turn with me to some scriptures, first of all, we'll begin again with Acts chapter 7 from verse 2. And Stephen said, Brethren, fathers, hearken! The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charan, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charan. And from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell.

And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on. And he promised that he would give it to him in possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And again, the scripture we have read each evening in Hebrews chapter 11, and verse 8, By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance.

And he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a servant in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

In the Roman letter of the apostle Paul, and chapter 4, the Roman letter of the apostle Paul, chapter 4, from verse 18, Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many

nations, according to that which had been spoken, so shall thy seed be. And without being weakened in faith, he considered his own body now as good as dead, he being about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. Yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

And then in Genesis, in the book of Genesis, and chapter 15, the book of Genesis, chapter 15, from verse 1, 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, O Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless? And he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And Abraham said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This man 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 and number the stars. If thou be able to number them, he said, And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

And he believed in God and the Lord, and he reckoned it to him for righteousness. And he said unto him, I am the Lord that bought the outer ward of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, O Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, Take me a heifer three years old, and a she-goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.

And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other. But the birds divided he not. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge.

And afterward shall they come out with great substance. But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace. Thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

And in the fourth generation they shall 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 flaming torch that passed between these pieces. In that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land.

And then once more in the same book, the twenty second chapter of Genesis. Twenty second chapter, and I will read from verse one. And it came to pass after these things that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, Here am I. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.

And then in verse nine, And they came to the place which God had told him of. And Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his hand.

And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him. For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked.

And behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place, Adonai Yehovah.

As it is said to this day in the mount of the Lord, it shall be provided. Shall we just have a word of prayer? Beloved Lord, we've so enjoyed the children singing. It encourages us so much to see those young ones and the word of God getting into them.

We pray for them, Lord, that in the days that you will give them, you will save them and bring them to be men and women of God, whatever the condition of the world in which they will live. And Lord, we want to thank you that we're here gathered in your presence. We want to thank you for the provision you make always for the gatherings of your people.

And Lord, we need you. We've come to this last session of ministry this evening. We thank you for the way you've spoken to us through these days, the enabling power that you have given, the anointing that has been upon all of us.

We want to thank you and give you all the worship of our hearts. But Lord, now we want to ask you, Lord, will you be the anointing grace and power this evening, both of the speaking of your word and the translating of it and the hearing of it? We need, Lord, to meet with you. We've heard a lot about the heavenly vision, but Lord, we need the eyes of our hearts opened.

We need in some way that you make all this ministry a reality in our life together and our life as individuals, in our family life and in our business life. Lord, we commit ourselves to you. By faith, we stand into that anointing.

Let it be manifest, Lord, in every way during the course of this time. We ask it in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. My responsibility in this theme of this conference, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, has been the life of Abraham.

And I think it is summed up in the words of Stephen shortly before he was martyred. The God of glory appeared to our father, Abraham. Abraham saw the whole panorama of redemption.

Would to God, most Christian believers had the same understanding. He saw that whole panorama beginning at that point at which he stood all the way through to the end, when that heavenly Jerusalem, the wife of the Lamb, comes down out of heaven, having the glory of God. He saw it first in the way that a family was born to him when he was childless.

He saw it in one sense, by faith, in the 12 patriots that would become the fathers of Israel, born to Jacob, his grandson. He saw it by faith in a nation that would be created, born in unbelievable suffering and slavery in Egypt. He saw it in the coming of the Messiah through that nation.

He saw it in the gospel, going out not only to the Jew, to the Jew first, but then to the Gentile. Going out to the nations by which men and women of every tribe and kindred and tongue and race would be born of the

Spirit of God and would become part of the family of God, part of the household of faith, part of the body of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. He saw the church.

He saw the church as something so precious to God, so unbelievably precious. He saw it, finally, in that city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God. We find it all contained, you know, I think Abraham was the beginning of this vision in one sense.

Of course, the Lord did something with Enoch and with Noah and with others, but with Abraham, it was the beginning of the corporate, the beginning of a people. And Abraham, I don't know how much he saw in fine definition, in precision. That, I think, we have to leave to the Apostle Paul.

But the extraordinary thing is that Abraham did not know the indwelling of the Spirit of God. That was to come with the finished work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary and the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost. Paul knew the indwelling of the risen, glorified Christ by the Holy Spirit.

And you have with the Apostle Paul a definition about the body of Christ, about the church of God, about the Gentiles being fellow heirs, fellow partakers, partners, as it were, in the family of God. Paul saw it so clearly, unbelievably clearly. Abraham, until we meet him and can ask him, I'm not sure how clear he was in definition, but he saw it.

