

Abraham ■ The Man Who Worshipped God

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the conditions of discipleship by examining the life of Abraham. It highlights the need to be detached from possessions, relatives, and self, as seen in Abraham's obedience to God's tests. The ultimate test of faith is illustrated in Abraham's willingness to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, showcasing true worship and obedience. The message encourages believers to count the cost, carry their cross, and seek the blessing of Abraham through faith that produces works.

Scripture: Genesis 22:1, Luke 14:27, Galatians 3:13, James 2:21, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Discipleship", "Faith and Obedience"

Description

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Transcript

I mentioned in our last session that we mostly look at New Testament passages in all our messages and studies, but I mentioned how three quarters of the Bible is the Old Testament and there's a lot we can learn from that, even though the Old Covenant has been abolished. The Old Testament is still very, very important. All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for instruction to make the man of God perfect in every way.

And we looked at Job and we saw how God could point him out to Satan. In that connection, I want to show you a verse which applies to all believers in Ephesians chapter 3. You know, Jesus said to his disciples, It is upon you, you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, to the outermost parts of the earth. And we are called as believers to be witnesses for Christ to all human beings.

Everybody we come across, even if we don't preach to them, they must see something in our life. Those who live with us and even the way we walk down the streets and somebody whom we don't know passing by. We are a witness, a light that burns.

Lights are very silent, but you recognize whether there's light in a room. If a person's walking down the road with a torch at night, you know there's a torch there. Light must shine.

So we have to be a witness to everyone we meet. If we don't, with our words, by our life, by the very way we conduct ourselves. But here's another verse, Ephesians 3 and verse 10.

It says here, God's purpose is that the manifold, manifold means a many colored, many sided wisdom of God. God's wisdom has got many, many different aspects. And all those aspects of God's wisdom is to be made known through the church.

Not just by you, none of us can do it completely. It's by the total body of Christ. Jesus could do it all by himself because he was the body of Christ in one person.

But since then, no single Christian, not even the Apostle Paul, could manifest it all by himself. But with the whole body of Christ, the whole church can manifest the wisdom of God to whom? Now it's not talking about Jerusalem, Judea and the outermost parts of the earth. It's not talking about human beings at all.

We are to show the wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. And when it speaks about heavenly places in the letter to Ephesians, it's always referring to demonic spirits. The evil spirits in the heavenlies.

So we are called to be a witness to Satan. And that's what Job was. When God could point him out to Satan and say, there's a person.

Have you seen him? Have you seen the way he lives? And today God wants to find people across the face of the earth who can be like this. A witness to show forth the wisdom of God. The many-sided wisdom of God.

See that as your calling, dear brothers and sisters. Part of your calling is to be a witness to Satan. And when we think about a witness to others in our church and to other people around us, we always think of what they see in us, what they hear in us when we are before them.

But when we think of being a witness to Satan, Satan watches us when we are all alone. If when you're all alone you're sitting watching pornography, what sort of witness are you to Satan? Even if afterwards you repent of it and say, Lord, I'm sorry, please forgive me. And you do it again.

And again you ask the Lord to forgive you. Or you have some secret sin. I don't mean in your thoughts.

Satan cannot read your thoughts. But that only God can see. So ultimately our witness must be before God.

But there are a lot of things we do in the darkness when no human being sees us. I'm talking about physical actions or words that we speak to unbelievers in our office. We don't lose our testimony in the church by the way we lose our temper in the office.

Or the way you lose your temper at home. But Satan sees it. You're not a witness to the devil there.

Or when you're all by yourself. Or when you handle money in a certain way that nobody knows except God and the devil. We're not a witness there if you're unfaithful with money.

Or any type of unrighteousness in your past life that has not been set right. You have not forgiven somebody. You've got a wrong attitude towards someone the way you behave.

And it's pretty obvious in the way you behave that even the devil can see. There you're not a witness. So think of Ephesians 3.10 as an amplification of Acts 1.8. Acts 1.8 is referring to our being a witness to everybody in the world.

And Ephesians 3.10 goes one step higher and says God wants us to be a witness to Satan and all the hosts. And there Job is an example. Not only Job, many other people throughout the Bible.

Now today we want to think about Abraham. I want you to turn with me to Isaiah 41. Isaiah 41 we read the Lord saying in verse 8. You Israel are my servant.

Descendant of Abraham my friend. It's great to be a servant of God. It's a tremendous honor.

In Isaiah 42.1 even Jesus is called. God says my servant. So it's a tremendous honor to be a servant of God.

To be called by God to serve him. But it's even more wonderful when God says you're my friend. Abraham my friend.

What an expression. Think if God were to say that about you. With your name there.

I think of myself and say Lord can you say about me, my friend. With your name there. Can God say that? Would that be something you long for? I tell you boy I long for that.

Not only God saying my servant but my friend. So God doesn't say that lightly about anybody. He tests a man.

And when he's passed the test he'll give him that title. And that can apply to us as well. Because many times in the New Testament we read about Abraham as an example for us in faith.

