

# Genesis 12:1

by Robert Arthur

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*The sermon explores Abraham's call from God, the significance of divine glory, and the transformative power of devotion in the believer's life.*

**Duration:** 31:45

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:1, 2 Corinthians 3:16

**Topics:** "Abram"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by referencing 2 Corinthians 4:6, which speaks about God shining His light in our hearts to reveal the knowledge of His glory. The speaker then recalls the concept of devotion and the example of the Nazarite, whose compulsions always came from before him. The sermon also mentions the story of Abraham and how he valued the word of God over worldly promises. The speaker emphasizes the idea that when glory comes in, something else must be displaced, as seen in the construction of the tabernacle and the filling of the tabernacle with the glory of the Lord.

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## Transcript

I should like to read in the book of Genesis with you this morning, at chapter 12, reading there a few verses, beginning with verse 1. Genesis chapter 12, verse 1, Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curses thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

While inclinations are to read further in that chapter, time propels me onward, and I'd like to read from chapter 14. Chapter 14, and read there also a part of something which should have the context read. Verse 21, And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread, even to a shoelatch, that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich. Now there are two passages in the New Testament to which I would make reference, one in the book of Acts, chapter 7. The book of Acts, chapter 7, at verse 2, I'm going to call it to be the utterance, the great apology of Stephen. At verse 2 he said, Men and brethren, and 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 country and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. The other passage, and the last of them, is in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3. The closing verses of 2 Corinthians, chapter 3. We might well read from verse 15. And here again, one is conscious of breaking into something that virtually would demand the reading of more.

But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart, Israel's heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now, the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

But we all, with open, or with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Then, since our Bibles are open at that particular passage, it is not too much to ask your eye to travel over to chapter 4, verse 6. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Now, the desire of one's heart is to step into the current of the previous ministry as much as possible in any given time, and at the same time, carry along some thoughts that one had earlier felt were suited to coming to the conference time.

You recall a heart was drawn along in the line of devotedness, and it's of such that we would like to speak this morning once again. And then you recall, too, that in some illustration of this matter, we spoke of the Nazarite and felt that the Nazarites' compulsions always came from before him. I have no doubt that in Israel's history, when they looked, as it were, to the tabernacle in the center of the throng and thought of the dealings of God with them, there then might come from a Nazarite heart a desire to devote itself wholly to God.

Devotion, say I once again, always is an outdrawing from seeing the work of Christ, the glorified Son of God. Now, I thought this morning, since our early thoughts also were that of illustration in personalities in life, I thought that perhaps we might think of this man Abraham, and what better than that he, being pilgrim and sojourner, tent dweller, that one who is on his way through and never quite baptized himself to the earth, what better than that he should give illustration of one who had seen the glory of God. I like this in Abraham, that God gave to him a revelation of himself, and Abraham never was quite the same thereafter.

I suppose to some heart it might seem that we're being ethereal and unrealistic and seeking to foment a kind of spiritual stargazing when we're speaking of seeing glory. Now, I don't mean it so. I've heard that old statement.

I think very little of it, but I've heard it said that, you know, some people are so heavenly-minded that they're no earthly good. Confessedly, I've met very few that qualify for being no earthly good on the basis of having become so truly heavenly-minded. There's none of us in too much danger of it, I believe.

But I do want to suggest that Abraham is one who saw the glory of God. Now, we may see that. I think the verse that gives interpretation to what our view of God's glory is to be is that in 2 Corinthians 4, 6, we're to see it in Christ.

Our Lord Jesus is in the glory. I shall never forget in early days, and I speak of early days in the taking up of a simple path amongst God's people. That's only 12 years ago, incidentally.

I heard a phrasing that was new to my ear, and it was this. There's a man in the glory. Ah, you say, well, had you lived all your days if you never heard that before? Well, I'm fully conscious that I must have lived in a limbo of some kind when I did not hear too many things, but I confess that it was a delightful thing to learn in reality that there was a man who had satisfied God on every score on earth.

All the earth had rejected him. He had been received into heaven, and there in the glory is a man who has glorified God. He is met and satisfied and suited heaven about everything he did.

Now, my dearly beloved friends, I suggest to you that we're to find out what is suitable to heaven through this blessed book. There will be moments, I trust, when in a little, although I promised myself to speak but shortly this morning, we'll come to 2 Corinthians 3. And you remember it says this, that we would unveil faith beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. Oh, I may be naive.

I confess I'm not very profound in many a way, or perhaps that aim should be deleted in any way, but I believe that the mirror or the glass in which we're to see the glory of God in the face of Christ is the blessed book of which we've been hearing this morning. We are to be those who repair to the word of God. It's not an upward glance, a star gazing.

It's a very prosaic entering into the word of God. We'll learn more of the glory of God in Christ as we, prompted by the spirit of God, come into the scriptures and there see that glory revealed. Now, I already feel that some young hearts or young mouths are stifling yawns because they say, oh, well, of course this is going to be very commonplace.

