

# Abraham: The Life of Faith - Part 2

by Roy Hession

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*The life of faith is a journey of trusting in God and His promises, and it requires the death of the old man and the consent to God's judgment in order to enter the land of Canaan.*

**Duration:** 51:46

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:1

**Topics:** "Abraham"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Abraham and his journey to the land of Canaan. He emphasizes the importance of responding to God's promises with faith and obedience. The preacher highlights how Abraham and his family set off with high hopes to obey God's command, but they stopped short and dwelt in a place called Haran for a number of years. The preacher draws a parallel between Abraham's journey and the Christian's journey of faith, pointing out that many believers also stop short of fully experiencing the abundant life and purpose that God has for them. The preacher warns against coming short of God's promises and encourages listeners to continue venturing out in faith and obedience.

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## Transcript

Now will you open your Bibles to the same passage we were reading yesterday, Genesis chapter 12. We will not read this whole passage again because we read it yesterday and our subject is really a closer consideration of this great early chapter in Abraham's life. I remind you that we are thinking of Abraham as illustrating the life of faith to which every one of us is called.

Sometimes you prefer to be called to any other life than a life of faith, for faith is the opposite of sight and how we love to walk by sight but God has to teach us to walk by faith and that's what we, I trust, will see very helpfully illustrated in this history of Abraham. Yesterday we saw the grace of God calling Abraham, God taking the initiative and although God asked him to make a great renunciation, he offered him a glorious vision a thousand times better than anything that he was called to lead and he responded but he responded only by faith. He dared to believe that God meant what he said and to hang on to where he was would be to be impoverished himself when he could be part of a glorious universal worldwide purpose of God for humanity.

Today I want us to look at three things in our passage. First of all, Abraham entering the land and then Abraham dwelling in the land and then Abraham's temporary relapse when for a time he forsook the land and ultimately returned to it. Now before we go further, it might be helpful if we ask ourselves of what is the

land of Canaan here to be regarded as a type? Well, I would say first of all, I think God would have us see it to be a type of the fullness of life in Christ, a type really of Jesus himself.

Someone has said there's only one victorious life in the world and that's the life of the victorious Christ and therefore if Canaan is a type of the victorious life, then it's a type of Christ for there is only one victorious life in the world. It's not mine, it's not yours, it's the life of the victorious Christ in which he wants us to be partakers. Perhaps you'd like to turn to corroborate that.

Hebrews 3.14. Hebrews 3.14. For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. We are not made imitators of Christ, not merely followers of Christ, but partakers of Christ himself. Indeed, Jesus said it's like eating bread and drinking wine.

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, I dwell in him. You partake of Christ. He offers himself to us, not only his salvation but himself, not only his blood but his very life, to be lived again in us.

And there's only one chance of us ever knowing anything of victory and blessing is for us in an ever-deepening measure to be partaking of Christ so that the Lord Jesus is living again his life in us. And that, I would suggest, is the only victorious life there is in the world. Maybe you've seen a little tract called The Life That Wins.

It's written by an American of a generation ago. What was his name? Editor of the Philadelphia Sunday School Times. Trumbull, yes.

And you say, well now, this Life That Wins, that's wonderful. And by the time you finish it, you find what the Life That Wins is, it's Christ. Indeed, he tells how in his experience he was longing for a deeper experience.

He kept on bumping into people who had what he felt he needed. And then he went to a certain meeting, and the title was The Resources of the Christian Life. So he settled himself down expecting to hear a talk on the resources of the Christian life, one of which, of course, was prayer, and the other which, of course, would be Bible study, and another would be perhaps the means of grace and the sacraments.

And he was surprised when the speaker said, the resources of the Christian life are just Jesus Christ. And as he laid hold of that, it became a new chapter for him as it has for many another. So he is our land of Canaan.

And if we see that, we shall see how it is we enter in to be partakers of Christ, where it's no more our working wisdom or power, but the life of Jesus flowing through us hour by hour, where we aren't the doers of what is done, but he is. The Christian life is not our nature improved, but his progressively imparted. But then I think this land of Canaan here is a type of something linked with that, but a little different.

And it is that place, that situation, where God's purpose for our lives can be fulfilled. It's finding the will of God for your life. Now, we must be careful here, lest we get one another into bondage.