And in obedience. Romans 4 Abraham is set before us as an example in faith. And in James chapter 2 he's set before us in his obedience as an example to us in obedience.

So when we look at his life we find that God did not quickly call him my friend or my servant without testing him. You know even Jesus was tested for 30 years. Hidden away in Nazareth with nobody who knew anything about him.

He did not do any miracles. He did not preach any sermons. 30 years he was tested.

He was tested as a little boy to see whether he'd be obedient to Joseph and Mary. Obedient to imperfect parents. And later on when he was working as a carpenter tested with money and faithfulness in his work.

And at the end of 30 years we find God publicly saying at his baptism this is my beloved son. Not just that. In whom I'm thoroughly pleased.

I'm totally happy with him. I'm well pleased with him. I've observed his life.

Every second of his life for 30 years. And I have nothing to say but this that I'm extremely happy. I'm well pleased with him.

I wonder if you have a longing like that. Many times I have said to the Father in heaven. I say Father, Lord Jesus can you say about me you're well pleased with me.

All the honors of men and the appreciation of men is garbage compared to that. One word from the Lord I'm well pleased with. Seek for that my brothers and sisters.

It says about Jesus he was well pleased. And I want you to have a look at Romans. Sorry not Romans.

Second Corinthians in chapter 5. Second Corinthians chapter 5 we read the apostle Paul saying that he's got an ambition in life. That's mentioned in second Corinthians 5 and verse 9. In second Corinthians chapter 5 he's talking about the fact that our home is in heaven. In verse 1 and 2. Our dwelling is in heaven.

That means here we are absent from our home. It's like a person who's visiting another country. When you're visiting another country you're a visitor there.

You're actually a citizen of some other country. But you're visiting another country and Paul says I'm a citizen of heaven. But I'm visiting here on this earth for a short time maybe 60, 70 years.

Then I go to my place where my citizenship, our citizenship is in heaven. He says that in Philippians 3. So he says we are citizens of heaven. And then he says in second Corinthians 5 and verse 9. Whether we are at home which is in heaven.

Or absent from home which is here on the earth. We have the same ambition. To be pleasing to God.

Right now we are absent from home. One day we'll be at home in heaven when Christ comes back. Then definitely our ambition will be only to please God.

The question is when we are absent from home. And here on earth is that also your ambition? Paul says that is my ambition. In other words he says my life is set in a certain direction.

Every day of my life, every moment of my life. To the best of my ability, to my conscious awareness. I want to be pleasing to God, pleasing to God, pleasing to God.

And one day Christ comes again. I continue in the same direction. I don't have to change direction at all.

I'm pleasing to God for all eternity. Now with many believers it's not like that. It's slightly away.

They want to be pleasing to God but many times they please themselves. Or they want to please their friends. Or relatives.

Or their boss or something else. And then when Christ comes they suddenly want to stop pleasing God. There's something wrong with such Christians.

They are selfish who seek their own gain. In other words I can gain something if I seek to please some man, my relatives or my friends or my parents or my boss here on earth. But when Christ comes of course all those people have disappeared.

Now I want to please God all the time. What do you think of such Christians? They are self-serving, selfish people. I don't know whether they will ever get into God's kingdom at all.

I'm absolutely certain of one thing. That those who seek to please God here on earth will definitely be in eternity with the Lord. But those who are seeking to please men, I don't know whether they'll ever be in the kingdom of God.

Because it says in Galatians in chapter 1. Galatians in chapter 1 in verse 10 is a very important verse where it says if I seek to please men I cannot be the servant of Christ. You can't be a sort of a secondhand servant of Christ. It says here you just cannot be a servant of Christ.

If I seek to please men I cannot be a servant of Christ. That's absolute. So Abraham became the friend of God.

He pleased God according to that old covenant level. Like I said in our previous study of Job, remember whenever we look at these Old Testament examples, remember they were under the old covenant. We don't expect from them the standard God expects of us in the new covenant.

To whom more is given more is required. From the day of Pentecost onwards we are under the new covenant. And God requires a much higher standard from us than he expected from Job and Abraham.

So their lives are a challenge to us that if they got that far, how much higher it should be with us. And it's only on that basis that we are seeking to study some of these Old Testament examples. So what is the first test that came to Abraham? That's the first test of discipleship that comes to us.

Are you willing to follow the Lord breaking away from your earthly family? It says here in Genesis chapter 12 verse 1. The Lord said to Abraham, go from your country, from your relatives, from your father's house to the land which I will show you. Do you know that that is the first condition of discipleship to be a disciple of Jesus? It's exactly similar words that the Lord says. Abraham had to go physically away from his father and mother and all his relatives Today Jesus calls us to go spiritually away.

You don't have to be physically away from them. You can live in the same town. But Luke 14, 26, Jesus said, Luke 14, 26.