Well, I never thought it would be otherwise, but I must tell you that just a little ago in looking at the word glory in the Old Testament, I made a little bit of a discovery. I suppose that others have made it long since and are wondering why it was delayed in my time. But I found out that the word glory in the Old Testament is a word that means weight.

I hardly know why it should be. You who are New Testament students will know that the word glory in the New Testament is usually a word that, well, we have our word dogma. It's derived from that root, and that suggests an opinion or glory.

But the word in the Old Testament is a word that means weight. I can only conceive that the excellences of God, for example, are so weighty and so heavy that when they're being described, this word for glory is the most suited word to bring into the case. Well, I took that up in a little sense some time ago, and then another thought came to me, and it was this.

Weighty things, you know, when they're immersed into any body of fluid, they have a capacity for displacing other things. Not too long ago, my oldest son came home from school. He was in junior high school, and I suppose he was trying to trip up his aging father, and he said to him, he said, Dad, did you ever hear about Archimedes? Well, it just so happens that I, yonder years ago, was exposed to a little bit of natural philosophy, and I had heard about Archimedes.

In fact, I had done a little experimenting with his principle of flotation and so on, and so I knew about him. But perhaps you've heard the old story about Archimedes. He was pondering and wondering about this matter of mass or of weight or a specific gravity, and they say that he was an absent-minded professor.

You've heard some of the incidents related to such kind of persons, and well, this day, anyhow, he was, he was running his bath. I don't know what corresponds to a bathtub in that age of day, but he was running

his bath, and he had it filled up, and still pondering this whole business of flotation, he stepped into his bath. Well, when he stepped in, a great volume of water stepped out, and it said that he ran down the street crying, Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it! He had found the principle that a body immersed in a fluid displaces, well, you know, you physicists know whether it's the same volume of water or not by, or same weight of substance, why that's what he had found out.

But this came to my heart, that whenever you get glory in the Old Testament, you get something I like to call displacement. Glory comes in, something goes out. It did with Abraham, but before we get to that, let's look at one or two passages.

I'd like you to look to the 40th chapter of Exodus for just a moment, and that's the passage that tells of the rearing up of the tabernacle. You remember when the tabernacle was constructed? There came that moment when the divine occupant would take over. And so we read in Exodus 40, 33, he reared up the court around about the tabernacle, and the altar and set up the hanging of the court gate, so Moses finished the work.

Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Quickly to 2 Chronicles 5, where almost similarly you read of the occupancy of the temple.

And in 2 Chronicles 5, when the singers are in their place, I'm reading at verse 13 of 5, it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord. And when they lifted up their voices with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever, that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house. And you go through the scriptures, if you so care, and come at long length to the last book of the Bible, and you'll find that in that heavenly scene concerning the descending city, there is no need of the sun there, or the moon, for the glory of the Lord lights them.

Wherever you get glory, you get displacement. Now, dearly beloved friends, this is not meant this morning, in brief compass as it will be, it's not meant, as I've said, to be merely unrealistic, or to ramble somewhere concerning a little bit of a flimsy thing that perhaps the heart is caught on. I'm suggesting that in line with our thoughts on devotion, if in very truth we're taken up with the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, there virtually will be displacement, displacement of those lesser things from these our lives.

And has not that been the contention concerning the devotedness of the Nazarite? His is not a legal outcasting of something, but his is that gracious displacing of things because he's been taken up with the glory of God. Now, just a little more concerning this man Abraham, I delight to see how it worked in this man's case. We know him to be a pilgrim.

In the twelfth chapter of Exodus, he has a meeting with God. God of glory appeared to him, told him to take his tent and leave family and friends and loved ones and go out, not knowing whether he would go. I often incline to a thought it may be gratuitous, but you know his time was almost the same as that time when the builders of Babel were building their house, their city, their brick formation.

And I often wonder this much, I wonder if some of those in their time must not have said, why doesn't Abraham come in with us? Why is he a nonconformist? Why does he hold on to his skin tent? Why

couldn't he come on in and have the more substantial brick house and brick city that we're building? And I often have the notion that dear Abraham must have answered in words that we've heard already this morning, because you know he had the consciousness of glory. And I believe he must have said, no, I'll wait for the city which has foundation, the city whose builder and maker is God. And he'd rather have the lightness of the tent now and the heaviness of the glory hereafter, rather than reversing them.

By the way, a lovely little thought came to me some time ago out of John chapter 2. You remember there that when Christ was invited to the wedding at Cana of Galilee, the wine ran short. And Christ gave command that the firkins, the water pots holding so many firkins should be filled up, and then water was changed to wine. There have been many an expression of what happened.

Some say the water saw its maker and blushed. Whether that's good poetically or not, it certainly is not the reality of the miracle. Christ made water wine.

And then they brought it in, you remember, and incidentally it says his glory was manifested forth then. And when they tasted it, this is what the governor of Ephesus said. He said, now normally when we come to a feast, we expect the best wine first, and then afterwards the worst.

