

(Genesis) - Part 13

by Zac Poonen

God's call to Abram and the blessing of Abraham are examples of how believers can receive God's best and fulfill their calling.

Duration: 1:01:20

Scripture: Genesis 12:1

Topics: "Obedience to God", "Divine Calling"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes God's call to Abram from idolatry in Ur of the Chaldees, illustrating how familial ties can hinder one's divine calling. He highlights Abram's initial delay in reaching Canaan due to his father's influence and the importance of prioritizing God's will over family expectations. Poonen warns that many believers may miss God's best for their lives by allowing relatives to interfere with their spiritual journey. He draws parallels between Abram's faith and the New Testament's call to be filled with the Holy Spirit, stressing that true blessing comes from God and flows through us to others. Ultimately, Poonen encourages believers to respond to God's call with obedience, even amidst challenges, to fulfill their divine purpose.

Transcript

Genesis chapter 11. We were considering the last few verses here of this chapter where we saw that God called Abram from that land of idolatry, Ur of the Chaldees, and from there he brought him out, and we saw that he didn't initially come to the place where God wanted him to come. Because his father took charge of that movement, out of Ur of the Chaldees, and it says in Genesis 11, verse 31, that Sarah took Abram, his son, and Lot, the son of Haran.

And they set out, verse 31, the last middle of it, it says, to enter the land of Canaan, but they went as far as Haran, and settled there. And we saw there how it is possible for people to be called by God to a particular task or ministry, and we can apply that to our own lives, that God may call a person to a particular task, a particular calling. It's possible that he can miss that if he allows his relatives to interfere in God's calling for his life.

This is why Jesus, when he laid down the conditions of discipleship, the very first thing that he mentioned was that if a man wants to be my disciple, he must hate his father, mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters. Otherwise it's impossible to be a disciple of Jesus. We find the Old Testament is full of many examples of this.

How right in the beginning, Eve tempted Adam to sin, and Adam sinned because of his wife. And here how Abram missed out, for some time anyway, on God's best because of his father. We need to see this very clearly.

We looked at Acts chapter 7 last time, and we saw this verse that it was that God called Abraham. We read in Acts 7, verse 2, Stephen saying, The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, Depart from your country and your relatives. You see that? That's the condition of following the Lord.

And come into the land that I will show you. And he departed. And he settled in Haran, verse 4. From there, after his father died, God removed him into this country from which you are now living.

Think if his father had not died, Abraham would have stayed there a little longer. It is right for us to love our parents. It is right for us to honor them, and to always speak respectfully to them, about them behind their back, always respectfully.

Never to speak evil to them, or evil about them. Provide for them financially, care for them in every possible way. But never, never, never to allow them to hinder us from doing what God wants us to do.

That is the teaching of God's word. And I think when we get to the judgment seat of Christ, we will discover, I believe there will be hundreds of thousands of believers who miss God's best, because they listen to daddy and mommy, they listen to their wife, they listen to their love for their children, or love for their brothers and sisters. Some think, and they miss God's best.

It is not that they went to hell, but that there will be some regret in their life, that if they had been a little more wholehearted, they could have made much more use of the one life that God gave them on earth. And there are enough examples in scripture to warn us about that. And, turning back to Genesis 11, Sarah died in Haran, and the Lord said, now the Lord had said, that's the right translation there, chapter 12, verse 1, the Lord had said to Abraham, go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house.

Notice that complete break, from your country, from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you. That was the requirement in the Old Testament, and it is the requirement in the New. If you turn to the book of Hebrews, in chapter 11, we read there a commentary of the Holy Spirit on the act of Abraham there.

Hebrews, in chapter 11, we read there about Abraham's faith, in verse 8, By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed, by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, because, verse 10, he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Verse 14, For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

And indeed, if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

We saw last Sunday that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers if we are desirous of being sanctified. That's the verse we looked at in chapter 2, verse 11 of Hebrews, that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren, those who want to be sanctified. Now here it says, in Hebrews 11, verse 16, that God is not

ashamed to be called their God, because in the Old Testament God is called the God of Abraham.

And there is a reason why God is called the God of Abraham. The reason is given us in this verse. God is not ashamed to be called their God, because these people, verse 16 of Hebrews 11, desired a heavenly country.

They were not interested in an earthly country. Like Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. If it were of this world, My servants would fight.

We need to understand that. That Abraham, though we read later on that he was very rich, he had much cattle and all that, yet his heart was not in them. And you see that particularly when a conflict arises with lots in the next chapter.

You find that Abraham's heart is not in his wealth, which shows that he was desiring a heavenly country. It's amazing that way back there in the Old Testament it says that they were desiring a heavenly country, verse 16. Therefore, that's the reason, God is not ashamed to be called their God.