What is amazing to me is that there are thousands and thousands of born again believers who haven't got a single idea as to this heavenly vision. All they know is we need to be converted and we need to read our Bibles and say our prayers and meet reasonably regularly in church meetings. We have a routine.

Abraham would be a stranger to that kind of mentality. He saw something and what he saw so gripped him that he could never be the same again. It changed his whole life.

It changed the direction of his life from living an empty life, a life that God would describe as vanity. He led a life of unbelievable fulfillment. Abraham became the father of all who believe, both Jew and Gentile.

I just think that it, well I won't say any more on this, but your birthright is to know the mysteries of God. You ought to understand something of the mystery of the indwelling of the Lord Jesus. You ought to understand something of the mystery of the church which is his body.

You ought to understand the mystery of Israel. These things belong to you. They are your birthright.

They are not something fathomless, something unsearchable. They are your birthright. If Abraham understood these things in the old covenant, how much more should you in the new covenant understand these things? I say it is tremendous.

When I read Romans chapter 9 and from verse 3, I hear this wonderful, this matter echoed in the words of the Apostle Paul. For I could wish that I myself were anathema, cursed from the Messiah, for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh who are Israelis, whose is the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises, whose are the fathers, the patriarchs, and of whom is the Messiah as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. What a catalogue.

Will you notice that he doesn't say whose was, but whose is. And then look at these wonderful words in verses 25 and 26 of chapter 9 of Romans. As God said, also in Hosea, I will call that my people who,

which were not my people and her beloved that was not beloved.

And it shall be that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there shall they be called sons of the living God. I find this simply tremendous. Abraham saw it when the God of glory appeared to him, whether he saw it all at once, I'm pretty sure he didn't.

The Lord would have revealed it stage by stage, step by step, but he saw it. And of course it's contained in Revelation 21. I read it to you in Revelation 21 and from verse 9. I will read the last part of verse 9. Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a mountain great and high and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like unto a stone, most precious as it were a Jasper stone, clear as crystal, having a wall great and high, having 12 gates and at the gates, 12 angels and names written thereon, which are the names of the 12 tribes of the children of Israel. On the east were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

And the wall of the city had 12 foundations and on them 12 names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. Do you know, I find this, I mean, this was the city that Abraham sought for. You have the 12 patriarchs and you have the 12 apostles.

It is a wonderful thing. Within this city there is no middle wall of partition. There is no Jew against Gentile and Gentile against Jew, but one new man.

This heavenly vision, this thing that knocked Paul out, spiritually traumatized him. Dear Abraham also saw it from afar. He saw the whole counsel of God.

I get so tired when I travel. Of course, I'm getting older so I get tired anyway, but I get so tired of these pernickety, narrow-minded, mean-hearted believers. I'm told in some places, we would like you to come and speak, don't mention Israel.

Other places I'm asked to go and speak and they say, don't please talk about the Holy Spirit. Other places they say to me, please don't speak about being crucified with Christ. And so it goes on.

Veiled faces. Not the whole counsel of God. Veiled.

They see only in part. They refuse to see the whole counsel of God, but it seems to me that Abraham called the Father of all who believe, the Father of faith, of the faithful. He saw something of the whole counsel of God.

He saw the whole panorama, as I put it, of redemption from his day to the end. Now, that's enough of introduction. How can I, how can we be involved practically in this heavenly vision? It seems to me there are five things that I want to talk about this evening.

I may not get there, but I will see how we go. And when I see you all asleep, I will stop. The first thing is obvious.

A living, working faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. May I say it again? Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

You can have knowledge, knowledge galore. You can recite scriptures. You can take the Lord's table.

You may have been baptized, but if you do not have a living, working faith, it is impossible to please God. A living faith, as opposed to academic faith. A living faith is essential if you are to grow in the Lord.

It is essential if you are to have an understanding of the Lord. It is essential if you are to experience the Lord. It is essential in the service of God.

It is essential in church life. Living, working faith. It is the gift of God.

It is not something that is natural to us. It is something that God gifts to us, and it comes through vision. When you see the Lord, spontaneously, faith springs into action.

It has always been the same. Abraham was a testimony to such faith. He had a living, working faith.

It was the kind of faith that joined him to the vision. He saw the God of glory, that living faith made him a follower of the Lord. He walked with the Lord.

He became the friend of God. It was a living faith that joined him to the vision. It was not academic, head faith, but a faith that worked.