God has a marvellous blueprint for our lives, as I've said. But you don't step straight into the completed blueprint. It's progressively unfolding.

The will of God for you, you may not quite know what it is, but the next step is revealed to you. And if you're obedient, it will surely lead from there to that. And Canaan is that place where I should be at this

moment in the will of God, where this blueprint can progressively be unfolded and implemented in my life.

And so this land of Canaan, may I suggest, typifies those two things. Of course, they're inextricably linked together. Now, Abraham's entering into the land.

The interesting thing is that whereas he had this call way back in Chaldea, in Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his nativity, his actual entering into the land of Canaan, the promised land, was in two stages. If you look at Genesis 11, 31, you will see the family starting the great emigration. They got their visas, maybe, and they started off.

Quite interesting, on the Queen Mary you see, you know, who are the immigrants? See, I only have a visitor's visa, but others have got an immigrant's visa, and they always carry a great big package with them. You know what that is? It's an x-ray of their chests. You see, they've got it already, they're making the great venture, because, and then you see the doctors looking at each x-ray before they're even allowed into the United States.

Visitors, well, you can come in with a funny old chest, but you're going to go out soon, so they don't mind too much. Well, now, this little immigrant family, they set off with high hopes to obey God, to go into this land which they didn't know much about, but they got it in promise. And they went, we read, they set out to go into the land of Canaan, well done, and they came unto Heron, and dwelt there.

They stopped short, and it was only after a number of years that the journey was completed, and in the next chapter, chapter 12, verse 5, you have, and after a certain man had died, one of the party, they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came. They stopped short, and instead of getting into Canaan, they stopped at a place called Heron, and they dwelt there, obviously, for a number of years. And so it is with ourselves.

Jesus approached us, the grace of God took the initiative, woke us from our sins, and we found the Lord Jesus, and we began to venture out into this new life. There were intimations of the glorious possibilities of it, Christ living again His life in us. Nothing was impossible to Him, impossible to us.

We began to get a glimpse of a new type of life available to us, and we got a glimpse of a glorious purpose that was going to be implemented through us. And we ventured out, and we took the step, the initial steps, and then so many of us stopped short. We never immediately got into the land of Canaan.

It isn't of necessity that you should have this experience, but so often it is our experience. It's very interesting that this was the danger that Paul envisaged when he was writing to the Hebrews. If you turn over to the Hebrews, you will see this very danger pointed out there.

Hebrews 4, verse 1. Let us therefore fear, lest the promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Any of you should set out from Ur, but not get to Canaan, lest any of you should stop at Her. Of course, here he is referring to the Israelites' entry into the land many years later.

And you remember, they didn't get into the land for 40 years. They stopped and had to wander in the wilderness. And so there is that possibility.

We've stopped. We haven't got right in. We don't know the fullness of life in Christ, and maybe we're not in the place of God's appointment.

Things aren't working out as he intended, and we're in Her. There's a very sad situation to be out, but not in. Halfway house, and you haven't got the glad assurance that the purpose of God is being worked out with you and for you.

And maybe we're not rejoicing in a savior that's more than enough for all our needs. We're struggling to meet those needs ourselves, and failing all the way along. Now why did Abraham stop short? Well, we read in verse 31, and Terah, his father, took Abraham, his son, and Lot, the son of Heron, his son's son, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, his son, Abraham's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan, and they came to Heron and dwelt there.

It was because of his father. Now, this call had not come to his father at all. It was for Abraham.

Indeed, part of the call was that he must get out of his own kindry, and also out of his own land. But here, Terah goes along with them. And will you notice, it's not Abraham taking Terah, it's Terah who takes Abraham.

Maybe Abraham shared this revelation that had come to him in the night watching. And you know, Terah was tremendously impressed. He said, how wonderful.

In any case, this is not too good a spot, and maybe there's a wonderful land where we can strike roots. Come along, we'll go. And Terah, I imagine, got all enthusiastic.

And it was he who took Abraham. Though the revelation was never initially made to Terah, but to Abraham. And it was Terah who took the initiative.

It was the wrong man. Ideally, he should have been left behind, though of course, Abraham could hardly avoid taking his father when his father was so enthusiastic about it all. But of course, the old man, he soon ran out of petrol.