And God is not ashamed to be called our God if He sees in our hearts that we desire another country. And there God searches all people's hearts. The Bible calls Him the searcher of all men's hearts.

And I believe it is possible for any of us to have God call Himself the God of so and so. Put your name there instead of Abraham. But I don't believe that every believer can put his name there.

I don't believe that God is willing to be called by the name of every believer like He called Himself by the God of Abraham. Because the vast majority of believers are interested in earthly things. They fight for earthly things, they fight for property, they fight for their rights, they fight for position, they fight for honor in the earth, honor in the church.

God is certainly ashamed to be called their God. I don't believe that God would ever be willing to be called the God of a man who fights for money, or property, or honor, or for his rights. God is ashamed, thoroughly ashamed, to be called the God of such a person.

Even if that person says God is my God, he may say that, but God is ashamed to be called the God of such a person. But God is not ashamed to be called the God of a man like Abraham, who responded. Very easy to look now and say, well, he should have been more wholehearted and given up his father.

That's right. But remember, he lived in a time when there was so little light. There was no written word of God.

Think of all the people who have much more light than Abraham today, who still don't do what Abraham did. He finally, anyway, broke free from his father and came to the land. But think of multitudes of believers who have got God's word and never seem to break free from their relatives.

I really believe, brothers and sisters, that many of us may discover in the daily stand before the Lord that we missed on a lot that God had for us because of an undue attachment to carnal relatives who are not wholehearted. There may be relatives who are believers, but who are not wholehearted, and we are influenced by them, affected by them, and the result is that we just don't move to the place that God has for us. So that's something we must take seriously.

The Lord said to Abraham, Genesis 12.1, Go forth from your country, from your relatives, from your father's house to the land which I will show you. And he did it, and God was not ashamed to be called his God, the God of Abraham. Here is an example for us to follow.

And I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. Here are two things. On one side, God says, I will bless you, and on the other side, he says, you will be a blessing.

In other words, I will fill your life, and then your life will overflow in blessing to other people. Now that is the blessing with which God blessed Abraham when he called him out. Right at the beginning, before he told him anything about all the other purposes he had for him, the first thing he said was, if you will do all these things, if you leave your country and leave your father's house and leave your relatives and come to the land I'll show you, I'll do something for you.

I will take the responsibility to bless you, and I will make you a blessing. And when you turn to the New Testament in Galatians chapter 3, we read that in the new covenant, we can receive the blessing of Abraham. This is why the study of Abraham's life is appropriate for us, because it says in Galatians 3 that Jesus redeemed us, verse 13, from the curse of the law.

Galatians 3.13, becoming a curse for us. Now we thought that the curse of the law was physical. Basically, you read that in Deuteronomy 28.

Physical sickness, madness, blindness, poverty, getting into debt, all types of things. You go through Deuteronomy 28 and you see the curse of the law. It says Jesus has redeemed us from that because he has become a curse for us.

But it is not in order that the blessing of the law might come upon us. There's no word in the New Testament. There are blessings mentioned in Deuteronomy 28, but those are not the blessings promised to us.

We are redeemed from the curse of the law, but not blessed with the blessing of the law. Notice that. We've got to read Scripture exactly.

We are redeemed from the curse of the law, verse 13, but the blessing that comes upon us is not the blessing of the law in Deuteronomy 28, but, verse 14, in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles. So that, and here is the blessing of Abraham, so that we might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith. It's referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

What Abraham had in a very small way was going to be ours in the New Testament in fullness through the baptism and fullness of the Holy Spirit. And there we get an understanding of what this new covenant blessing in Abraham is, and what the power of the Holy Spirit is really meant to do and produce. That is, that God can say to us, like he said to Abraham, I will bless you and you will be a blessing.

You see, we can try to make ourselves a blessing to others. There are a lot of Christians who try to make themselves a blessing. God didn't give Abraham a command saying, make yourself a blessing to others.

I cannot make myself a blessing to others. There's a song we sing, Lord, make me a blessing. God can do it.

I can't do it. And when I try to make myself a blessing to others, usually people who try to do that usually end up making a nuisance of themselves to others. But God can make us a blessing to others.

And how does he do that? Only one way. And that is by filling us with the Holy Spirit. Then the word of God is fulfilled that Jesus, like Jesus told the woman of Samaria, that he would put a well inside her, which would spring up into everlasting life.

That's the first part of that blessing. I will bless you so that you're filled with the Holy Spirit and you're never dry. That's the meaning of what Jesus told the Samaritan woman.