A faith that was relevant, practical. It had expression. For instance, the Lord said to him that he was going to give him a land, and yet he never possessed that land.

As I said in the previous evening, he even had to buy a field in it for a burial plot. That was the only bit, small, tiny, postage stamp of the promised land that he actually owned when he died. And yet, he had such a living faith that he believed God.

God said to him, in your seed, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And it is amazing to me when you read that passage in Romans 4, how he hoped against hope. And did you notice those amazing words? Some people, when they believe that, when they have faith, they mustn't look at reality.

You know, you must shut yourself away from reality so that you can have faith. You have to be a kind of, I can't explain it, but you mustn't face the facts. But the wonderful thing in Romans 4 is these words, and without being weakened in faith, he considered his own body as good as dead.

Isn't it beautifully put? As good as dead, he being a hundred years of age. And the baroness of Sarah's womb, she was an old lady. I mean, I think that most of us would say, don't, don't do that.

If you do that, you will have an evil heart of unbelief. But this living kind of faith could face the facts, face reality, and still believe that God could do it. And that's exactly what it says.

It says, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, he was able also to perform. Wherefore also, it was reckoned unto him for righteous. That kind of living faith joins us to the vision.

Dear folks, if we have seen anything of the purpose of God, if we've seen anything of the significance of our Lord Jesus, if we have seen anything of the church, which is his body, if we've understood anything about this, this wife of the lamb, this city of God, at the end of the Bible, it is only living faith that will join us to it. So that we do not waver through unbelief. But at the end, we are not disobedient to the heavenly

vision.

Consider the lapses of faith. You know, Abraham is called the father of all who believe and is for us an amazing symbol of living, working faith. But Abraham had some incredible lapses of faith.

Almost immediately after the God of glory appeared to him, there was a famine in the land. And he went down to Egypt. He moved out of the boundaries of the land that God had promised to him and told him to dwell within.

And once he moved out, once he moved down, he got into a mess. He was frightened that Sarah, so beautiful to look upon, would become the reason for his murder. So he said to her, do you mind? Just tell them you're my sister.

I will tell them you're my sister. You say I'm your brother. It was a half-truth.

Now, we who are Jews are very good at this. It was a half-truth. It was actually one sense it was truth.

But what Abraham was saying was a compromise. He would never have got into this mess if he had only stayed in the land. You know the story.

The amazing thing is this, that Abraham wasn't, as far as we can tell, the least bit conscience-stricken. I mean, we all think of Jacob as the twister. But in actual fact, here is Abraham showing a little bit of the twistedness himself.

Something in the genes came down to Jacob. It's interesting to me because he doesn't show any conscience over this matter. Only when a plague hit Pharaoh's household, particularly Pharaoh and his first wife.

And when they probably asked the enchanters and wise men to explain what was happening, probably they said, there's someone here who has lied to you. And it was then that Pharaoh went to Abraham. Now listen to this.

He said, what have you done to me and to my house that you told me that Sarah was your sister? I never touched her. Actually, it was the Lord who stopped Pharaoh from touching Sarah. And here is the most amazing thing of all.

Believe it or believe it not, it's in the book. Abraham came out with gold, with silver, with camels, with donkeys, with sheep, and with goats. Now some of you may not particularly want some of those things, but the fact still remains that he came out with far more than he went in.

So amazing is God. So full of grace is God. So absolutely loyal to the ones who really want to follow him.

The second time Abraham got into this mess was in the land. And this time was with Abimelech. He said exactly what you would have thought he would have learned.

But no, this time he said to Sarah, you just tell him you're my sister. I'm your brother. And the same thing happened with Abimelech.

And Abimelech came to Abraham and said, why have you done this to me? The whole female household is barren. You're responsible. And once again, read the story.

Abraham comes out with gold, with silver, with camels, with goats, and with sheep. It is an amazing story, Abraham's lapses of faith. The biggest lapse, the greatest lapse was over Ishmael.

You know, dear Sarah, she was so so remarkable a woman. And she said one day to Abraham, dear, I think you might have been wrong about this son of promise. You know, you are nearly a hundred.

And I am approaching the same age. And look, we know God can do anything, but God obeys natural laws. You have to use your common sense.

You know, I always hear this in church circles, we must use our common sense. I hear it on committees amongst elders, amongst diaconates, and I don't know what else they all say, we must use our common sense. God gave us common sense.

Most of the common sense they talk about is unbelief. It's not common sense at all. To me, common sense is very simple.