Similar words to Abraham for us spiritually. If anyone, if you claim to be a believer, you want to be a disciple of Jesus, this applies to you, my brother and my sister. If anyone comes to me and he does not hate his own father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers, his sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Now, we know that when we compare that with similar words that Jesus sometimes comparing scripture with scripture makes it clear to us. What did Jesus mean by hate? Because in other places in Mark 7, Jesus told us we've got to honor our father and mother. And that's repeated in Ephesians chapter 6 as well.

And we've got to love our wife, it says in Ephesians 5. So what does it mean to hate your wife and children? Well, Jesus explained it in Matthew 10, 37, in slightly different words, but means the same thing. He said in Matthew 10, 37, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

So comparing scripture with scripture, we find that's what he's referring here. If anyone comes to me and loves his father and mother, Luke 14, 26, more than me, or he loves his wife and children more than me, or he loves his brothers and sisters more than me, or he loves his own life more than me, he cannot be my

disciple. So we find the same thing with Abraham.

For us spiritually, am I willing to make a break with the attachment I have to my relatives? And Jesus is an example for us here. We read in Luke chapter 2, the last verse that he was subject to Joseph and Mary throughout the time he was in Nazareth. But once he left Nazareth and after the baptism, now he was a servant of God.

After that, you know, he got baptized, and then the very first step, he comes to Cana of Galilee's first miracle. You read in John chapter 2, when the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus came to Jesus and said, they have no wine. And look at Jesus' reply to her in John chapter 2, verse 4. The one whom he called mother, mother, mother, mother, mother for 30 years.

He turns to him and says, woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not come. What is that to me and you? My time has not yet come. Woman, I'm no longer your son to obey you in everything.

I did that for 30 years, but now I'm called to a ministry, and I have to break that connection. I'm not going to listen to you anymore. I have to listen to my heavenly father.

I don't think I'm going to have the same relationship with you that I had till now. What an example that is for us, dear brothers and sisters. Jesus himself.

And I see particularly in India, I've seen, and probably in many countries in the West as well, but in India, attachment to parents is very strong. And I've seen so many, many cases of believers who do not obey God's command which says you must leave your father and mother and cleave to your wife. And wives who don't leave their father and mother and cleave to their husbands, like it says in Isaiah 45 and Psalm 45 verse 10, forget your father's house, he tells the wife.

And Genesis 2, 24, leave your father and mother. So there's a break needed even in an earthly marriage, which so many people do not do. They're still attached to their parents more than to their marriage partners.

And no wonder they have unhappy marriages. No wonder they don't fulfill God's purpose. The same way when it comes to parents trying to hinder you from doing God's will, if they stop you from taking baptism or stop you from doing anything God calls you to.

My parents were God-fearing parents, but when God called me to leave my job, I did not consult my parents. I just put in my resignation and told them, I'm not going to be the admiral of the Navy like you wanted me to be. I'm going to serve the Lord.

I'm quitting my job. I've put in my resignation. So I wonder if you're not making as much progress in your life because you're not fulfilled the condition of discipleship.

Let me give you one more example where we read that a time came when Jesus' mother and brothers were standing outside wanting to speak to him in Matthew chapter 12 while he was preaching somewhere. His mother and his brothers, Matthew 12 and verse 46, were standing outside wanting to speak to him. And someone said, Your mother and your brothers are here, Matthew 12, 47.

And he said, Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? Look at the way he speaks. These who hear the word of God and obey me, who do the will of God, those are my brothers, sisters, and mothers. That was

the test that came to Abraham as well.

And I want you to see how he didn't pass immediately. God had told him, Leave your father's house and leave your relatives and come, Genesis 12, 1. But we read about what actually happened when they left Ur of the Chaldees. It says here in 1131, Abraham shared this with his father, Terah.

And Terah took the initiative. And it says in Genesis 1131, Terah took Abraham, his son, and Lot, the son of Heron, his grandson, and Sarah, his daughter-in-law, and they all went out from Ur of the Chaldees in order to enter the land of Canaan. God had not called his father.

God had not called Lot. Why in the world did Abraham take them with him? No, it doesn't say he took them. His father said, Hey, Abraham is 75 years old, but he's still a slave to his father.

His father said, Abraham, listen to me. If you're going, I'll take you. And we're going to take my favorite grandson.

Lot is also here. We're going to take him with him. And Abraham obeyed.

That was wrong. It was foolish. And they didn't go to Canaan.

It says in Genesis 1131, they got stuck in Heron and didn't go further. And that's what happens when you listen to your parents and don't listen to God. God tells you to do something, and your parents say, Yeah, I'll come along with you.

And they stop halfway, and they won't allow you to go all the way. They stopped at Heron. And what does God do? He kills Abraham's father.

Yeah. And God wants to do something for his servants. He'd do something even as radical as that, that if a man's father objects to his hindering and is a hindrance, God will kill the father.

You read that? Terah died. And then Abraham moved on. Terah died.

And then, Genesis 12, then Abraham went forth, as the Lord had spoken to him much earlier. So God loved Abraham so much that he took away his father. But because Terah's grandson and Abraham's nephew, Lot, was also along with them, he should not have been there at all.