If you drink from this well, you'll thirst again. You'll run dry and you'll let it come back. But the one who drinks from the water that I give him, I'll put a well inside him, a spring inside him, that'll never run dry.

That's the meaning of being filled in the Holy Spirit. It's not God's will that his children should ever run dry. And the second part of it is what he said in John 7, that from this life would flow rivers of living water to other people.

That means such a person would be a blessing to others. And this is the blessing of Abraham, which Galatians says, is for us through the Holy Spirit. I will bless you and you will be a blessing.

In those two statements, we have a picture of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the blessing promised to Abraham, which is ours in the New Covenant. We can say that's our birthright. And therefore, we should never be satisfied until that is fulfilled in our lives.

Every one of us, we know that Jesus spoke about those who are thirsty coming to him. Who are the thirsty ones? Those who are thirsty and saying, Lord, I want you to bless me. Bless me in such a way that blessing will overflow from my life to others.

Who are thirsty for that? A person, for example, who is content that, you know, I have no sickness in my family, and my children are doing well in their examinations in school, and they're getting married off properly, and they've got good jobs by God's grace. He's got no thirst for anything. He's quite happy with what he's got, with a few material things that have been given to him and his freedom from sickness.

He's quite content. Yeah, I don't believe that such a person can receive the blessing of Abraham, because Jesus said, if any man is thirsty, let him come to me. And think that what God promised to one man.

If you were living in 2000 B.C., around Abraham's time, that blessing was not for you. No, God said it to Abraham. But think that because we are living after the day of Pentecost, that every one of us can have that.

It's not just for one person. Everyone who has a thirst and a faith to believe that what God did for Abraham, He'll do for me. Because it says in Galatians 3.14, that the blessing of Abraham might come on us, heathens.

The word Gentiles means heathens. I'm one of the heathens. You're one of the heathens whom God called out.

But it's not automatic. You can miss it. I can miss it.

If I don't really thirst for it, if I don't have faith that God can do this for me. So we've got to take that seriously. I'll bless you, you'll be a blessing.

I will bless those, Genesis 12.3, I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you, I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And of course, we know that that was fulfilled because Jesus Christ came through Abraham.

Abraham's seed. And now it is being fulfilled through the church, which is the body of Christ. We are now called the children of Abraham, who is the father of faith.

And that's why the study of Abraham's life is so important for us. Because turning back to Galatians, we see there, Galatians 3.29, first of all, Galatians 3.16, now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Galatians 3.16, and it does not say, and to seed, as referring to many, but rather to one, and to your seed.

That is Christ. And we know that we are the body of Christ. Therefore, verse 29, and if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed.

Not seeds, but seeds. And connect that with verse 16. You see that what God has promised to Abraham was fulfilled through Christ, not through the Jews, but through Christ.

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise. And we know that those who are Christ are those who crucify the flesh with his affections and lusts, as he says later on in Galatians 5.24. And that's why we see that what God promised to Abraham is relevant to us who enter into the new covenant. Because this is for us.

In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed. That applies to the church, which is the body of Christ. In other words, it is God's will that through the church others should be blessed.

Families should be blessed. Think how Jesus told his apostles, when you enter a house, say, peace be to this house. And if there is someone sick there, heal that sick person, so that when you go away, those people are so thankful that you have come there.

Think of that, my brothers and sisters. We may not have the gifts of healing, perhaps, but think that every one of us can be a blessing to every family that we ever visit. Think of the stupidity of so many believers, who all that they do when they visit another family is sit and gossip and spread the curse a little more in that home before they leave it.

Talk all types of useless things. Perhaps have a quarrel with somebody in that house and then leave. That's not the blessing of Abraham.

No. That's the result of being under the curse of the law. When people were under the curse of the law, they fought, they quarreled, they had strife.

All types of things. Jesus has become a curse. We are freed from all that.

Now, all the families of the earth are to be blessed through us. I cannot visit all the families of the earth. You cannot visit all the families of the earth.

But we can visit a few. The ones we visit should be blessed. They don't have to be just believers.

Anyone. Think of that calling. Think that our life is to make such an impression for God on the earth, that families are to be blessed just because one person enters that home.

And they are thankful that such a person ever came into their home. My brothers and sisters, that's not the calling of some special group of people. For every one of us.

Because the blessing of Abraham is for us. So let's take that seriously. Genesis 12 verse 4. So Abraham went forth as the Lord had spoken to him.

And we know that was after his father died. God had to deal drastically with him. But then finally he got him moving.

I thought that what I see from here is how much God is dependent on a man. And how, there's a phrase that came to my mind when I thought of Abraham. And that's the phrase that's mentioned in Ezekiel 22 and verse 30.