He wasn't the sort that could go on and on in their covered wagons across the prairies or the desert. And at the first nice, lush bit of pasture, he said, this is it. And there they stopped.

And so it was because it was the old man that took Abraham that they stopped halfway. Well now, I hope you don't think I'm trying to be flippant, but there's quite a lot in the New Testament spoken about the old man. The old man.

Put off concerning your former manner of life, the old man, says Paul, who is a corrupt according to deceitful lusts. And elsewhere we're told that God thinks so little of the old man that he has crucified him and buried him with the Lord Jesus, that we should walk in newness of life. Well, if you know your epistles of Paul even a little bit, you'll find every now and then reference to the old man.

Now, what is the old man in the New Testament? Why, I would suggest he's the man of old. The natural man, the man you're used to be. The man of which self is all the time the center.

Now, this man of whom self is the center can be very dissolute because the central letter of the little word sin is I. You look at a dictionary and see all the words that begin with self. Self-indulgence, self-pity, self-abuse. I is at the center of every conceivable sin, from the most respectable to the most disreputable.

But at the same time, the old man can try and be very good. He can be very religious. Just because self is at the center doesn't mean a man doesn't want to be good.

Why, it doesn't improve his prospects. Doesn't he get a better reputation? To do what some of his passions would dictate might get him into trouble, and therefore concern for himself will keep him on the path of decency. And are there not great compensations in being a Christian? And how wonderful to be used, isn't it wonderful? And so the old man who can indulge himself in the most disreputable ways can also try to be a very good Christian.

And as with Kira, he can get all enthusiastic. And when the message of salvation comes, yes, he'll be converted, and he'll live the Christian life, and he gets all enthused, and the old man sets out to go to Canaan. And I tell you, there's a tremendous lot of that.

I suppose we've all had touches of it. Of course we have. There's some people, they get converted, you can hardly hold them down.

They've got them, ooh, ooh, we're going to use those. You won't. God won't use them, but he'll die first.

And maybe we who are in the Lord's work encourage some people too soon. Just because a man had a distinction in the world, we think, well now he must use those for the Lord. That'd be a big advertisement for Jesus Christ.

Jesus doesn't need advertisements. The old man. But the energy that's displayed is natural energy.

It isn't the work of God. And deep down, there are darker undertones. Such a man of his cross won't take it easily.

He likes doing what he's doing. And of course, the old man doesn't last long. The first touch of difficulty, the first real desert journey, he runs out of petrol.

He hasn't got what it takes. Not even the old man, when he's converted, hasn't got what it takes. When he's directing his life to the things of God, he hasn't got what it takes.

God's vision of the Christian life is not me improved, but me supplanted. Jesus has come not only to save me, but to supplant me. The Christian life is not possible to the old man in his most exalted moments.

And of course, his exalted moments are invariably followed by the most debased moments, because it's self-imposed. Now this is what we're born with. This is what we are.

And the estimate of the old man, perhaps we may as well look at least one reference to him in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, Ephesians 4.22. That he put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, this is God's estimate of him, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts. The trouble is they're deceitful. He deceives you.

You think he's all right. He's making improvement. He's getting on.

He's improving. Much better fellow now than when he was first converted. I haven't found that my old man's improved one little bit.

And God's intention isn't to improve the old man, but to progressively supplant him by the new man, which is Christ in us. And when our Christian lives are actuated by the old man, we come short of what God had intended for us. And we find a comfortable place halfway between, and we settle down.

Not only do we find we haven't got what it takes when it comes to it, but then sin comes in and compromise, and things aren't repented of. Attitudes are indulged in. Sin is left.

And we get blinder and blinder to ourselves. We're so right. And then we're not at first very satisfied with herein.

We say, well, maybe that is the Christian life. We get used to this halfway house, herein. And all the time God had something so much better in the land of Canaan.

Well, now this is the truth I think God wants us to see. We will remain coming short of the promised rest in Christ until the old man died. It wasn't until Terah died that they started their emigration again, and ultimately got into the land of Canaan.

And it's not until the old man dies, in some real measure, that we move into a new place with God. And that, the death of the old man, listen, can only happen when you see it's happened already. If you say about your sins, oh God, please put them on the Lord Jesus.

Take them away and put them on him. Jesus will say, I won't. God will say, I won't put them on him.