If you are joined to the living God, there is nothing impossible. And if he has said that he will do this and this and this, common sense is to follow him and believe him. Isn't that, don't you agree with me? That's common sense.

I've never been able to understand anything else. All this kind of thing where we get together and we say, what shall we do about the youth this coming summer? And then they have a little word of prayer. Lord bless us, we pray.

Now, just give us your mind. Then we all talk this, talk that, talk the other. We'll have this, we'll have a barbecue, we'll do this, we'll do that, we'll do the other.

Then we bow our heads and say, dear Lord, bless this mind of yours that you have given us in this discussion that we've had together. Then we wonder why nothing happens the whole of the summer. Nobody gets saved.

Nobody gets met by God. No change takes place in the youth. Well, what's wrong? Common sense.

If we really believed God, we'd get on our knees and say, Lord, just help us. What can we do that the young people amongst us can be natural, spontaneous, no weight upon them, placed by us, but at the same time somehow helped into a real living experience of the Lord. Dear Sarah, dear Abraham, she said, we must use our common sense.

Look, I have a very nice young girl helping me. I think that's what the Lord wants you to do. And Abraham thought for a while, and he decided that that was the obvious thing to do.

They'd waited for so long for this word of the Lord to be fulfilled that he decided that really, that's right, we have to obey natural law. And Ishmael was born. Do you know that the Lord didn't speak to Abraham again after the birth of Ishmael for some 16 years.

It was the greatest mistake that Abraham made. And the most amazing thing about it is that the Lord blessed Ishmael, both Hagar and Ishmael. He made a covenant with Ishmael and his seed, which has lasted to this day.

After all, the major part of the oil of the world is in their hands. It is so interesting about the troubles we face in the Middle East and the troubles that the whole world, Western world is facing, all stems from the birth of Ishmael. Well, I say, then listen to this amazing thing.

You and I need a living, working faith. In the end, Abraham learned. What I'm trying to say is this, just because you have a living, working faith does not mean you do not have lapses of faith.

Just because you have a living, working faith does not mean that at times you do not make mistakes. But the grace of God toward Abraham is remarkable. That's the first thing that I want to say this evening.

How can you and I be involved? How can we be involved in this heavenly vision by a living, working faith, which joins us to the Lord, which makes us those who are followers of the Lord, who hear him? And this brings me to the second thing, total obedience to the Lord. Genesis chapter 12 and verse 4. This is how it reads. So Abraham went as the Lord had spoken unto him.

Isn't that beautiful? So simple a sentence. So Abraham went as the Lord had spoken to him. This was probably the time when the God of glory appeared to him.

We know it was before they came to Haran, when he was still in Ur of the Chaldeans. But whatever the Lord said to him, Abraham went with the Lord. That is obedience.

When you ask me, what is obedience? It is to go with the Lord. It is not only to hear the Lord, it is to obey him, to go with him. That's what the writer of the Hebrew letters says in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 8. By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out not knowing whither he went.

Consider, Abraham did not even know where he was going. Can you imagine his friends and relatives left behind in Ur of the Chaldeans? Can you imagine those business colleagues of his? What is Abraham doing? He's left Ur. Where is he going? He doesn't know.

You mean he's left his property, his home, his business, he doesn't know where he's going? Well, that's what he says. He says he's going to get directions as he goes. Oh, he must be.

He must be. He's got a screw loose. Something's gone wrong with him.

He was such an intelligent man, such a capable man, such a sophisticated man, and he doesn't know. What is he doing? Well, he's got sheep and goats. Sheep and goats? What do you mean? Has he become a butcher? What is he doing with sheep and goats? Well, he's a herdsman.

A herdsman. Abraham, a herdsman. Is it any wonder that the Lord added to him even when he made mistakes? More sheep, more goats, and more camels, and gold and silver as well.

When someone obeys the Lord with total obedience, they sometimes make real mistakes. But the Lord turns it to good account. The best example of that was David, King David, when he sinned in the most horrendous manner over one of his most faithful servants, Uriah the Hittite.

He arranged for him to be in the front of the battle and for the battalion to move backwards and leave him to be murdered, killed. And then he took Bathsheba and she bore a child. And only when that child died did David repent.

The amazing thing is this, that Bathsheba became the mother of both Solomon and Nathan, both of whom are in the messianic pedigree. Isn't that amazing? So the Lord's ways, I'm not of course encouraging you to sin, but what I am saying is this, when there's total commitment to the Lord, total obedience, even when you make mistakes, even when you sin and repent, then the Lord turns it to good account. Disobedience over the land is something quite extraordinary.