Ezekiel 22 and verse 30. It says, the Lord says, I searched for a man among them. That is a phrase.

I searched for a man. Which has been true of God's working in the human race in all generations. In Enoch's time, it was true.

God searched for a man and he found an Enoch. In Noah's time, he searched for a man and he found a Noah. And then in Nimrod's time and afterwards, in the subsequent generations, with all the world in idolatry and rebelling against God, he searched for a man.

Because the world was full of idolatry. We read that in the book of Joshua and chapter 24. Joshua 24 and verse 2 and 3. Joshua said to the people, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the river, that's the river Euphrates, in Ur of the Chaldees, namely Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor.

And they served other gods. Abraham was an idolater. We can say he was like a Hindu.

Abraham was like a Hindu. He was an idolater, worshipping many gods. Then I took your father Abraham from out of there and led him through the land of Canaan.

They were idolaters. And in the midst of all these idolaters, God searched for a man whom he could deliver from this idolatry. And we have seen that idolatry is more than worshipping images.

Idolatry can be idolatry of people, of things, of a profession. And in the midst of all the idolatry there is in the world, God still says, even today, I searched for a man. I believe he is searching for many men in many parts of the world today.

But he is searching, searching. And in Ezekiel's time it says he found none. And in Abraham's time he searched.

He must have searched before, but he never found anyone. But finally he found one in Abraham who didn't have light. But there must have been something in Abraham that God saw with all his lack of light, that there was a responsiveness to God.

And that's the thing that encourages me, brothers and sisters. It is not light that God looks for. Because all of us have much more light than Abraham had.

But we may not be as responsive to God as Abraham was. So what if you've got more light, if you're not responsive? God still has to leave us aside and says, I searched for a man. I'm not searching for a man who's got a lot of light.

Light I'll give him. I'm searching for a man who will be responsive when I call him. It's a very wonderful phrase that comes about Abraham later on.

Whenever God says, Abraham, he says, here I am. Have you noticed that? You'll see that in later chapters in Genesis. The Lord called Abraham.

Abraham said, here I am. He didn't say, Lord, just wait, I've got something else to do now. No, here I am.

That was his attitude. A man who was responsive. And that's the thing that encourages me tremendously, that there may be so many things on which we don't have light.

It doesn't matter. If we are responsive, God will lead us on. So we're not to glory in the fact that we have a lot of light.

Are we responsive when God speaks? And I believe it's in little things that he tests us. I think of people, for example, to whom God speaks about baptism, and they take years and years to think about it and finally obey. We can say that such people, I mean, they may not go to hell, but it's very unlikely that God can ever do anything with such people.

Or for that matter, in some other area, God asks them to give up something, and they think about it and think about it and think about it and think about it. Don't give it up. I mean, we know that, for example, there are people who say, I've got this bad habit and I can't give it up.

I heard of a man who, in another country, who was a slave to smoking, and he became a believer. And he said he couldn't give it up, because he said, I've been a slave to it for so long. Till one day he had some serious problem with his chest, and the doctor said, if you smoke cigarettes anymore, you'll die.

And he stopped immediately. How is that? The fear of death was more than the fear of God. That was the reason.

And I believe with many believers, the fear of death is more than the fear of God. For example, when some people are dying, they suddenly begin to confess all their sins and make restitution and ask forgiveness. They never did it in all their lifetime, because they never feared God.

But now they're afraid of death. Fear of God. The fear of pain and sickness is more than the fear of God, because when sickness and pain come, they begin to confess everything and set all things right, which they never did all the rest of the time, when they don't fear God.

So you see, God is always searching for people who will respond. Think of that. Who will respond, who may not have so much light on so many things, but when God calls them to do something, they say, Lord, I'm going to do it.

If the fear of God doesn't do it in me, nothing else must do it in me. And there each of us can profitably examine ourselves. Can the fear of death make us do something which the fear of God will not do? Then we are just like all the other human beings in the world, who are just the children of Adam, who have no fear of God.

I believe that if we examine our lives, we shall discover how many things we would do out of the fear of death, which we wouldn't do out of the fear of God. There are believers who do things out of fear of the government authorities, who wouldn't do the same thing out of the fear of God. They do something righteously because they're afraid they'd get caught, but they wouldn't do it righteously out of the fear of God.

And that's why God's search continues throughout the world today. I searched for a man, God searching for those who will respond like Abraham. Finally, Abraham moved.

And Abraham took Sarah, his wife, Genesis 12, 5, Lot, his nephew, and all their possessions, which they had accumulated, the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. Thus they came to the land of Canaan. I don't know why Abraham took Lot, whether Lot came along, because God's word was very clear in Genesis 12, 1, Go forth from your country and from your relatives and from your fathers out.