Why not Lord? I've done it already. You've got to believe it. So it is with this deeper problem.

Not our sins, but the sinner. Ourselves. This man of which self is the center, who always breaks down.

You say, oh God, crucify him. God says, I won't crucify him. I've done it already.

And when was it done? At the cross of Calvary. Not only did Jesus bear our sins, but he wore our likeness. Not only did our sins get their judgment when he cried, it is finished, but the man who produced the sins was likewise judged in the Lord Jesus.

Romans 8, 3 says that Christ was made in the likeness of sin's flesh. He became an effigy, a living effigy of that for which God has nothing but judgment. He doesn't intend to improve Tyre.

He's got no purposes for Tyre. The only thing he has for the old man is the cross. And that he's already done.

He's given his judgment on me at my best, as well as at my worst. That derelict figure out there on the tree, forsaken by man and God, is a picture of me at my best, as well as at my worst. And God wants me to consent to the judgment that he has passed on me.

It's not suggesting for a moment that he won't express himself, but you've lost all confidence in him. You no more have confidence in the flesh. You have begun to agree with God.

You no longer expect any good from yourself. And if self doesn't produce any good, well, that's exactly what you've come to see. It's serious, it humbles you, but it doesn't surprise you.

It's what you've really come to expect. You don't let him get away with it. You judge him with the judgment which God's already pronounced upon him.

But it isn't a terrible surprise. You've come to know yourself, if only by looking at the cross, by seeing the place that the Lamb of God had to take for you. He didn't die on a bed, about which there's nothing disgraceful.

He died on a cross, which was a punishment reserved for criminals. And that's what you deserve. And Paul says, that's me up there.

And he says, way 1900 years ago, I was crucified with Christ. And the only way in which this can become real at all in our lives is seeing that it's already happened, and consenting to that judgment, and judging that man and his expressions in repentance at the foot of that cross. Only so can I enter into the land, quite obviously.

Only so can Christ live again his life in me, when judgment is to be pronounced on that old eye of mine. There cannot be an entering into the land without that, quite obviously. Maybe you've heard the story that's often been told of George Muller, that great saint of God, that apostle of faith, through whom God did such great things.

And someone asked him the secret of his Christian life. And the dear old saint bowed very low in his chair, and he said, there came a time when George Muller died. It didn't really mean that the old man had ceased to exist in George Muller, but he saw, as he'd never seen before, himself on the cross.

He accepted that verdict of himself. He began to judge self, and take it to the cross, and the result was another, mightier than he, took over. And what was wrought was not wrought by George Muller.

George Muller was a Calvary. He was in the land. Christ was his land.

And it's not until we're prepared for that, that we really get into the land of Canaan. Now, this picture would seem to suggest that this is a very definite crisis. This departure from Haran to the land of promise.

It would seem as if it is a second blessing. And without any doubt, it very often is. It's like a second conversion to some.

I believe it was a very important time for me. I could regard it as, if you like, a second conversion, though I don't need a second new birth. You don't need to be born again, and again, and again.

You're born once, that's enough. You're born again once, that's enough. But all in our experience, there very often is an important crisis.

And very often, this crisis comes to us through a great failure. All the ministry of failure in our lives. It was so in Peter.

You see, Peter, I will assume, shall we, he got out of Ur of the Chaldeans. But I say, who was the main force of Peter's Christian life? Why, it was the old man. He was so full of confidence.

He was going to do this. He'd never deny the Lord. The Lord says, you don't know.

You don't know what the old man's like. And he had to find out. And he found out that the old man hadn't got what it took.

And he denied the Lord. And he wept bitterly. He said, Lord, I can never, never trust my promises again.

That's what I've been waiting for, says the Lord. And in a very real way, it was his crisis. When he entered, he passed from Haran into Canaan.

And then the other life, the life of God, the Holy Spirit, entered into him. And so it can be like Peter. And very often, the crisis comes via a great failure.

Praise the Lord for failure. The best thing that ever happened to Peter was when he failed. He was really empty out of this self-confidence that had to be replaced by Jesus Christ.

But whereas we say that, that's not the whole picture. Because this going to the cross has got to be constantly reiterated. If I'm going to be in the land of Canaan.

