

The God of Abraham

by Robert Constable

The sermon explores the profound faith of Abraham and his relationship with God, emphasizing obedience and trust in divine promises amidst life's challenges.

Duration: 40:06

Scripture: Genesis 12:1, Genesis 13:2, Genesis 13:14-15, Genesis 15:1, Genesis 15:6, Genesis 15:18, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Abraham"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Abram (later known as Abraham) and his encounter with God. Abram receives a message from God to leave his family and go to a place that God will show him. Despite the uncertainty and questions from his family, Abram obeys God's command. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being honest and open with God, sharing a personal anecdote about his son's struggle with God's presence in his life. The sermon also highlights the faith and trust displayed by Abram and his descendants, as they experience various encounters with God throughout the book of Genesis.

Transcript

Would you turn with me to Matthew, chapter 22? Matthew, chapter 22. I just want us to look at verse 32. Here the Lord Jesus is discussing the matter of the resurrection with the Sadducees, and in beginning, for the sake of the connection of verse 31, Jesus says, as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which is spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

You notice it does not say, I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. It says, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, because he was a different God to each one of these people. It just says he's different to you, and to me.

And, this week, I want for us to think about the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, and see if the God that he is to us doesn't come through somehow, and that some way during the week he will become more to us, and more significant to us than he has been before. I mean, personally, it was my privilege, not last year, but the year before, to go through the book of Genesis with the ladies down in Boca Raton. We had 12 or 13 weeks in the book of Genesis, and at that time, as we went through the book of Genesis, I was very much impressed myself with the experiences of these men, their experience with God.

And, I said to myself, this is remarkable. Someday, I'm going to speak on this. I'm going to make myself up a series of talks on the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of Moses, and of Daniel, and so on.

And, I have done that, I think. I've never preached about this before, but we're having it this week, and I trust that the Lord will have something for us, for each of us in this. Long years ago, in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans, way off there in the Middle East, there was a family who were idol worshippers.

The father and the head of this family, his name was Terah, and he had three sons, and he had some daughters. I don't know how many daughters he had, but he had three sons and some daughters. And, as I say, he worshiped idols.

Now, turn to Acts chapter 7, and verse 2, and Stephen is speaking, And Stephen said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken! The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country 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 Haran. And from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

Now, let's go back to the book of Genesis and see the record back there. Genesis chapter 12, and verse 1. Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, 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. So Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him.

And Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abraham took Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came. So we now have the New Testament reference to all of this, and we have the story given to us in the book of Genesis as to how it came about.

I submit to you this, that Abraham was one of, if he was not the most remarkable man in human history. Here was a great man. He was one of the sons of Terah, and as I said, they worshipped idols.

Remember, Stephen spoke of that in his speech that we have just read from. My father was an idolater in the land of Mesopotamia. So, somehow in the course of time, God himself got through to Abraham.

He realized as he looked about him the futility of idol worship. He recognized that there had to be a God above, and God revealed himself to this man. God spoke to this man, and as he spoke to him, he told him that he was to leave his country, leave his family, leave everything, and go out to a land that God would show him.

Well, can you put yourself in this situation? Here's this family, a pretty substantial family, living in the city of Ur in urban life, and one of the sons gets a message from God. And there came a day when he said to his father and to his brothers, the other members of the family, the God of heaven has spoken to me, and he has said that I am to leave this place and leave you, and go off to some land he's going to show me. And everybody would have said, well, what is that? I don't know, I don't have any idea.

Well, you don't mean to say that you're just going to pick up and move out lock, stock, and barrel out of Ur, and leave the family. Yes, that's what I'm going to do. The God of heaven has spoken to me, and that's what he has asked me to do, that's what he has told me to do, and I'm going to do it.

Well, you can believe it, but there was a lot of family discussion about this. In those days, even more so than today, families were very closely knit, and to break away this way from his family and his home and his friends and his city was a big thing. And for what? Because he had been spoken to by the God of heaven.

They didn't know anything about the God of heaven. Where'd you get this idea, they would say. But he was convinced in his soul that God had spoken to him.