And we've already talked about the lapses of faith when he went down to Egypt, but it is amazing. And the birth of Isaac is also quite extraordinary. The compromises that he made when he didn't obey the Lord was that he took his father Terach with him and locked.

Now where it's not very clear from the record exactly what happened over Terach, his father, because it seems the way it's put Terach actually said, took the initiative and said, let us go to Haran. But what is clear is it's only when Terach died in Haran that the Lord moved Abraham on to the promised land. But Abraham took Lot, and as I said, as Mr. Sparks used to say, Lot was a lot of trouble.

And we still have Lot's sin with us today. He became the father of the Moabites and the Ammonites. So this is still with us to this very day.

God had said to Abraham, get out of your father's house, out of Ur of the Chaldees, leave it all behind. Abraham obeyed, but apparently he took Terach along and Lot. And it took quite a while for the Lord, first to free him from his father, and secondly, even longer to free him from Lot.

But here I think is something we can all learn, that disobedience has its consequences. And sometimes we have to live with the consequences of our disobedience. Total obedience is a second vital constituent in not being disobedient to the heavenly vision.

We have to obey. What is that heavenly vision? What does it say? What does it mean? How practical is it? How are we to obey? Only God can speak to us. I myself could not be part of a denomination.

I myself would not feel free to be part of some kind of heavily organized work as such. I know others who don't feel the same as I, but that's how I feel. I cannot obey the Lord and obey the heavenly vision and compromise on some of these things.

I don't have any problem going in and out of the Lord's people wherever they're found. If one can build them up, if one can help them to go on with the Lord, we are one people. We are one family.

We need each other. But there are these kind of things that come down to obedience, and the Lord tests us very much on these things, right down to the nth degree. Then again, here is the third thing.

The essential nature of Calvary. It is very interesting that Abraham built four altars. The first one, Shechem.

The second one, Bethel. The third one, Hebron. The fourth one, Moriah.

The altar is always, in the whole Bible, the symbol of Calvary. That's the place of sacrifice. That's where you can call upon the name of the Lord.

How else can sinners really come to God? How can they commune with God? How can they enter the presence of God? Only through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus at Calvary. Through His finished work at Calvary. Through the justifying work whereby He was made our sin, that we might become His

righteousness.

God's righteousness in Him. That is almost beyond us, but it is wonderful. And these altars, four of them.

They're almost, you know, four is like the whole earth, as it were. The whole universe. The four corners.

The four winds. The four seasons. It is just, it means universal.

Here is something so amazing that Calvary lies at the root of all Abraham's journeyings, his pilgrimage. It began with Shechem. Now it is more than that.

Let me just say, before I say something about Shechem, let me just say that it's more than just the finished work of the Lord Jesus. Although I don't want to demean or devalue that work. In that finished work, we were finished.

We died with Christ. Those four altars not only speak of the fact that Jesus died in my place, for me. They also speak of the fact that Jesus died as me.

Abraham was saying, I'm out of Ur of the Chaldees. I'm out of Mesopotamia. I'm out of my father's house.

Before long, he was free of lot as well. That altar. Shechem in Hebrew means shoulder.

Shoulder. Or your back. Now when you have a bad back like I have, you understand just how little you can lift.

Why does it speak about the government upon the shoulder? Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Upon and the government, I'm going over a few verses, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. That altar means one thing. Abraham, it typified, it symbolized the simple fact that Abraham was saying, you are Lord.

Your government, I will obey. It began with the Lordship of Jesus. You cannot be involved in the heavenly vision if you are not under the Lordship of Jesus.

While your brain, your thought life, your concepts are actually a way out of the government of God. They are not governed by the word of God. You have your own way of looking at things, your own way of coming to it.

You cannot be involved in the heavenly vision. We have only one head, and that head is the Lord Jesus. We can't have a thousand heads.

We have only one head. And when Abraham built that altar and sacrificed upon it, and called upon the name of the Lord, it was his recognition that the government is upon the shoulder of the Lord Jesus. The second altar is very interesting, Bethel and Ai in English.

Bethel means house of God, and Ai means a heap of ruins. And he pitched his tent with Ai, the heap of ruins behind him, and Bethel, the house of God in front of him. And interestingly, east at the back and west to the front.

In other words, where the sun comes up, that was the heap of ruins. And he was journeying to the house of God. Are you journeying to the house of God? There's no way you can be involved in the heavenly vision if you haven't understood the house of God.