As I said, there's no internal operation whereby the old man is taken out like a bad tooth. We'd all like that if it were possible, but it isn't there. But God says, there's my verdict on him in the Lord Jesus.

And you're to judge every evidence of his activity. And back to the cross, you go. He has to be taken in deep repentance, and the heart is cleansed, and the Lord Jesus moves in afresh each time.

I only know yesterday morning when I was thinking about this subject, and I found the Lord giving me precious things, I found pride getting in. And I found myself thinking of myself. And I thought, my, the brethren of Motee will like this, they'll think that's rather good, and I'll gain in their estimation.

And it came at me again, and again, and again. And I had to stop. I said, this is what we have to do.

This isn't Jesus. And I had to take time out going to the cross. This is the man that God has nothing for but judgment.

They have other forms in you and me. Oh, we Christian workers, minister, what's the real motive? Are you taking the judgment of self seriously? When did you last see the desire to excel? When did you last have the motive exposed, the reason why you wanted souls to be saved? Was it it should be passed round? Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction.

When did you last have the motive exposed, the reason why you wanted souls to be saved? Was it it should be passed round? When was the last time we bowed at Calvary? That's the reason why we didn't hear of it. Though we may have heard of Christ years ago, we may not be there now. And then we've got to be taken to count.

And not only Christian workers, every other, wherever we're called, whatever God's purpose is, this old man is infiltrating as he can all the time. But Calvary stands, Calvary's tree is planted. That judgment on myself is all the time availing me to accept.

There's forgiveness and cleansing all so quick as I do so. And I'm in the land, afresh and anew, every time I do, Christ becomes my all. And so we see Abraham getting into the land.

Well, I suppose that's our experience. We didn't get in perhaps all in one piece, although we did. And converts very often do.

They get into a place of blessing quicker than the old Christians that we are. But even if it was like that to begin with, you've had your time at Calvary. God helps us to move out of that wretched halfway place into the life which is the life that wins Christ.

And where you pass those lesser concerns, those competing interests, to apprehend that for which you've been apprehended of Christ. Now we have Abraham dwelling in the land. If you will look at chapter 12,

you will see verse 6, that Abraham passed through the land unto the place of Sikkim, unto the place of Moreh, and the Canaanite was then in the land.

And the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, unto thy seed will I give this land. And there he builded an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him. When he got into this land, only to find it wasn't vacant.

It was already in possession of the Canaanite. And all the appearances of the hour were to Abraham against the fulfillment of that promise. This is the land he was going to give me.

This is where he was going to build this nation. But the Canaanite is already in the land. And at first there seemed no probability of the promise being fulfilled.

But no sooner had he come into the Canaanite, than Abraham had his second appearance of the Lord. And the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, you see, I don't care who's in it, unto thy seed will I give the land. And here's this man of faith, he takes his eyes off things seen.

He looks to Jehovah himself, accepts that promise, and he builds an altar unto the Lord. He takes that promise at its face, Daniel, and he's fully persuaded that what God promised, he's going to fulfill. Now so it is for us, we do come into a new place with the Lord, as we come to the cross.

But the place we come into, very often doesn't seem a suitable place where the victorious life could be worked out. The Canaanites in the land, things are just as difficult as hell. You find yourself taking up a job where everybody's ungodly.

They're all sorts of difficulties. You're cut off from fellowship. This doesn't look like the place that God promised for you.

Things are difficult, difficult to have our quiet times maybe, not enough solitude. Someone was complaining of that to me about their home situation yesterday. I said, I don't think this is much of a land.

But you know, this wonderful Lord of ours knows how to appear to us again. And you'll find he's there. He'll appear to you.

He says, this is the land that I'm going to give to you. This is where I'm going to live again, my life through you. And I'm adequate for this situation.

This is the place where my blueprint is going to be progressively developed for you. And you have got to accept that fact by faith. You began by faith, the big venture, and you've got to continue that way.

And Abraham, it didn't matter to him who or who wasn't there. He was fully persuaded. This is my land, and you and I can be too.

This is where you may crack, but this is the thing God's got to teach us. To walk by faith, which isn't by sight. And by faith to endure seeing him who's invisible.

To know the resources of the Christian life are Christ. And is he not enough for this situation? I want you to notice how his faith expressed itself. It expressed itself in two ways.

First of all, he built an altar. And that was a direct answer to this gracious revelation. He built an altar.