Sometimes we can think that, yeah, surely God can't mean it so exactly. But He did mean it exactly. And who did Abraham go out with? He went with his father and with Lot.

And we can see that those were the two people who were the cause of problems in Abraham's life. First of all, his father got him stuck in Haran. And secondly, Lot brought strife into that family.

So you see, sometimes we can think that we are wiser than God, but we're not. When God says, Go forth from your relatives, it's best to go forth from our relatives and not try and modify it and be diplomatic and do it in some other way and end up in some halfway home, like so many believers have ended up. It says here he took his nephew, Lot his nephew.

Well, God didn't stop him. But later on he had to be separated from him also. Both were painful experiences.

He had to be separated painfully from his father through death and painfully from his nephew. But God was determined to do something. And if I don't do it the way God wants me to do it, in a peaceful way right in the beginning, then God has to do it in a drastic way later on.

So it's always best to obey God exactly and implicitly right from the beginning. And Abraham passed through the land and says the Canaanite was then in the land, verse 6. God had not yet determined to give this to the seed of Abraham. That was still more than 400 years to go for that.

And the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, To your seed I will give this land. So he built an altar there to the Lord who appeared there. Notice it says there, the last part of verse 6. The Canaanite was then in the land.

And the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, To your seed I will give this land. And he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. That was his saying, Amen.

I believe that. I built this altar to show that I believe that one day you're going to give this land to me. I'm a lonely man here.

This land is flooded with Canaanites, massive giants. And Abraham was like a little pygmy before these giants. Lord, I don't know how, but I believe it.

You see, that was the faith which later on his descendants called Joshua and Caleb had. That when they looked at the Canaanites, they had the same faith that Abraham had when he looked at the Canaanites. Remember, the first person to look at the Canaanite giants was not Joshua and Caleb.

It was Abraham. Abraham was the first person to look at these Canaanite giants and to whom God had said, I'm going to give you this land. And he said, it's very significant, that statement there.

The Canaanite was then occupying that land. We can apply that to the flesh. We know that Canaan is a picture of the flesh.

And the Canaanites are a picture of all the lusts that rule in the flesh. And to come to faith like Abraham is to hear God say to us, when the Canaanites are ruling the land, I will give this land to you, to your seed, that is to Christ. As we saw in Galatians 3, we've just got to build an altar there and say, Lord, I believe that.

I believe you'll do that. I can't say how. I'm so weak.

I'm just lonely, alone, with these massive giants around me, but you'll do it. So we see that Abraham was the first person to do that, and Joshua and Caleb just followed in his footsteps. Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, and he built an altar there again and called on the name of the Lord.

It's a very beautiful picture. Abraham was always building an altar. And we have seen before that this altar is a picture of our presenting our bodies.

Whenever you read an altar like this in Genesis, it's not referring to the sin offering, which came later on in Leviticus. It's referring to the burnt offering, which refers to Romans 12.1, present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Reading this in New Covenant terms, it means Abraham presented his body as a living sacrifice to God.

And Abraham journeyed on, continued on toward the Negev. Now there was a famine in the land. And we read here, it's very significant, I just want to mention one thing about the Lord appearing to Abraham in verse 7. It doesn't say that the Lord appeared to Abraham when he was in Haran.

The Lord appeared to him when he was in the Nur of the Chaldees and said, go into the land which I will tell you. He came halfway to Haran and stopped there. God never appeared to him.

God only dealt with him in judgment there by allowing his father to die. He brought him into Canaan and then the Lord appeared to him. Which teaches us something, that when the Lord has given us revelation at one point, until I move to that place to which God has told me to move, until I take that step of obedience which God has told me to take, I will not have further revelation.

That's the reason why many people stay without revelation. Because there's something in their life which they haven't settled. Some restitution not made, somebody they have not apologized to.

Something, they've come halfway and got stuck. They are in a Haran. God has told them to go all the way and do that, they've done it halfway.

They're stuck there. They'll never get further revelation until they move to complete obedience. Then the Lord appeared in Canaan to Abraham.

And then we find a second test. That was a famine in the land. That can be a test.

That when God calls us to a place, we think the place should be all full of comfort and ease. And we come to the place which God has called us to and we find that there are problems. There are difficulties.

There is a famine. And when there is a famine, it is easy to lean to our own understanding and not trust in the Lord. The question is, has God called me here? Yes, He has called me to Canaan.

Then famine or no famine, I must stay here. But Abraham didn't do that. So Abraham went down to Egypt.