What could Abraham do? God mercifully didn't kill Lot, but he allowed Lot to go along with him. It's a real problem when we allow our relatives to come and interfere with God's call on our life. When you're a disciple of Jesus Christ, you have to take a stand.

It'll hurt your relatives. They may try to hurt you as well. But you have to take a stand for the Lord.

If you love any of your relatives more than you love Jesus, forget about being a disciple. I don't know what your future will be. I've got no promise in the Scripture for those who love their relatives more than they love Jesus Christ.

It's very strong, the demand of the Lord, upon those who want to be his disciples. And many people never accomplish God's full purpose. They never grow in their Christian life because they only want to go to heaven when they die.

They don't want to accomplish God's purpose on earth. You cannot fulfill God's purpose on earth if you don't obey God. And if God loves you, you can do something drastic.

In Abraham's case, he did it. And then he took him. So that was the first test that came to him.

I think in eternity we will see when we stand before the Lord how many people the Lord called but did not fulfill his purpose for their life because they loved somebody, maybe their father, mother, wife, or children or something, and they came short of God's purpose. And when they stand before the Lord on the final day, the Lord will say, You know what a fantastic purpose I had for you, my son, but you wouldn't listen to me. You loved your parents more than me.

You listened to them more than you listened to me. That's why I see what a wasted life you lived on earth, useless life. You just trusted me for forgiveness of sins.

In a selfish way, you lived on earth just to go to heaven. You accepted me as your Savior. But what did you do? Was there any gratitude that you showed me for dying for you on the cross? No.

You lived 100% for yourself to please your parents, to please your relatives. Dear brothers and sisters, don't have a regret in the day of judgment when you stand before the Lord. You may not even make it into God's kingdom if you're like that because people are like that.

Over a period of time, they'll begin to please other people, and finally they'll lose their salvation altogether, even if they were saved once. You know, the Bible says very clearly in Hebrews 3.14 that we are made partakers of Christ if, that's a big if, I-F, Hebrews 3.14, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end. What if we don't hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end? Hebrews 3.14 says very clearly, you will not be a partaker of Christ, and your eternal destiny will be something very different from what it was supposed to be when you first accepted Christ.

You've got to hold fast firmly until the end. And that's why Jesus said, you have to make a break with allowing your relatives to run your life. So that's the first test where Abraham failed, but God made him obey him.

Now, I want to show you another example. Do you know why, out of the 12 tribes in Israel, why God picked up Levi to be the priest? Was that favoritism? Did God take lots and say, okay, Levi? No. There was a reason.

There was a time, you know the story, when the Israelites were worshiping idols. And we read that when Moses came down from the mountain, we read in Exodus in chapter 32, Moses came down from the mountain, and he saw this and he was very angry, and he broke the calf that they had made, covenant calf. And he said to the people, who is on the Lord's side? That is the question.

Who is now on the Lord's side here among all of you? It was an open challenge. Exodus 32, verse 26, who is on the Lord's side? Come. And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him.

And he said, now go into the camp and ignore your brothers or friends or neighbors. All those who worship idols, take your sword and kill them and dedicate yourself to the Lord, verse 29, and be against son, brother, anybody, so that God can bestow a blessing upon you. He didn't tell them what that blessing was going to be.

And they went and they did that. And we read later on in Deuteronomy. Listen to this word.

Deuteronomy chapter 33 and verse 9. It's referring to Levi. Deuteronomy 33, verse 8. Of Levi, he said, the Urim, that is the things that mark the high priest, and your Thummim and Urim belong to your godly man, because where Deuteronomy 33, 9, he said to his father and mother, I will not consider them. He did not acknowledge his brothers.

He did not regard his own children. He used his sword against father, mother, brothers, and sons, and thus observed your word and kept your command. Therefore, Deuteronomy 33, 10, they shall teach your ordinances to Jacob and your law to Israel.

They'll be the ones who put incense before you and hold burnt offerings on your altar. Lord, bless his substance and accept the work of his hands and defeat all his enemies. So on what basis were they selected? They made a break with their earthly relatives.

I'm absolutely convinced there are many, many children of God who have never made that break. And therefore, God is not able to fulfill his full purpose through them. Most believers, they probably fulfill 5% of God's purpose in their lives because they have not made this break.

Or do they make a break at the beginning perhaps when they accept Christ, but halfway along, they feel sorry for the cares of their mother and the pleadings of their father, and they change their mind, and they backslide. They don't see that as a backsliding because they're not living in sin, but they're not listening to the voice of God anymore. So that is the first test Abraham had to pass.

He broke away, and he came away from his relatives. As I said, Jesus himself is our example. Then the second test, we read here a second condition of discipleship.

Another condition of discipleship in Luke 14 is mentioned in verse 33 that if you don't give up all your possessions, it's like your attachment to your relatives has to be given up. Your attachment to your possessions have to go as well. You can have your possessions.

You can still have your parents around, your relatives, and visit them, and care for them, and provide for them. All that is okay, but you must not let them control your life. It says here that if you don't give up all that you possess, you cannot be my disciple, Luke 14 and verse 33.