The same promise was reiterated in Genesis 26 to Isaac. This is the land. And immediately, oh, how wonderful, what grace.

He built an altar of worship and praise. And so it is with us. Our response to the promises of grace is to be that of faith, which expresses itself in praise and worship.

Can you praise for something you can't see? You've got to. You've got to learn. God made a gracious promise to David that from his line would come the Messiah.

And though there was just yet, of course, no sign of it, the first thing he did was sit before the Lord and say, oh, what a wonderful God. Who am I to have this privilege? And my dear friends, there's got to be precious, exalted moments, and they will be yours. When faith sees the promise, embraces it, and rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

You don't rejoice because you feel it. You rejoice in faith. Whom having not seen, we love.

Whom though now we see him, not yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I'm not very interested in just a peace that comes or a joy that comes if it isn't the result of believing in this immense grace. Have we learned it? Times of amazing exaltation, but they're not dangerous.

They aren't just, they come at you. They're all rational. Very, very rational.

The Christian's joy is rational. It's based on the promises of grace. And it's by faith that he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It isn't mere emotion. He can give you a reason for it. You see a man, I've sometimes seen people in this hall, as they sing a hymn, nearly taking off for glory.

If I ask them, they could give a reason. What was it that made you look as you did and sing as you did? What was it that filled you? They'll tell you, Jesus showed me that in the Bible. I lost my burden.

I saw the promise as good as done. I could do nothing else. Oh, the building of this altar.

And of course, the building of the altar was the place where the blood was sprinkled. And for us, it means that there may be failures, there may be deflections, but there's this precious altar by which I may stay in the land, for there the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. But going back a moment to this faith that takes the promise, will you turn over to Hebrews 11, where there's reference to Abraham, of course.

Hebrews 11, verse 17, we read that Abraham, breaking into the middle of verse 17, it says, he that had received the promises. You see? So Abraham received the promises. But in verse 39, it says, these all received not the promises.

Abraham received the promise, yet he didn't receive the promise. What do those two contradictory things mean? There's a difference between receiving the promise and receiving the fulfillment of it. Actually, Abraham never did see the fulfillment of it.

He says, all right, I'm content. Apparently, the ultimate fulfillment will have to be in glory. All right.

But he received, and it affected his whole attitude. In fact, he didn't care too much about the fulfillment. The receiving of the promise was as good as done for him, and he lived in the power of it.

So the actual fulfillment, he left to God, and that didn't matter too much to him. Oh, all this is involved in this building an altar. I wonder how it is with us.

Has faith built an altar of acceptance of the promise? But see, where's the altar? Well, praise the Lord, there's the blood upon that altar for you. Calvary is there available. You can still go on confident.

This is the only way. We've got to learn to live in this rarefied, joyous atmosphere of faith. I don't always do so.

I've fallen under the power of seeing things seen, but I've got to go back to my altar again. Back to my place of holy confidence in Him. But there's another thing, and it's this.

He not only built an altar, but he pitched a tent. I haven't got time to show you the references in Isaac and Jacob, but they were all the time doing it. Two things.

Built an altar, pitched a tent. Built an altar, pitched a tent. Built an altar, pitched a tent.

Wherever Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob went, built an altar, pitched a tent. Now what does this tent pitching mean? Why, a tent is a temporary building. The great point in which it differs from any other building is it hasn't got a foundation.

And it says in Hebrews 11, we haven't time to look at it again, but you must look at it. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelt in tents. So they looked for a city that had foundation.

In other words, he says, we're going to have this whole land one day. We can build our cities. We can have our foundation.

Till then, only tents. Now, what he might have done with this now, this is my land. It's promised.

Well, it isn't very easy to actually possess it, but we ought to get moving in that direction. And he could have come to business terms with the king and bought land on it at quite a big price. And then he could have built houses that had foundations.

He says, I'm not going to spend any money doing that. The whole thing is going to be mine one day. Greatest.

I'm not going to sink any capital in what's already mine. Till it actually becomes mine, I'm going to dwell in a tent. I'm not going to give my finger to try and help God fulfill his promise.

It's up to him. And oh, what dangers he avoided because of it. He dwelt in tents.