And having made up his mind, he carried through. And he was about to go, and I can just hear Tara, his father, saying, look, if you are so insistent upon going away from Ur and leaving us all, well, we'll go with you. We're not going to have you go off by yourself like this.

And so the family went. His father and other members of the family, his nephew, Lot, for instance. Aaron had died.

That was one of his brothers. And his other brother said, no, I'm not going to go. I'm not going to get carried away with this idea.

I'm going to stay here. And so he stayed, and the family was divided. And they started on their journey, and they went north and west along the river, the Euphrates River, as it winds northwest around the edge of the Fertile Crescent.

They followed the river until they came to the northernmost point and we don't know why they stopped there. That isn't where God had called him to go. But, you know, it could have been that the old man, Terah, couldn't go any farther.

There might have been one reason. He ran out of steam. In any case, they stopped at Haran, and they stayed in Haran for a while.

That is, they stayed there until Terah died. I don't know how long that was. It might have been a month.

It might have been five years. When it says that they dwelt there, I take it it was a little while. But they couldn't go any further.

But then the old man died. And as soon as Terah died, Abraham said, let's go. And I take it from that that he had been chasing it just a bit all the time in Haran, saying to himself and to his family, this isn't what God had in mind for me.

This is not the place that he wanted us to come. He was going to show me a place. He didn't show me this place.

And so as soon as Terah had died and was buried, Abraham said, let's go. And they left Haran, and they went on around the Crescent and down into the land of Canaan. Now, Abraham was 75 years old when they left Haran.

He's no boy, you know. He is quite a man of experience. His wife Sarah is 65 years old when they left Haran.

It's pretty hard to pull up roots and move away when you get along in years. But when you've had a call from God, that's the thing that counts, you know. And Abraham had this call.

And so away they went at 75 and 65, and Lot went with them. You know, faith is a conviction that moves us to action. That is, action taken with the assurance of things hoped for, even though they may not be seen.

Now, Abraham didn't know where this land was going to be. God said, I'll show you the place when you get there. But he trusted God sufficiently, so he went, not knowing whither he went.

He was going to the place God had chosen for him. This is remarkable. This is great faith.

Now, I said that I thought that Abraham was one of the great men of history, and I do think this. And I suggest to you that there is no greater blessing that can come than to be honored by God for leading a life of faith. Let me stop here for a moment.

We sometimes have a way of limiting our definition. We talk sometimes as though living a life of faith means being out as a preacher and not taking a shower. And there is faith involved in that, believe me.

But we shouldn't limit the idea of a life of faith. Do you live by faith? And if you get paid for your job, you're apt to answer, no, I get paid. You know, that hasn't really very much to do with it.

Living a life of faith is responding to the word of God, whether you understand it, whether you know all that's involved in it or not. You do what God says to do, and you trust him to take care of the consequences. And this is exactly what Abraham did.

He went out not knowing whither he went on the basis of the fact that God had called him, and that was enough. He'd keep his eyes open until he got to the place that God showed him he was to stop. Not very much to go on.

Now, do you notice that so far God hasn't given him any reason for this? God just told him to go. This is another thing that we always want to do with God, isn't it? When God tells us to do something, we sort of hold it, and we say, well, okay, but what's the reason for this? Why do you want me to do that? Haven't you noticed that your children say that too? Always want a reason. My mother used to say to me when I would ask for a reason, she said, because I say so.

And that never satisfied me. And yet I realize now that I'm older that she had a perfect right to say that. It wasn't necessary to explain everything to us kids.

And that's the way it is with God. He doesn't think it's necessary to explain things to his children. He gives them his word, and that's it.

And we are to respond to his word because he's God. Didn't give a reason. Just said go.

Do you remember another case in the Bible where God did not give a reason? It was Job, wasn't it? He lived about this time too. And Job was happy and prosperous and had a great family and everything was done whole. But all of a sudden, everything was gone, taken away from him.

His wealth, his family, the companionship of his wife in his faith was all swept away, and he was left desolate and with nothing, sitting on a heap of dust scraping boils off of himself, wondering, Lord, why did you do this to me? And God didn't bother to give him a reason. God could have given him a reason. We now know what the reason was, but God didn't explain it to Job.