And that was the second test that came to Abraham as you read in Genesis. When you come to chapter 13, there was a conflict between Abraham and Lot's servants over the, where will we feed our sheep? We have so much of livestock, and there's conflict here. And so you know what Abraham said to Lot? I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 13.

Let us separate. And Abraham could have said, listen, Lot, don't ever forget that I'm the one whom God called. You just followed along.

So I'm gonna choose first which place is best for me and my livestock. Then you can take what's left. But see what he says.

Abraham says in Genesis 13, verse 8, our attitude to property, possessions, Abraham said to Lot, Genesis 13, verse 8, let there be no strife between you and me because we are brothers. He was not a brother. He was his nephew.

He could have said, listen, Lot, I'm your uncle. I'm senior. Number one reason why I should choose first.

No. He could have said, secondly, God called me. He didn't call you.

Number two reason why I should choose first. No. We are brothers.

Here the whole land is before you. Let's separate. Let's seek for, I wanna seek for peace.

Blessed are the peacemakers. They shall be called the sons of God. He said, I want peace.

And he said, you choose first. If you choose the left side, I'll choose the right. If you choose the right side, I'll go to the left.

And covetous Lot, verse 10, looked at the valley of Jordan, well watered everywhere. Before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 13, 10. And he said, I like that.

I'll choose it. My foolish uncle gave me first choice. Was his uncle really foolish? He was the wisest man on earth at that time because he chose God.

When you choose God, you get everything. So Lot chose for himself. Verse 11.

Look at those words. Four important words. Lot chose for himself.

Okay, let's see. And he chose the land of Sodom and Gomorrah. And you know what finally happened? He lost everything.

He lost even his property. And his uncle had to come and rescue him and return his property to him. And who was the silent witness to this transaction going on between Abraham and Lot? Do you know that whenever you are engaged in some financial transaction or any transaction concerning property on this earth, do you know there's a silent witness watching you all the time? You see it here.

God was watching. Lot didn't know that. Even Abraham didn't know that.

We know it today because we've got the scriptures. He's the silent witness to every financial transaction, everything to do with money in your life. God watches.

He sees whether you're righteous and he sees whether you're faithful. Faithful means that you love him more than money. Righteous is just being righteous and upright and dealing with money that you don't remain in debt and you don't steal and you don't do anything unrighteous.

You pay your taxes properly, all that. That's righteous. But faithful means that you say, Lord, this is not mine.

This is all yours. Faithfulness in terms of riches is far higher than righteousness. Most believers, many believers are unrighteous, but at least some believers are righteous.

Very few are faithful who recognize that all their possessions belong to God. And so they don't fight. How many cases I've heard of believers fighting for property? When the father dies fighting for the inheritance, maybe the wife's parents have died and the wife's brothers are stealing the inheritance, fight with them.

Believers. What did Abraham do? Follow Abraham's example. The guy was under the Old Covenant.

Today you say you have the Holy Spirit. People are speaking in tongues, but they fight for property, fight for money. They're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

It's an evil spirit. It's the flesh. It says here, Abraham said, And here Lot lost everything.

Now, now listen to this. The silent witness speaks up now. Genesis 13, verse 14.

Lot lifted up his eyes. We read in Genesis 13, 10. And verse 11.

After he had gone, the Lord said to Abraham, verse 14. Now you lift up your eyes and I will choose for you. That was the difference.

Lot lifted up his eyes. Lot chose for himself. Abraham sat back and God said to him, Abraham, you lift up your eyes and I will choose for you.

Lot chose for himself. God chose for Abraham. I wanted to be said like that for me all my life.

Lord, I did not choose for myself anything. You chose for me. And I can say in the 61 years I've been a Christian, from the time I was 19 and a half, I've seen God choose for me again and again and again and again.

I said, Lord, I will not choose for myself. I have to say it's gone exceptionally well with me in so many areas. Because I refuse to choose for myself.

I refuse to choose for myself property or money or ministry or anything. I said, Lord, you choose for me. And he's always given me the best.

And the Lord said to Abraham, that little corner that Lot chose, even that will be yours one day. Just look north, south, east, west. You told Lot to choose one side and he looked south and he chose Sodom and Gomorrah.

I'm telling you, you look south, north, east, west. It's all going to be for you and your children and your grandchildren. And not only that, I'll make your descendants, verse 16, like the dust of the earth.

I'll give it to you. This land, verse 17, I will give it to you. I want to say this, brothers and sisters.

If you forsake all possessions and follow Jesus, he himself will give you what you need and far more than you need. I can say that from my life's experience. Anything that you need and much more.

And eternal life besides. Jesus said that, if you give up anything for my sake, I'll give you a hundred times. And eternal life with a lot of persecutions on earth.

That's what Jesus said. Now, here's another example. In Genesis 14, still the same test of finances, property.

We read that Lot was captured. You know, he went there seeking his own and he got captured by Sodom and Gomorrah, were captured, we read in Genesis 14, by some other kings. And Lot was captured.