It is an amazing thing. Everywhere you look in the Word of God, one thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Isn't that amazing? Think of it.

What is this dwelling place of the Lord? It is the Lord Jesus. But what is this dwelling place of the Lord? It is the Lord Jesus and you and me, everyone he saved. We are the living stones out of which this house of the Lord, this dwelling place of God is to be built.

I always loved the simple fact that according to our Jewish tradition, David wrote Psalm 23 when he was a boy, not even in his late teens, in his mid teens. And in it he says, you know it, don't you? The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters and so on. And then he says this, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

But there was no house of the Lord. When he was a boy, there was no house of the Lord. Again, in one of our traditions, David's mother was a weaver of the Tabernacle Vale.

Did she at some time say to him, you know, we have no permanent house of the Lord? I don't know. But all I know is this, that something captured David that was to remain with him for the whole of his life. He lived for the house of the Lord.

He said, I will not rest. I will not give sleep to my eyes until I have found out a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the mighty one of Jacob. If this were to consume us, wouldn't it be? Have you turned your back on the ruin? You younger people probably don't feel you're a ruin.

We older ones know we are. Oh, that you could turn your back on the ruin. You make a lot of your young life, your hopes, your ambitions, your career, your marriage, the family you will have.

It's all a ruin if it is not connected and related to the house of the Lord. Only when you have the central point in God's purpose, the heart of God's purpose, will you know what it is to be in the eternal. Well, dear folks, I could go on and on, but don't you think this is tremendous? He pitched his tent with Bethel in front and Ai behind.

There's a good deal more than one could say about this because Ai was the place of judgment, and that's exactly what the cross speaks. That old ruin, that old man, that old nature, judged, done away with in Christ. If, wherefore, if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation.

Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. The house of the Lord.

And then think of Hebron. Now, here we have something a little difficult because in Hebrew, originally, Hebron was probably a ford. Now, there are no rivers in that area.

I know it very well, so I can tell you there are no rivers, but there are seasonal wadis that carve great gullies in the wilderness, and there are places when in the winter those great cloudbursts come, you can only cross at certain points. Originally, Hebron was called a ford. Then came the idea of association.

Fellowship, as I think dear old Fawcett put it in his encyclopedia. In other words, now you've come a stage further. Here is the third altar.

It is to do with fellowship. It is to do with the association of those who belong to the Lord. You know what is fellowship? In the Greek word, it is simply to share.

It is to have in common. What do you and I have in common? I can tell you what I have in common with you. I am a Jew.

I have a background that is Jewish, although I was brought up not in an orthodox way. I did not even know much about my background, except that the whole Jewish community in our area, including the rabbi, tried to help us and be with us and guard us in our earlier years. But I can tell you this.

If you're not a Jew and I am a Jew, in Christ, we have one thing in common. It is the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is my Savior.

He's your Savior. He's my head. He's your head.

He's my goal. He's your goal. My fullness is found in Him.

Your fullness is found in Him. Isn't this amazing that we're all in the one Christ, whether we're Chinese or Koreans or Germans or Scandinavians or British? Of course, the British like to think that they're the only ones in. But it doesn't matter who it is, who you are.

If you are in Christ, there's only one Christ. There's not a Chinese Christ or a Jewish Christ or a Swedish Christ or a German Christ or an Italian Christ or an Arab Christ or an Indian Christ. There's only one Christ and we're all in Him.

And this one Christ is in all of us. Now He manifests Himself. He uses our background.

He uses the cultural background we have. There's somehow or other, there is something very precious that is not obliterated. You remain, some of you Chinese.

I remain Jewish. Yet there's no middle wall of partition. You remain English.

Someone else remains Danish. But there's no middle wall of partition. The third altar, Calvary.

It is the basis of fellowship. Our fellowship grows out of the finished work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary and what He did with us there. And then again there is a fourth altar and the fourth altar is Moriah.

Now I shall say something more about that in a moment. But all I'm going to say just now is we have a problem here with this word Moriah. Moriah in English.

Moriah in Hebrew. We have a little problem here because some of our authorities tell us that it means the Lord sees. And others tell us well it is more than that because it means that when the Lord sees, He provides.

So the Lord provides. We have it Adonai Yireh. The Lord will provide.

Others believe, and they are real authorities in Hebrew, that it is chosen. Somehow here when we come to Moriah, here is that altar. The Lord will provide.

What an amazing experience Abraham had. He has moved from the lordship of Jesus to the house of God to genuine fellowship and to knowing the Lord as his provision. Calvary.