You know, when you, you know, there's a promise of God and his purpose to you is along a certain how we try to help him out, how we try to fulfill it ourselves. And we only get our fingers burnt. You know, I used to pray long, a long time with a dear friend of mine, and I learned much of him years ago at a young age.

He says, Lord, we're not going to lift a finger to help you out, to help you fulfill your promise. We're going to meet it. We're not going to lift a finger.

And how God owned that thing. Things happen that man couldn't do. That's the way.

We don't need to try and buy land and build a house that has foundations till the actual fulfillment, we're going to dwell in tents, absolutely confident that God is going to fulfill his promise. And this meant, of course, that Abraham was so different from the others. They did dwell in houses that had foundations.

He was only living in a tent, and he was marked out as a different man. It says in Hebrews 11, they went through as strangers, foreigners, and pilgrims. That tent living.

You see, that was what Lot got tired of. He didn't want to go on living in a tent. Why not go to Sodom where there were proper houses? And this path of faith is going to mark you out as a different sort of man.

You're going to be different from the world. They're always on the get. Everything depends on their efforts, not so the child's God.

You're to be willing to be a foreigner and a pilgrim. When I go abroad, I'm distinctive, they know. Even in America, they know I'm not an American by the way in which I speak.

Quite an advantage to have an English accent, by the way, in America. They treat us, I think, better than we treat them. Are you prepared to be a foreigner? Are you prepared to be the one man out? Are you prepared to be a pilgrim only passing through? This earth as it is is not your home.

You've got promises that assure you something so much better. Oh young people, you've got to get it. This is built right into the Christian life.

If you're not prepared to be a foreigner in this world, in the world society, then give up all thought of being a Christian. You cannot be a Christian without being that. A man's utterly distinct, that doesn't do what they do, that has different habits, above all a different vision and a different value.

You're looking for a city that has foundation. And Abraham said, the promise doesn't get fulfilled in my life, that's all right. I know it's coming, I have to be in glory then.

And some of the glorious purposes of God for you, I don't know, you might have to wait to glory. Isn't that enough? Oh my dear friends, the whole of redemption is never going to be really completed till we get to glory. And maybe we don't do enough thinking about that.

Paul says he rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. Only so would the whole thing be complete. Till I'm not going to try and find my home down here, I'm going to be a stranger.

Dwelling in the land. And now I must hurry on for a few minutes to Abraham's temporary land. When having dwelt in this wonderful attitude of faith in the land, alas and alas, he forsook it.

And the occasion of his forsaking that promised land was in verse 10, and there was a famine in the land. And Abraham went down into Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was grievous in the land. And he left the place that God had given him.

He didn't stumble over the Canaanites, he didn't quit it for that. But only when the famine came, and the rains didn't come, and there was no crops, he thought he'd be better down in Egypt. And he forsook the land because of the famine.

Now, we too may have a time of famine in the land. I can't say that it was so in Abraham's case that it was because of sin there was famine, it's certainly so because of us. Even in the land of Canaan, if sin comes

in, wrong attitude, unbrokenness, God shuts up heaven, that there's no rain.

And then there's a famine, the Bible doesn't live, your soul doesn't rejoice, prayer dies out. But very often we aren't aware that that's the reason why there's famine, we just know we're not quite satisfied. And then too, these things don't seem to be working out for us in our present situation as we thought they were going to.

And rather than stay, even in the land, even if there's famine there, and repenting of everything, God will show. We take a shortcut, we try to get a make way, something that will give us a satisfaction, some other plan for our lives, and we go down into Egypt. And of course it was a failure of faith.

His strongest point was the point in which he failed. He didn't believe that the God who put him in that land could yet provide for him even in a time of famine. And even if things don't appear to be working out for you as you thought they would, stay where God's put you.

Many a minister crosses opposition or difficulty, goes to another church, but he takes his biggest problem with him. It's himself. You've got to get the victory in that difficult place first before you even dare intervene.

Someone has said that a great big squeeze turns into wine, but if left to dry in the sun, goes into a race. And that's all that happens if we run away from the famine, we just turn into a race. If we stay in that difficult situation, and where God shows we've got the repentance, we go to that cross and Lord, if the rain isn't coming, show me where I have got to repent.

Sometimes of course the situation is what it is, because of God's discipline. Doesn't matter whichever it is, you go there, you stay there, but we don't. Hubert hasn't known what it is to run away.