You know, you ever wonder why God doesn't give us a reason? Giving us a reason might lead to a discussion. Right? You say, well now wait a minute, Lord, hold it. I don't know about that.

I don't know about that. And you wouldn't. No, his thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and his ways are higher than our ways.

And if he gave us a reason, we wouldn't understand it. But he gave him a promise. A promise we can understand, can't we? You do this, and I'll do that.

All right, that's simple. Keep it simple. And that's the way God deals with us.

You do this, and I'll do that. We don't have to understand anything about it, or how it works, or why it applies to us. We simply do what God says.

And that's what this man Abram did. He took God at his word, and we read Abraham went. When we read that, we read a great deal.

And he got the Canaan. Look at verse 7 in chapter 12 of Genesis. And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land.

And there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him. When he got there, the Lord said, Hold it, you're here. I'm going to give you this land, right here.

This lovely country that you're looking at. This is going to be yours. And Abram was satisfied.

He built an altar there. He said, Thank you, Lord. And he began to walk with God.

It says, Though God said to him, All right, Abram, you're on the right track. You've come this far. We've got each other here.

And then he led him on in his experience. Now, you would think, wouldn't you, that having obeyed God as he did, and having responded, and having followed through as he did, and having arrived at the place that God had chosen for him, that everything was fine. Oh, if you do, you haven't read your Bible very closely.

That's when everything got complex, and that's when he ran into problems. Sometimes we think that because we respond in faith to God, that solves all the problems. That may be the reason for the problem.

God doesn't say, Do this, and I'll rid you of all the problems of life. He says, Do this, but leave the rest to me. And then he begins to complicate things for us.

It must be very interesting to be God, and to work this way in the lives of people, and to see how surprised they are all the time. One of the first things he ran into when he got into the land was a famine, and it didn't take him long to say, Some land. Some land he brought me to.

Nothing grows here. Can't eat. And so he got out.

The Lord would have said, All right, you're in the right place. Now let's go from here. Meaning, we'll have each other here.

And instead of that, because there wasn't anything growing, Abraham went down into Egypt. God didn't tell him to go to Egypt. That was his own idea.

He thought he should go down there and get something to eat. And when he was in Egypt, somebody saw Pharaoh. You know, she must have been a remarkable person, because it says that when they got down into Egypt, it became court gossip down there.

Have you seen that stranger's wife? Boy, she's a beauty. And the report got up to the king, to Pharaoh. And they said to the king, Have you seen that stranger's wife? And then the word was let out.

This is not his wife. It's his sister. Hey, she's available.

You know, she's nearly 70 now. Beautiful. And so Abraham got scared.

He thought they were going to take his wife away from him. And he said, Don't tell anybody you're my wife. Tell them that you're my sister.

And he tried to cover it up. You see, he's on his own now. He's down in Egypt now.

This was his idea. And he's got to go it on his own now, because he's down in Egypt. He has to figure out how he's going to get along.

And so this is what he does. He starts out with a little detection. It didn't work.

It says later on that Pharaoh reprovved Abraham for this. He called him in and told him what he thought of it. This is too bad when this happens.

When somebody in the world has to call in a child of God and say, What's going on here? Isn't that too bad? You'd think to read that part of the story here that Pharaoh was a better man than Abraham was. You really would. Pharaoh hadn't done anything wrong.

Pharaoh was an honorable man. But Abraham was a liar. Something's getting twisted here.

Anyway, Pharaoh was also a gentleman. And he said, Now look, take your wife and go your way, and don't act like this, and get other places. He sent him away and gave him gifts.

Abraham left and went back to Canaan again. He must have done a lot of thinking on that trip. Haven't you had that experience sometimes when you have acted like a Christian ought not to act? And then it comes to you, you're in the wrong place.

You need to get back into the will of God again. And as you think this through, you realize what you've done. You say, Can I be a Christian? Is this what it is? Maybe I'm not a Christian at all.

The world, the people in the world around me seem to be kinder than I am. They seem to be more careful about their ethics than I am. I wonder if I really am a Christian.

And I'm sure these were exactly the thoughts that Abraham had. I wonder if I really am a child of God. After this experience, this must have been a hard experience for him.