If you and I want to be involved in the heavenly vision and not be disobedient to it, there's no way but through Calvary. And then if I can take one other thing, I must watch myself on time. One other thing, it is the covenant God made with Abraham.

What an amazing picture this is in Genesis 15 when the Lord said, I am your shield and your exceeding great reward. That is so. Now, dear Abraham had a problem.

He said, Lord, that's very wonderful of you to say that to me. You are my covering. You are the one who guards me and protects me.

I'm so thankful. And you are going to be my exceeding great reward. You've said it again and again, Lord, about how I'm going to be, all the families of the earth are going to be blessed in through me.

I'm very thankful. You said I will be a blessing. You said be a blessing.

But Lord, I'm childless. You said in your seed shall all the families of the earth. I don't have a seed to talk about.

And the Lord took him out and showed him the heavens and said, do you see those stars? Can you count them? That's how many your seed will be in the end. And then the Lord said to him, take a heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon. Divide the heifer, the she goat, and the ram.

Leave the two birds undivided. Put the pieces one on either side opposite to them. What is all this about? First of all, of course, all these creatures are to do with the burnt offering.

But it wasn't a burnt offering because the birds of prey came down to try and eat them. They weren't burnt up. So what do we have? Of course, it was the ancient way of a covenant.

You made a covenant by taking an animal, splitting it in two, and then the person who was making the covenant walked through it. What does this all mean? The Lord said to Abraham, take these things and do this. And then a terror of great darkness fell on Abraham.

And the Lord said to him, no, certainly that when you have become a nation in another foreign land, you will be enslaved and you will suffer greatly for four generations. And then I will bring them out from the land. Then we are told that what happened when the sun went down and that great terror, horror of darkness fell on Abraham, a smoking furnace and a flaming torch.

Now most of the authorities, commentaries and others, they all tell us that it was to do with the children of Israel in Egypt. And this smoking furnace was the suffering of the people of Israel in Egypt. And the torch, the flaming torch was the testimony, the torch of the testimony that never was extinguished.

Well, I don't doubt that there's a tremendous amount of truth in that because immediately it's the words of the Lord, no, certainly he went and explained it as this, but I feel there's something far deeper than that. To me, the covenant that God himself made with Abraham, the animals were divided, the birds left undivided and then a smoking oven and the flame, a flaming torch went up and down between the sacrificed animal. I think it is Calvary that is again in view.

That smoking furnace, certainly the children of Israel were in it, but the Lord Jesus knew something about that on Calvary. He knew what it was to be in a furnace of affliction when he cried my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Pentecost was the flaming torch. It was a tongue of fire that came upon 120 people and within hours 3000 more were saved.

I don't have any doubt that here you had the most amazing covenant that God made with Abraham. He gave him some understanding that there would come a day when the Messiah would die for us and the fire of God would fall upon the redeemed. Dear folks, if I may say this before I go to my last point, the great need in the fulfillment of a heavenly vision is a nucleus of those who are living sacrifices.

Whenever you have an assembly in which there is at least a nucleus of those who have fallen into the ground and died, you have the promise of a harvest. You have the promise of the dwelling place of God. You have the promise of the house of God.

You have a promise of that city which has the foundation. You need not only the smoking furnace, you need the flaming torch. You cannot do with one without the other.

They both belong together. It is a burnt offering that is the living sacrifice. It is amazing to me that the Apostle Paul, after giving us the greatest exposition of the gospel in the books of the Bible, in the Roman letter, ends it with, I beseech you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritually intelligent worship and service.

Out of that comes the body of the Lord Jesus. You read it, Romans 12, verse 4 and 5. As the body has many members, so it's also with the church. It comes out of a living sacrifice.

When people are just important in themselves, want to lord it over others, want to be leaders, want to be in leadership, want all the time the glory that comes from that kind of thing, you don't have the house of God. You don't have the body of the Lord Jesus building itself up in love. But where you have those who become living sacrifices, out of that comes the flaming torch.

It is fire. I don't mean strange fire. I mean the fire of God.

I wish I could put it more clearly and simply. Finally, I want to say something more about that last altar, Moriah. It is, for me, the most remarkable event in Abraham's life.

When the Lord said to him, take thy son whom you love, your only son. Isn't that interesting? Three times the phrase comes, your only son. Ignoring poor Ishmael.

Take your son whom you love, your only son, and make him a burnt offering in the mount that I will show you. It was Mount Moriah. Remember, dear child of God, how essential Isaac was to the purpose of God, to the whole course of divine history.