I made a big big mistake in my life years ago because of this very thing. Well now, what happened to him in Egypt? We read yesterday, we needn't read it again, but it led him to further sin. He got scared that these Egyptians would desire his wife, who was a beautiful woman, and he asked her to tell a lie and pretend that she was his sister, so that he would be saved alive.

He thought they would kill him for her sake. And you know when I get out to the path of blessing, and out of the place of God's appointment, it always leads me to further sin, further compromise. It was so with Peter.

All Peter did was to warm himself at the world's fire. He never should have been there. He should have been with the other disciples, but he got in there, and instead of standing separate from them, he identified himself with them, and warmed himself at their fire.

And I tell you, when the Christian warms himself at the world's fire, he's in a dangerous place. And of course it led him to further sin. You're a disciple, aren't you? No, I'm not.

And he found himself pretending, that he wasn't a Christian. When a man gets out of the place of separation with his God, you'll find that you're ultimately led even to deny the Lord. You're in the wrong company.

You'll find you just cannot stand there. You never should have been there. That was where the mistake was.

Young Peter said, it was so difficult, you know, to be a Christian when I go out with the boys. I said, you shouldn't go out with the boys. That's not your public.

You should have been in the prayer meeting of young people, or in the evangelistic rally. That's where you should be. But once you start going down into Egypt, you find yourself getting involved in all sorts of unthings.

And notice this. He nearly wrecked the marvelous purpose of God for his life. You have the astonishing spectacle of the chosen mother of the promised seed in the harem of Pharaoh.

What would have happened to that promise of God, if she'd become Pharaoh's wife and conceived? What about this wonderful promise that through her was going to come this great nation and ultimately the world's deliverer? It was nearly wrecked. My dear friend, when you get out of the way and start going down into the world, that wonderful blueprint was just beginning to be implemented, you're in danger of ripping it to pieces. And you don't know what you're losing.

One day you will. You won't be able to forgive yourself. God intervened, however, here.

And he plagued Pharaoh. And you have the astonishing sight of an Egyptian reproving a man of God. And Abraham was saved.

The thing that struck me was this. God didn't do it for Abraham's sake. He had his own purposes to fulfill.

And you know, God's extricated me from things, and I guess some of us, not merely for your sake. He saw his whole purpose was at stake. And grace knew how to step in and save.

But not even grace can do that if you're intent on going on in your own stubborn way, and everything will be lost. And so it was, dear Abraham, returned as a humble, penitent man to the place where his tent had been at the beginning. Will you look at that? Chapter 13, verse 3. He came out of Egypt, and he went on his journey 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'd made there at the first.

And there he called on the name of the Lord. I wonder if some of us need to take that verse seriously, to return to the place where our tent had been at the beginning. Back to that old place of faith and holy confidence, that place of separation from the world, that place of living for Jesus only, that place where faith builds its altar and knows that even if it is a failure, there is the precious blood for peace and cleansing again.

Maybe this morning God would have some of us who have been in the land, but have gone down into Egypt in one way or another, to return to the place where our tent had been at the beginning. And he's waiting for us there. He's not waiting for a big stick.

The big stick has already been laid on his back for us. And the amazing thing is that when we repent, how quickly we step back into the land, back into the purpose. Grace makes good what we've lost.

And the purpose of God goes on again with us, as it did with Abraham. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we thank thee for these inspired records in thy word.

Thou didst tell us they're written for our admonition upon whom the end of the ages have come. We thank thee that when you called for these scriptures to be written, you were thinking of us, and we ask thee

interpret them deeply to us. Lord, show us where we have stopped halfway.

Show us where we've stopped, how we've stopped. Show us Calvary's entrance into the promised land, as we judge ourselves and come to thee, to make thee our Lord and our light. And then, Lord, others of us have been in the land.

But, Lord, thou knowest perhaps lately, because of difficulties, we've begun to compromise, we've begun to slip, we've got cold. In some measure, we've gone down into Egypt. Lord Jesus, thank you for not leaving Abraham there.

You watched over him. You preserved him. You stepped in.

Do that for us, Lord. And may there be for some of us a coming back to the place where our tent was at the beginning. May we find again that first love which may be with left.

For this we ask in thy dear name. Amen. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen.

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