Chapter 13, verse 2. And Abraham was very rich in cattle and silver and gold, and he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and Ai, unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first. And there Abraham called on the name of the Lord. He got back to where he started with Saul.

And this is what we need to do sometimes. You know, we get carried away by the world. We get carried away by our own ideas and our own schemes and our own thoughts, and we need to get back to the place where we first met with the Lord and start with him there.

And he meets us there. You know, God's no perfectionist. He remembers that we're dust.

He's perfectly willing to come back and meet us again at Bethel and start all over again. This is what he did with Abraham. Now, it sounds, doesn't it, so far like we're talking about Abraham.

I hope you're not focusing in on Abraham. We're talking about Abraham's God. He was willing to start over again with Abraham.

Well, all right, he's had this experience. He comes back to Canaan, and he builds the altar again, and he's back in communion with God. Well, now things are going to be fine.

Well, no, they're not. You know, this is when he begins having trouble with the family. He starts having trouble with Lot.

Well, Lot's herdsmen and his herdsmen are fighting with one another, and Lot says, the country's not big enough for both of us. Abraham says, hold on. Now, look, friends, you just decide which way you want to go.

You can go north, south, east, or west, any direction you want. I'll take what's west. Wonderful attitude Abraham had.

But, anyway, Lot went off then, and you may believe that, since he chose to go over by Sodom, that wicked city that he gave Abraham something to pray about, he was concerned about this. Now, turn to chapter 13 and verse 14. And the Lord said unto Abraham after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward.

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land and the lengths of it and in the breadths of it, for I will give it unto thee.

And Abraham removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord. So, the Lord came to him in his discouragement, you know, after the problems with Lot. And Lot had gone, and he felt left all alone now.

And God came to him and said, Abraham, I'm with you, I'm with you yet, and I'm going to give you the whole bit. He encouraged him. Chapter 15, After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.

God is starting to encourage him some more, and Abraham levels with God. Sometimes we don't level with God. We sort of gloom about the way things are going on, but we don't come right out to God and talk about it.

I remember one occasion I was driving my son down to Moody Bible Institute from home. He'd been home for the weekend, and he said this to me. He said, You know, Dad, I wish God had quit for me.

I wish he'd leave me alone and get out of my life for a while. And I said, Well, did you tell him? You know, what do you mean? I said, You know, he knows what you're thinking about, so you might as well bring it right out and talk it over with him, and tell him to get out of your life and leave you alone for a while. I think it's kind of shocking that I took this angle with him, but anyway, he said okay, and he got out of the car, and we said good night to each other.

And the next Sunday, he was back at home again, and I drove him down to the institute that evening. I said, How'd you get along? You know what he means. I said, How'd you get along when you told God to quit bugging you and to get out of your life and not be on your back all the time? He said, Did you ever tell God that? No, I said, I don't think I felt that way.

Well, he said, I found out I didn't feel that way either when it came right out on the table. When it came to saying this to God, I couldn't say it. I don't want him to get out of my life.

You know, it was a very good exercise for him, but the thing that was necessary was that he bring it out, that he level with God, and he found out. And so, this is what Abraham is doing here. He says in verse 2, And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? Behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

See, he's saying to God, This is great, all this talk about my family and my seed and all the families of the earth being blessed and all, but do you know that I'm in my eighties, and I haven't had a single child? He had some. And God said to him, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars that thou be able to number them. So shall thy seed be.

And God confirmed his promise to Abraham. Why did he do that? Because Abraham leveled with him. That's the way to get confirmation from the Lord.

Level with him. Talk it over. Bring it all up.

This is no casual thing. But we go on, and by now he's ninety-nine. They thought he was old when he was in his eighties.

Now he's ninety-nine, and his wife is eighty-nine. God has made him a promise to give him a family. And it seems to take so long.

It takes so long. And I'm sure, you know, you can feel for this fella. Oh brother, I'm ninety-nine.

And he says he's going to give me a family. In the meantime, he met Abimelech. And Abimelech was a king in the area.

And Abimelech saw Sarah, and he said, Hey! And what did Abraham do? Remember his experience back in Egypt? And say, This is my wife. Leave her alone. Oh no, no, no.