And it says in Genesis 14, 12, they took Lot and went away. And Abraham heard about it. Genesis 14, 13, your nephew has been captured and is a prisoner.

Abraham could have sat back and said, that guy deserves it. He cheated me. He took the best of the land.

Let him learn a lesson now. Do you feel like that when somebody who cheated you financially suffers? Abraham was a hundred times better than you, even though he was under the old, not even under the old covenant, before the old covenant. Let Abraham's life challenge you, my brother, sister.

When somebody has cheated you financially and he suffers, what is your attitude? Will you go to help him? It says Abraham went to help him. And at what risk to go and fight with so many kings who had soldiers? It says Abraham went with his 318 servants, verse 14, to fight against, you know who all? The king of, verse 1, the king of Shinar, the king of Elasar, king of Elam, and the king of Goyim, verse 1. Four kings and their armies who had overpowered Sodom and Gomorrah completely. Abraham goes with his ragamuffin group of 318 servants to fight with them.

You think he thought his servants could defeat these armies who had defeated Sodom and Gomorrah? No. He trusted God. He said, God, I'm not going to seek my own here.

I'm going to help my nephew. He went in pursuit. As far as Dan and his, they were not soldiers, they were servants.

And verse 15, he pursued after them. And verse 15, he defeated them. The king of Sodom and king of Gomorrah could not defeat these four kings and their armies, but Abraham with 318 servants defeated them.

You know why? Because God says, those who honor me, I will honor. God had seen how his servant was faithful in being detached from material possessions. And God honored him by helping him to win a battle here.

An example for us from someone who lived long before Jesus, 2,000 years before Christ, knowing nothing about Calvary, knowing nothing about, he hadn't seen, didn't have the Holy Spirit within him, nothing. But he was detached from his relatives and he was detached from attachment to money. And he brought back all the goods and his relatives and possessions.

Now we see something further. The king of Sodom then went to him and told him, now please take whatever is yours. He said in verse 21, Genesis 14, 21, the king of Sodom said to Abraham, the rule in battle is that the possessions become yours.

Even the people become your slaves. That's how the rule was in all battles. Even in the times of the Romans, you'll see that.

So the king of Sodom followed that rule and said, okay, at least give me the people of Sodom. You can take all the possessions because you won the battle. And Abraham said, no.

My Lord is the possessor of heaven and earth. What is this little few cents? What you're giving me is worth about five cents or two cents compared to heaven and earth, which belongs to my God. I'm not going to take another.

I won't even take a shoelace from you. Verse 23. I will not take even a shoelace from you.

A shoelace. How much is a shoelace worth? I will not take even that, lest one day when God blesses me, you'll say you made me rich. Dear brothers, sisters, especially those who are serving the Lord who keep

asking people for money.

Is it to be said about you that those people made you rich? Or that you trusted God and God provided your need? So many preachers today, they become rich by taking money from the poor people. They drive cars paid for by poor people. They fly in planes bought by the poor people.

Who has made them rich? These poor people. It's an absolute shame. Abraham puts them to shame.

He says, I will not allow anybody to say you King of Sodom. I won't even take it from you. You're an ungodly man.

The Bible says in third John, verse 10, that we should not take any money from unbelievers. Abraham understood that over there. He says, I will not allow any human being to get the credit that God should get.

Lest some King of Sodom say I made Abraham rich. I will not take anything from you. What an attitude we should have.

The early apostles and Christians had that attitude. They would not take a cent from any unbeliever. So many churches today are so eager to get money from anybody.

Anybody come and put money in the offering box. We have offering boxes in our church building and we put a notice there. If you're not born again, you have no right to put money in here.

Only those who are God's children. We put that notice on top of the offering box. So that those who are not children of God do not put money in there.

We don't want it. We follow Abraham's example. We follow Jesus' example.

We follow the example of the apostles. Yeah, if you want God's best, follow this principle of being detached, not only from your relatives, but also from attachment to possessions. We are all born with an attachment to possessions.

We want to possess. And Jesus said, give up this possessive habit. You can have things that God gives you.

Like I've often said, possessing is this is what is your possessions, car, house, everything. This is possession. Hold it tight.

This is mine. To have it is to say, yeah, Lord, this is yours. You can take whatever you want from it.

Spend whatever you want from it. It's not mine. Don't possess things.

You can have things, but not possess them. And so God, Abraham said, I've sworn to the Lord, Genesis 14, 22. He's the possessor of heaven and earth.

And he's my God. Today we can say he's my father. Our father, who art in heaven, he's the one I submit to.

You know how Abraham got that title, by the way? Because a servant of God called Melchizedek had come just before that and told him, Abraham, don't forget, Genesis 14 and verse 19, your God is the possessor of heaven and earth. It was an indirect way of delivering Abraham from feeling that this, he

could take all this money, which he won in battle. Remember that your God is the possessor of heaven and earth.

Don't covet this money. It's a wonderful thing, you know, when we can give a prophetic word to somebody because God gives it to us, and we listen to that prophetic word, and maybe some of you are hearing this prophetic word now. Be detached.