And we'll discover that as a result of going down to Egypt, he got into a lot of problems which were worse than a famine. It would have been better to stay there and trust God. A lot of problems he got by going into Egypt.

For example, when he came out of Egypt, he brought an Egyptian woman called Hagar with him. There would have been no Hagar in his life if he had not gone to Egypt. And through Hagar came Ishmael.

Through Ishmael have come all the Arabs who have troubled the Jews all the centuries. Through Ishmael has come Mohammed and the Muslim religion that has troubled Christianity through the centuries. Just think of all the consequences that come out of one little step of disobedience.

Of course, God forgives. Forgiveness, we can always repent and say, Lord, please forgive me. But the reaping is still there.

Even though God forgives our sins, we still have to reap some of the consequences of our sins for a long time. And sometimes our children also, unfortunately. Abraham's children are certainly reaping the result of Abraham's folly there.

Think how much depends on one little act of leaning upon our own understanding. There is a famine here. What shall I do? Go to Egypt.

I hear there is plenty of food there. Go to that rich brother. Go to that influential brother.

He will help you out of that. The point is, does God want you to go there? That is the point. Don't lean to your own understanding.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. I'm not criticizing Abraham. I would never do that.

I believe he had far more faith than a lot of us. He didn't have God's word. I'm saying we can apply this to us who have so much of God's word and learn something.

When God calls us to a place, famine or no famine, we got to stay there till he tells us to move. There is a saying that what God shows me in the light, I should not doubt in the darkness. To use an illustration, supposing I've got a hundred rupee note which I've examined very carefully in the light and I'm convinced that it is a true note.

Afterwards in the thick darkness I take it out and it doesn't look like a real currency note, I don't have to doubt it. Because in the darkness, I cannot be so sure. There are times when God makes something very clear to us.

Later on, maybe some months later, some years later, there's famine, there's darkness, there's a storm and I begin to doubt. Has God really shown me that? That's what I've got to remember. What God has shown me in the light, let me not doubt in the darkness.

God has shown me in the light that I must go to the land of Canaan. I go there. Famine or no famine? We see a very beautiful contrast to this in the New Testament in Acts of the Apostles chapter 16.

In an earlier meeting once, we considered how when Jesus told the multitude to go away in Matthew 14 and then told the disciples to go out in a boat. It says he compelled them to go in the boat. What did the disciples face? Do you remember? What did they face? A storm.

A storm. When they obeyed Jesus, they faced a storm. What did Abraham face when he obeyed God? A famine.

Is it the obedient people who have a comfortable life? No, sir. It's the disobedient people who have a comfortable life. If Abraham had been disobedient and stayed in Ur of the Chaldees, there was no famine in Ur of the Chaldees.

If the disciples had been disobedient and stayed on land, there would have been no storm there. It's the obedient who face the storms. Here's another example in Acts 16.

It says here, a vision, verse 9, appeared to Paul in the night, and a man from Macedonia, that is a vision from God, saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. When he had seen the vision, immediately he sought to go to Macedonia, concluding God had called us to preach the gospel there. And the chief city of Macedonia was Philippi, verse 12.

And when they came to Philippi, within a short time, it says here, they were beaten, verse 23, and thrown into the jail. How do you like that? For following a God-given vision that lands you in a jail. That's like the famine that Abraham faced when he obeyed God.

That's like the storm the disciples faced when they obeyed God. A jail when he obeyed the vision and went to Philippi. But how did Paul and Silas respond? It says at midnight, verse 25, they were praying.

If it had only been written they were praying, we don't know how they would have prayed. Because there are various ways of praying. Lord, why in the world have you put us here? No.

But it also says here, they were singing hymns of praise. Then we understand what type of prayer they would have prayed. You can't sing hymns of praise, hallelujah, and then say, Lord, why in the world have you put us here? No.

When you say, sing hymns of praise, then your prayer is, well, Lord, if this is why you brought us to Philippi, that's fine with us. We're quite happy. Maybe there's some purpose here, and there was.

That was to save the jailer. So, we see quite a contrast in the New Testament. And there we see when we receive the Holy Spirit, how we can respond.

When there is a famine in Canaan. When there's a storm in the middle of the sea after Jesus has told us to go there. When we're locked up in jail after we have obeyed God and gone into our Macedonia.

And that can have many applications in our lives. We take a step of obedience, and lo and behold, there's a storm in the family, and a storm at home, and a famine, and all types of things. And then, I'm confused.

Then we can think of how Abraham responded, don't go down to Egypt, and you may get into all types of difficulties there. Stay there, and say, Lord, I obey you. And there, God will sanctify you in the midst of that famine, and that storm, and that jail, and make you a blessing to others.