Isaac's survival, Isaac's growth, and Isaac's well-being were priority. From one point of view, Abraham who'd waited a lifetime till nearly a hundred years of age to see this boy, this son of the promise being born to him, now saw in that son the whole purpose of God centered and focused. Now the Lord came and said, take this son, your only son whom you love, and make him a burnt offering.

You have listened to me long enough, but can I say something which I hope will sink in to many? In the Christian world, there are many Ishmaels. Things born of the flesh, things produced by the flesh. They

have the concepts of flesh, the world's ways, the world's techniques, the world's methodologies.

Ishmael may have looked more like Abraham than Isaac. If you saw this boy running around, you'd say, oh, it's obviously Abraham's son there. But Ishmael was not the son of promise.

You can have a Bible pattern, you can have a perfect Bible pattern, you can have a whole church routine, but if it is an Ishmael, it can never inherit. Isaac may not have even looked like Abraham. Maybe he looked like one of his mother's people, but he was the son of promise.

He was born, if I can put it this way, of the spirit. Why did the Lord say to Abraham, sacrifice your only son? Can you all hear me at the back? Am I dropping my voice? Why did he say, sacrifice your only son? The deepest lesson we can learn in the service of God is to let go of what we have seen born of God. Now, I don't mean that in a wrong way.

We are to be watchmen, we are to be shepherds, we are to be overseers. But there comes a point when our flesh life grips the vision. And then when that happens, the shadow of death falls on the whole.

I remember years ago when I was in my twenties, and when the work at Halford had begun, and we had really prayed for four months, every single night, for four months. And out of that came that work. I became very exhausted, and I went to see Brother Spock.

And I poured out my heart to him. I said, you know, I'm called to prayer, and I've traveled in prayer. I honestly believe, as young as I am, that I've traveled in prayer.

But now I have almost a kind of revulsion. Mr. Spock listened quietly. And although Mr. Spock could be a very severe man, and a very stern man, he was actually a very loving man.

And he looked at me and he said, your soul has got into it. What, I said. You mean it's not of God? No, he said.

It is of God. This work has been born of God. But now your soul has got into it.

Let it go, he said. Let me give you another little example from my own experience. When I was in Egypt, I became very, very ill with hepatitis.

I mean of the kind that is very serious. And for quite a few weeks, I was confined to bed in hospital. I wasn't allowed to go to the bathroom, not allowed to touch the floor with my feet.

I had a special diet. Every day a dear old missionary came up to sit with me in the afternoon. And I was so depressed.

I sat there without saying a thing. And she sat there without saying a thing. And I'm so thankful, I can't bear that kind of missionary who has to lecture you.

She just sat there quietly. Then one day she said to me, you are very depressed today, more than usual. Can you share what it is? Yes.

I said weakly, I cannot understand the Lord. You cannot understand the Lord? She said, join me. I said, well, she said, what is it that's troubling you? I said, look, in the camp, the Air Force camp, a whole number of those fellows are right on the point of receiving Christ.

They've actually started coming to services. They're asking questions, they've even asked for Bibles. And I said, when everything is happening, the Lord allows me to be laid aside.

She listened and she said, well, well, well, if it's Lance's work, it will disappear. And we shall say, hallelujah. And if it is the work of the Spirit of God, it will go on whether you're there or not.

You know, it sank into my heart. Suddenly I saw, I got my hands on this. I let go of it.

And for the first time in weeks, I smiled. She said, don't be fearful. If this is a work of the Spirit of God, it will go on.

And she totted off. She cycled in the midday sun back to the home where she worked. When I got back to that camp, I found that those boys, a number of them had found the Lord.

They had no one to show them. They had no books. They just found the Lord.

It taught me one of the greatest lessons that I was to have to learn again when the work at Halford House in Richmond, England came into being. And that was, you can get your hands on the vision. And when that happens, you become so protective.

You become so, as it were, you stifle the vision. God said to Abraham, take your son, whom you love, your only son, and sacrifice him. That is what it means to fall into the ground and die.

Out of that comes new life, new power, new vision, new understanding. Not for you. You already understand.

You already see. But for others. Your dying has allowed the Holy Spirit to fall on a whole number of others.

May the Lord take these simple little lessons and burn them into our hearts. I was not disobedient, said the Apostle Paul to the heavenly vision. Abraham did not use those words, but he could have said them at the end of his life.

I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. May you be involved in this heavenly vision that is given to us in our Lord Jesus. Thank you.

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