And actually that word that suggests the worst wine is the word light. The world always expects its best now, and then it'll take whatever is light hereafter. But I'm encouraged to believe that the Christian who may oftentimes in the eye of the world be getting a heavy weight of sorrows now, he's not really getting that.

He's only suffering light affliction which is but for a moment. But it works for him a far more excellent weight of glory. The heavy thing is coming hereafter for the believer.

But now just one more thing as time passes along concerning Abraham and the resultant of his having seen glory. I read the 14th chapter of Genesis, his return from the deliverance of the man Lot, by the way, dear young folk. Lot is a sterling example of how a man who hadn't seen the glory for himself is therefore never quite as much prompted to a devotedness to God.

And he got down into Sodom, and Sodom got down into him. And you remember how he got entangled with the city? And of course when he did that, get so entangled, the city's problems and troubles became very much a reality to him. He was taken in the thralldom of these kings who had come up and captured Sodom.

And we remember that Abraham, the man who had seen the glory, could go down with his trained servants and deliver Lot from captivity. It's always so. A separateness of a true and spiritual kind is the best defense against entanglements with this old world.

But he comes back, and then we hear the story of how Sodom's king makes a proposition. He said, Abraham, you give us the man, you give us the personnel that you've delivered from captivity, and you keep the goods to yourself. Now, perhaps you do remember this, that in the former time we spoke thus, that Nazarites are always great refusers, and Abraham refused the king's suggestion of taking the goods to himself.

Lest, he said, lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich. And then he says this, I wouldn't take as much as a shoestrapping. I don't even want that much of heaviness.

Lest you should say, I've made Abraham rich. Sometimes when we're reading God's word, there come those promptings to see what every little word in the text may mean. And I recall a little while ago turning to some textual material, source material, because I wanted to see what the word rich meant.

And I made a discovery, a very interesting one, a very slight one for some of you, I'm sure. But I discovered this, the root of the word rich has the figure 10 in it. I don't scratch your head and say that means but little to me.

I confess it meant little to me in a sense, until I began to ponder, how could that be? What does that mean? And then this suggestion comes. You know that we sometimes speak of a man, he may be a millionaire. I don't know too many of them, but he may be able to say, or we may say of him, he can write his name with six figures.

You know, we mean that that means he's a fellow with six ciphers, he can say a million. And I take it that Abraham meant something like this. If I took this from the world king or Sodom's king, there would come that moment sometime, surely, when the world would say, ah, I enabled Abraham to write his name with 10 figures.

I tamed him. I made him rich. Well, whether we get it or not, that's at the root of the word 10.

You know, friends, I was thinking through this matter later on, and we often have a way of saying that seven is the perfect number. Do you know why it's the perfect number? Because it's the number for God's oath. When God swear to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, he sevened himself.

I dare to think that somebody is finding that this is all so confusing, but I think it's inexpressibly lovely that the divine method of making an oath is to seven himself, to say as it were seven times over, God is, God has spoken, is the author of this. And do you know what lovely little thoughts came to the heart? Let me tell you them. I believe that I'd far rather have God's seven than Satan's 10 anytime.

Abraham found out that he'd rather have the oath of God, the word of God born to his heart, the security, the assurance of a sevened word than all of the promises of the world to enrich by any wire. And so Abraham's view of glory has always this power to displace the thing that the world would count very much worthwhile. See, quickly and in a moment, one wonders if the representative of this old world king would come to any one of our hearts in these times, and who knows, he's been doing his foul work very readily, would come and say to us, wouldn't you rather have the riches, the heaviness, the weight of this world's things now? I believe too few might incline to say nay.

I'd rather have what God says now and then the heaviness of the glory to follow. I'd rather have that than all that this world may offer. I believe then, friends, as we try to round out a thought for this morning, I believe that when, in terms of 2 Corinthians chapter 3, the heart of God's dear people is taken up with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Say, or may I quickly insert this word, I cannot think that that means this isolationism that shuts off every other thing. My brother said it well. I don't think we can afford to be lofty and say, oh, I never think of anything else but Christ.

I never read anything else but the Word. God grant we do keep in the Word with a deal of solidity. But I believe that every contributing force that can make Christ more real to our hearts is to be desired.

And God grant that as we keep in touch with this glorified one, God grant that the power to displace things becomes a very evident one in our lives. Oh, how worthwhile it would be were we to repair to our homes when Yosemite days are done for 1958. And somehow the Spirit of God had gotten the hold of our hearts, every one of them, and had somehow made Christ of such entrancing worth to us that never again would we go back down the hill, down into the norm, the valley land of occupation with so much of the incidental and the unworthy.

God grant that we might go away back with our souls scaling the loftiness of all the glory revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ so that forever in the day the lesser things might be displaced and our hearts be rejoiced in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. May the Lord bless His Word to our hearts.

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