Even though Paul and Silas got a beating on their backs, the blessing of Abraham was still fulfilled in their lives, because the blessing overflowed from them to the conversion of the whole jailer's family. And that's the important thing. Whether we get a few strikes on our back doesn't really matter.

But Abraham went to Egypt because the famine was severe. And that can be a test. When you pray and the famine doesn't go, the situation doesn't ease up, but the situation becomes more severe.

Think of that. Here I am, great man of God, one man whom God has called in the whole world, Abraham. I am the one to whom God has given revelation in the whole earth.

God has chosen me, and I have obeyed God, and I've come out of Ur of the Chaldees, and I pray and pray, and the famine doesn't seem to go. That's really humbling. All you can do is put your mouth in the dust and say, Lord, I can't understand.

I'm not the great man of God I thought I was. I'm just a little creature, but I trust you. It's good.

It's good to put our mouth in the dust, as Lamentations 3 says. Then there's hope. And it came about when he came here to Egypt, here's the first problem that arose.

Soon as you land in Egypt, there's problems. You know you're out of God's will immediately, as soon as you've followed your own reason. He said to Sarah, his wife, he's already begun to scheme, he's seen the Egyptians all eyeing his good-looking wife, and he said, see now, I know that you're a beautiful woman.

And it'll come about when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, this is his wife, and they will kill me. You see the selfishness of this man. I mean, just like us, we have the same flesh as us.

But they will let you live. Please say that you're my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you. I mean, didn't Abraham think that if you go around saying this good-looking girl is my sister, somebody will just say, alright, I'm going to marry her.

And that would be common sense. But there, he was so much thinking of preserving his own life, they will kill me. So I'm willing to risk my wife becoming immoral, so that I can preserve my life.

It doesn't matter what happens to my wife, so that I can preserve my life. Now today, we won't act like that. But we can act like that when it comes to our inner self-life.

That to preserve my self-life, I'm willing to let my wife suffer. It's the same thing. They will kill me.

I don't want to be killed. So, tell a lie that it may go well with me. Verse 13.

Please say that you're my sister, so that it may go well with me. You see, this is typical of the human race. That it may go well with me.

What about going well with you, Sarah? Yeah, never mind that. But that it may go well with me because of you. That I may live on account of you.

And came about when Abraham came to Egypt, Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. I just want to mention something here. That Sarah was 65 years old, and she was so beautiful.

What's the secret of that? I want to turn to a verse in 1 Peter chapter 3 in this connection. 1 Peter chapter 3. 1 Peter 3 verse 3 to 6. 1 Peter 3 verse 3 to 6. Let not your adornments, your wives, be external, braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, putting on dresses. Let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and a quiet spirit.

For in this way, verse 5, which way? In this gentle and quiet spirit, in former times, the holy women also who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah, thus Sarah had a beauty in her life, as she obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord. And you have become her children.

Not only Abraham's children, wives, you can be Sarah's children, if you do what is right, without being frightened by any fear. You know, there was a beauty in her which was more than physical. And when you see in 1 Peter chapter 3, you see that beauty was the beauty of a submissive spirit.

Think that Sarah knew how to submit to Abraham, without a commandment saying, wives, be submissive to your husband. And she had no scripture, but she submitted to her husband calling him Lord. Amazing.

And she is put forth as an example for new covenant sisters. It's not only Abraham, Sarah is also put forth as an example. And Pharaoh, Genesis 12 verse 15, and Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house.

You see, they had some morality there in Egypt, they knew you can't take somebody else's wife, but they thought she was Abraham's sister. Pharaoh decided, all right, I'm going to marry her then. And therefore he treated Abraham well for her sake, and gave him sheep, and oxen, and donkeys, and male and female servants, and female donkeys and camels.

He exchanged his wife for all these animals. And think that he kept quiet with all this. It's amazing.

That Pharaoh's taken her, and he still keeps quiet. He doesn't say, hey, I was just bluffing, she's not really my sister, she's my wife. He didn't even say that, he just let her go.

And those of you who are single, you may say, boy, I'll never do that. I'll tell you something, you'll never discover how selfish you are until you get married. Never.

I believe when you get married, you get a revelation on selfishness that dwells in the flesh that you never even knew was there. So, just hang on a little before you judge Abraham, and wait till your time comes and see if you can do it any better in relation to various little things. It may not be exchanging your wife for animals, you may not do any stupid thing like that, even the heathens don't do that.

But it can be another thing. It can be exchanging your wife and her rights for your rights. So that it may go well with me.

So that my self-life is preserved. So that my convenience is preserved. My comfort is preserved.