Your Lord is the ruler of heaven and earth. He owns the universe. Don't be attached to earthly things.

Because all the silver and the gold in the world is his. Don't keep your mind on earthly things. Don't let your longing be to have more and more money and more and more money and more and more of this and that.

God has given you enough. By all means, work hard and earn all that you can. Provide for your children.

It says lay up for your children, 2 Corinthians 12, 14, but don't be attached to it. Don't lay up for yourself treasures on earth. Lay up for your children to provide for their needs, but not for yourself.

And don't be attached, and never, never fight for property. The reason why you can't overcome the devil is because you fight with flesh and blood. Paul says in Ephesians 6, 10 to 12, we do not fight with flesh and blood.

We fight with evil forces. You'll overcome Satan much better if you stop fighting with flesh and blood. And a lot of fighting with flesh and blood is over property.

Scheming, believers who say they are so spiritual. When it comes to money and property, they scheme and they manipulate and they are covetous and God sees it and the devil sees it and the devil says to them, you don't have any power over me. I see how much you love money.

How can you have power over me? You fight with your relatives over property and money. Abraham passed the second test. The third condition of discipleship.

Jesus said in Luke 14 and verse 27, Luke 14 and verse 27, was you've got to carry your own cross and come after me. That means you've got to put to death this self which sits on the throne of your life. And he mentioned it also at the end of verse 26, your own life.

You cannot love your own life. Not only you cannot love your own life, as it says in verse 26, you've got to put it to death. It's one step higher in verse 27.

To carry your cross is to put your self which is sitting on the throne to death and let Christ sit on that throne. To put yourself, the call of self, of the self life to death. And that's the third test that came to Abraham.

We read in Genesis 22, one day in the middle of the night, it says God tested Abraham. We saw that in our last study. God tests the righteous.

We read that in Jeremiah. God tested Abraham. And remember, this is about 50 years after he first tested him.

And he was 75 years old. He's probably about 120 now, maybe 45 years old after his first test. He's still being tested.

Jesus was tested for 30 years. You will be tested. Were you converted 50 years ago? You're going to be tested today.

I was converted 61 years ago, and I say to you in Jesus' name, I am being tested even now. Not with the same test. You know, it's like you go from first standard or first grade to second grade, third, fourth, fifth, sixth.

You go to 12th, and then you enter college or university. You're still tested. You go to a PhD, and there are post-PhD courses.

The Christian life is one where we are constantly being tested at higher and higher levels. There's never a time when you're not tested. You will never go to the next higher level without being tested.

And so Abraham was tested, tested, tested, and now he's being tested with the most important thing. Who reigns in your heart? Abraham, it was his son Isaac, God's promised son, and he was tested there. And we read here that God told him one day, take your son whom you love.

He specifically says that. The one whom you love, Isaac. You know, earlier, God had told him to send away his first son, Ishmael, that was born through Hagar.

Send him away. He obeyed. But now was his darling son, the son of his old age, who was supposed to inherit his promises.

Take him, take him to the land of Moriah, and kill him there as an offering for me. And Abraham did not consult his wife. He rose up early in the morning.

I don't know what he told Sarah, but he just saddled his donkey, took two of his young men, and took his son, and they went. And it is only on the third day, Genesis 22, 4, that he saw Mount Moriah. It was a three-day journey.

Why didn't God tell Abraham to offer his son around the corner somewhere? Because he wanted him to think about it. He doesn't force you to decide. Take time.

Count the cost. Is it worth it serving such a God who demands everything? Take three days to think about it, Abraham. If you decide halfway there it's not worth it, turn back and go back.

God gives us time to think about it. That's why we don't force people to take a decision. I don't have the habit of inviting people in a meeting, come forward and decide right now.

Many people do that. I don't judge them. Come forward, stand up, and sign a decision card.

I never do that. What I say is what Jesus said in Luke 14, sit down and count the cost first. Think about it for the next few days, and then decide.

Do you want to be a disciple or not? I'm not asking you whether you want to go to heaven. No. My calling is not to take people to heaven.

My calling is to make disciples on earth. And the Lord will deal with taking them to heaven. And in the case of discipleship, Jesus didn't say stand up and come forward and sign a decision card.

He said in Luke 14, clearly, sit down and count the cost. And that's what I tell people. When I finish my message, wherever you're sitting, sit down and count the cost.

And go home and sit down for another few days or months, or years, if you like, and count the cost before you decide to follow. But don't quickly say, yeah, I want to follow, and then afterwards you go back. It's like, don't say, I'm getting married, and then forsake your wife.

Many people are like that. They say, Lord, I accept you, and then they divorce him a few days later or a few years later. No, sit down and count the cost.

Is it worth it following such a God? So after three days, he reaches the place. And notice he comes to that place, and he tells his servants, in verse 5, beautiful words. It's the first time the word worship comes in the Bible, which we talk so much of today.

People think worship is singing beautifully and saying nice words and all that. That's not worship at all. Worship is offering your very best to God hidden away from the eyes of men.