He does the same thing he did in Egypt. He said, This is my future. Because he was afraid that Abimelech would give him trouble if this was his wife.

Did you ever do that? Did you ever do the same fool thing twice? I'm glad Abraham did, because I've got someplace to go. The Bible is a great book. You know, it lays it out.

It lays it on the line. It tells us about the meanness of Adam when he blamed his wife. It tells us about the drunkenness of Noah.

The selfishness of Lot. The cowardice of Abraham. The cunning of Jacob.

The sensuality of David. And the inconstancy of Peter. These are great people, but not perfect people.

They're like I am. When I read about them and God dealing with them, then I get encouraged. Maybe God could be gracious to me.

Let me suggest this to you, that if the divine purpose is to be turned aside by the fault found in our individual character, then the divine government in human life becomes an impossibility. If God was going to quit working with us because we flopped at that, He doesn't. He doesn't drop us because we dropped Him.

He loves us. And He hangs in there. And He teaches us lessons, and love keeps going.

Doesn't it? Doesn't it? Amen. Even in our human association, if our friends dropped us because of some of the things we do, we wouldn't get very far. Even human wealth will hang in there a while.

God saves us. You know, you mustn't judge the universal situation by the local situation. You mustn't judge Christianity by Christians.

You get a wrong idea about Christianity if you judge Christianity by Christians. It would be like judging the English language by some dime novel. You don't do that.

You read this Word, and the lives of these people, and then you begin to get an impression of what God is like. Well, it came the day when Isaac was born. Really? Abram was 100, and his wife was 90, and they had this little boy, and they called the little boy Lasser.

That's what Isaac means. And it was ridiculous. It was comical as a matter of fact.

This old couple should have a baby. And so they called the baby Lasser. They couldn't get over it.

And the child grew up and became a teenager. And then God said to Abraham something, you know, to make all this other practically nothing. He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, and deliver him up for a sacrifice on a mountain that I'll tell thee about.

And if it was I, boy, I can tell you I know a thousand reasons and excuses and everything else I give that this couldn't be God. But Abram was like me. Abram knew when God spoke to him, and it says early in the morning, Abram got up to do what God told him to do.

Practically unbelievable. If it wasn't in the Bible, you wouldn't believe it. And he took his boy, and he took him up to the top of Mount Moriah where God led him.

And can't you see the scene up there at the top of the mountain? Isaac had already said, My father, here's the wood and the fire for the burned offering. Where's the lamb? You wonder what was going through Abram's mind at the time, don't you? I think when they got up there, they sat down on a rock. And Abram said to Isaac, Now, my son, I don't understand this.

You know that I love you more than I love my own wife. But the God of heaven that called me out of the land of the Chaldeans and has been with me every day since in weal and in woe has said to me that I must offer you as an offering on this mountain. And I've got to ask you to submit to this.

Here's a man 120 years old telling a teenager that he's going to kill him. Isaac could have taken his father and thrown him off the mountain. He didn't.

He said, My father, if this is what God has told you, go to it. And Abram bound his son, laid him on the wood on the altar, lifted the knife and was about to kill him when God intervened. God said, Hold it.

Hold it now. I found out what I want to find out. Who means the most to you? Isaac or I? And I found out, Abraham, that you love me more than you love Isaac.

That's all I wanted to know. There's a ram back there you can offer that as an offering. You know, sometimes we get so enamored and so glad because of the gifts of God to us that we begin to value the gift more than we value the giver.

And God doesn't want this to happen. And He may demand of us the choicest gift He ever gave us in order to turn our hearts to Him and to remind us that we still have Him. And having Him, we don't need the gift because we have Him.

Sometimes we hold on to our experience more than we hold on to the realization that God is our Father. And He is touched with a feeling of our infirmity. And He is committed, in His Word He is committed, that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose.

He guarantees that to be the case. And He wants us to believe it. He wants us to trust Him.

And that's the God of Abraham. The God who wants to be trusted. And this morning He calls on you.

He calls on me to consider this together. To trust Him. To make a new committal of our lives to Him and say, Lord, you have brought us to the truth.

And it's been a long way to here.

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