And the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. And it's amazing that Pharaoh knew that when sickness comes, he's got to judge himself. A heathen man like Pharaoh, sickness comes into the home and he says, boy, what did I do wrong? And he thinks, what did I do wrong in the last few days? Must have been that I took this woman.

I can't think of anything else that I did wrong that all of a sudden sickness has come to everybody in the house. Good thing to do. When sickness strikes everyone, to ask ourselves, what did I do wrong in the last few days? Follow Pharaoh's example.

And he discovered something. And he came to Abraham and said, what is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me she was your wife? I think he must have gone to Sarah and said, tell me, are you his sister? And she said, he must have said, no, I'm his wife. And he rebuked Abraham.

This heathen man rebuking a prophet of God. Have you had that experience? Where a heathen man says something and you feel humbled that a heathen man says something. I'm supposed to be a new covenant believer.

And what this man says is so upright and righteous, it puts me to shame. Yeah, I'm sure all of us have had experiences like that. Well, Abraham had one there.

Pharaoh called Abraham and said, what is this you have done to me? And why did you say she is my sister? So that I took her for my wife. Now then, here is your wife, take her and go. Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him and they escorted him away with his wife and all that belonged to him.

And we read, thus Abraham went up from Egypt to the Negev and he and his wife and all that belonged to him and lost with him. Now Abraham was very rich in livestock and silver and in gold. It's very significant that this is the first time in the Bible that it says that somebody was very rich and it is when he came out of Egypt.

That was the second problem that came there. First, he got into trouble with Pharaoh by telling a lie. The second thing, of course, he must have had a lot of things when he came out of Ur of the Chaldeans.

But I think those days a lot of people had camel and livestock and other things like that. But when he went to Egypt, Pharaoh the king, it says there, he gave him so many things, verse 16. And apparently he didn't take it all back.

He took, he gave it actually in exchange for Sarah. But he told Abraham, you can keep it. And Abraham came out very rich.

And not only Abraham was very rich, but Lot also was very rich. And there we see the root cause of the problem that came later on between these two people. They were, they had far too much wealth now that they got into conflict with each other, their herdsmen.

Why didn't their herdsmen get into conflict before that? Because they didn't have so much. But when they came out of Egypt, they had so much. Yeah, when you miss God's will, you can become very rich.

Very rich by missing the will of God. And so many people are so foolish to think that all that riches has come by obeying God. Did Abraham become very rich by obeying God? No.

By missing God's will and going to Egypt, he came out with all this wealth and the wealth became the cause of his problem with Lot. Learn a lesson. The blessing of the Lord makes rich and there is no sorrow.

But those who want to be rich and go into Egypt or instead of Egypt you can put dot dot dot, put some other country or any other name there. Go to such and such a place in order to become rich. Yeah, they will become rich.

God doesn't stop them. But there is something that will be lost. I just want to mention something here in passing.

That the first rich man mentioned in the Bible is Abraham. And it is after he came out of Egypt. And the last rich man mentioned in the Bible is in Luke 18.23, the rich young ruler who turned away from Jesus because he would not give up all that wealth.

And there is a contrast there. The first rich person and the last rich person. And Genesis 13 verse 3. He went on his journey from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning.

Notice that phrase, at the beginning. When you go astray from God to Egypt, you have always got to come back to the place where you were at the beginning. We say there is a phrase in English saying, which says going round in circles.

Or another phrase which says back to square one. Like the snakes and ladders game. You climbed up to 56 and then down to square one.

Because at some point you missed the will of God. Back to square one at the beginning. And all that time and labor lost.

Think of people who are at square one when they die. What a tragedy. At square one when they die after having been believers for 30-40 years.

Still losing their temper, still lusting after women, still loving money, still defeated, still bitter, still easily offended, still upset, still disturbed, still irritated. After years, back to square one. Occasionally after a convention they would move out to square number 10 or 12.

But after a few weeks after the conference was over, back to square one. But think, alright, that happens for a little while, but think if you spent all your life like that. Being eaten up by a snake and back to square one and end up in square one when you die.

We really got to take it more wholeheartedly. We got to walk carefully. Thank God it doesn't depend upon a throwing of a dice, like in snakes and ladders, that you don't know where you're going to land.

We know where we're going to land. And we can be careful that we don't land there. It's not a throw of a dice.

We choose to land into some square where there is a snake, called the love of money perhaps, or the love of a profession, or advancement for oneself, or some personal gain. I know there's a snake there, but I go and land there. I choose that it may go well with me.

Yeah? But praise God he didn't keep going round in circles. He didn't spend all his life going back to square one. He made a move.

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