He tells his servants, you stay here. I and Isaac will go to the top of the mountain, and we will worship God. What was he going to do there? He wasn't singing songs there.

He was offering his very best on the altar and taking his knife and about to kill him, proving to God, Lord, I love you more than the very best things on earth. That is worship. That's what it says in Romans 12, 1. I beseech you, brethren, present your bodies, a living sacrifice to God, which is your spiritual worship.

So that's what Abraham did. He took Isaac up to the top, and you know Isaac was a grown young man now because he could carry all the wood on his shoulder. As we read here, Isaac carried all that wood up to the top in verse 6. And when he laid there, he put the – Isaac says, where is the lamb? He didn't know he was going to be sacrificed.

And he says, don't worry, God will provide the lamb. And they go up to the top, and he makes the altar, and Isaac is surprised of his life, verse 9, when he tells Isaac, you get up and lie down on the altar. Imagine telling your 30-year-old son, I'm going to kill you now, just lie down here.

And Isaac laid down. Abraham brought up his son to be obedient. I see a little testimony there about Abraham as a father, a loving father, but who had brought up his son in such a way that when he told his son, lie down on this altar, I'm going to kill you and offer you up to God, he lay down there.

Boy, I don't know how many believers bring up their children like that. Obey 100%, how lenient and slack today's parents are. Their children disobey and turn around and mock them and say no, and they say, oh, darling, it's okay.

Okay, do it whenever you feel like. They bring up their children useless for God and useless to accomplish anything for God's purposes, but not Abraham. It's a great example there.

And Abraham, he doesn't know the end of the story. We know the end of the story. It says in Abraham, verse 10, Genesis 20, where Abraham stretched out his hand to slay him.

He took the knife. When did God stop him? Not when he laid his son. When he had taken his knife, the knife was up there and God said, stop.

Don't stretch your hand. I was testing you. Verse 12, you didn't withhold your only son from me.

It was your life. It was the picture of our self-life, the thing we loved the most. You take the knife and you're ready to kill it.

And the Lord told Abraham, look at these amazing words in verse 16 of Genesis 22. I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have not withheld the dearest thing in your life from me, I will bless you greatly. I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heaven and the sand on the seashore, verse 17.

And in your seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And it's happened today because you obeyed my voice. That is how one day God could say, Abraham, my friend.

You want God to put your name there and say you're his friend. Here's how it is. Faith without works is dead.

You say you believe in Jesus and you have faith. Let me tell you what James says. James 2. It says here, James 2, verse 21.

James 2, 21. Abraham, our father, was justified by works that manifested his faith when he offered up Isaac, his son, on the altar. There we see his faith was working with his works.

James 2, 22. As a result of works, his faith was perfected. Therefore, scripture was fulfilled which says Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

And he was called the friend of God. Why was he called the friend of God? Because his faith produced works. When you read faith in Romans 4, Abraham, you find the explanation of it here in James chapter 2. It's in obedience.

James 2, verse 22 to 25. So man is justified not by faith alone but a faith which produces works. It is by faith but not a dead faith.

So this is the test that comes to us today also. These three conditions of discipleship see Abraham fulfilled and so God called him his friend. I want to see this verse in closing.

Let's turn to Galatians and chapter 3. It's the only place in the Bible where it says Christ became a curse for us. Other places where Christ took our sins and 2 Corinthians 5, 21, he became a sin for us but this is much stronger. Galatians 3, 13, Christ not only took the curse but became a curse for us.

Oh Lord, I don't understand that. How much you suffered there. You became a curse for me.

Why? In order that, verse 14, the blessing of Abraham might come upon us. What is the blessing of Abraham? It says you are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Isn't it amazing that being filled with the Holy Spirit is called the blessing of Abraham? What a man he was that this future thing called being filled with the Spirit is called the blessing of Abraham, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, the faith which produced works.

Please listen to all that I shared today. Listen to it again and see what it means to receive this blessing of Abraham. So many people today say, yeah, just say, Lord, give me the Holy Spirit and go away.

He has filled you. Really? You're not willing to lay Isaac on the altar? You're not willing to be detached from your possessions? You're not willing to be detached from your family? And you think the blessing of Abraham, the fullness of the Holy Spirit will come upon you? I tell you in Jesus' name, it will not come. You get some fake experience, you mumble something in fake tongues.

It's all deception. And that's why the anointing, the mighty power of God is not upon your life, because you try to claim the Spirit without fulfilling the conditions of discipleship. It's the blessing of Abraham.

When did it come upon him that he was called a friend of God? He broke with his relatives, he broke with possessions, and he broke with his love for himself. May God help us. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, please help us to take seriously the lessons we learn from these godly men in Old Testament times, who are a tremendous challenge and example to us even today. Even though we claim to be new covenant Christians, we find these people like Job and Abraham who lived before the Old Covenant were way ahead of many of us. Help us to be challenged, Lord, and not to deceive ourselves that we are spiritual when we are not.

Thank you for every challenge that calls us to come higher. In Jesus' name, amen.

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