

(Genesis) - Part 15

by Zac Poonen

The sermon highlights the significance of Melchizedek's ministry and its impact on Abraham's life, emphasizing the importance of being in touch with God and having a dignity and character that is pleasing to God.

Duration: 1:00:20

Scripture: Genesis 14:19-20, Genesis 15:1, Numbers 18:20, Psalm 110:1, Isaiah 41:10, Hebrews 3:13

Topics: "Covenant Theology", "Faith And Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of Abraham's deep sleep and the covenant God made with him. He explains that just as God put Adam into a deep sleep and gave him something precious, God also put Abraham into a deep sleep and entered into a covenant with him. The preacher emphasizes that although it may seem like God is distant or forsaken, He is actually drawing near and entering into a covenant with us. He also highlights the importance of driving away the 'birds of prey' that seek to interfere and ruin our fellowship with God. Additionally, the preacher connects this concept to the new covenant, explaining that we must take our position as strangers, servants, and sufferers in order to possess the promises of God. The sermon concludes with a beautiful picture of God passing between the broken pieces of an animal, symbolizing His willingness to lay down His life for us.

Transcript

Chapter fourteen. We were looking at the ministry of Melchizedek to Abraham when we closed our last study, and the timing of his visit is significant and important. He is called here in Genesis fourteen, verse eighteen, a priest of the Most High God.

In other words, he was a man who was in touch with God. The first person mentioned in the Bible as a priest of God. He was in touch with God, he could hear God speak to him, and it must have been under some leading of God that he went out to meet Abraham.

We don't know whether he knew Abraham at all, but he must have had some prompting from the Holy Spirit to go, and he went. And he just did a very small ministry in terms of time. He just spoke a few words, and the effect it had on Abraham was tremendous, as we shall see.

Now the reason why I mention this is because we saw last time that in Hebrews seven it says Jesus Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. And if he is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, like Aaron was a high priest according to the order of Levi, then the sons of Aaron were priests in the same

way we also are called to be priests. As it says in Revelation one, but after the order of Melchizedek.

In other words, we can learn something from this passage as to what our priesthood consists of. It consists of being in touch with God so that we can hear God speaking to us, so that when God prompts us to go somewhere to bless a brother, we are listening and ready to respond to that. That's the first thing.

Before anything else, that's where the priesthood of Melchizedek begins. That's how it was with Jesus. It says his ear was opened morning by morning, and so he had a word in season for the weary.

And we can say that Melchizedek had a word in season for weary Abraham, and he not only gave him words, but he gave him food. There was a very practical way in which he blessed Abraham. He didn't just give him a sermon.

It's easy to give a sermon, but to provide for a person's needs, to be considerate, to think that Abraham must have been tired and hungry, let me take some food for him. That's thoughtfulness. It says in Hebrews 10, consider, let us consider how we can provoke one another to love and good works.

Well, Melchizedek was like that. He brought out bread and wine. He was a king, but here he was acting as a servant.

He didn't order one of his servants to do that. He took the bread and the wine and gave it to Abraham. A beautiful example of what true kingship, according to the order of Melchizedek, is to serve people according to their needs, practically or with words of blessing, and not to have any exalted opinion of our own position.

We also saw that his name meant King of Righteousness, and King of Salem means King of Peace. We saw this as a very blessed contrast to Nimrod in Genesis 10, who is a type of the Antichrist, and here we have Melchizedek very clearly a type of Christ, the King of Jerusalem, in contrast to the King of Babylon. And if you look at verse 19, you find that he didn't give Abraham a big sermon.

We don't always bless people by a big sermon. The priesthood of Melchizedek does not necessarily belong only to those who have the gift of speaking. We don't know whether Melchizedek could have given a sermon at all.

We don't know whether he could have spoken for ten minutes and held people's attention. He may not have had that gift, but he did have this gift of speaking two or three sentences, which really blessed a person. Two or three appropriate sentences.

And that's a tremendous encouragement, because this is a ministry that all of us can come into. If Melchizedek had given a long half an hour sermon to Abraham, we'd say, how in the world can we ever get into the priesthood of Melchizedek? But this matter of just speaking two or three appropriate sentences according to the need, no doubt Melchizedek had heard from God, and he spoke the right word according to Abraham's need. Abraham had just come back from a tremendous victory, and you can imagine how we have Abraham's flesh.

We know how it is if we have defeated a whole lot of people who had triumphed over four or five other kings, and we went and came forth with a tremendous victory, all the temptations to pride and to self-glory, and then comes along Melchizedek to just bless this brother so that he doesn't fall in pride or any such thing, but not with a rebuke, not with some carnal type of exhortation. He just told him, Blessed be

Abraham, God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God most high who has delivered your enemies into your hands. That's all.

One sentence. That was his message. One sentence, and that was enough.

And in that sentence he reminded Abraham of two things. Two things that we need to know as priests after the order of Melchizedek. One, that God is the owner of everything on the earth, the owner, the possessor of everything in heaven and on earth.

The reason why we need to know that is because many of the priests, according to the order of Melchizedek, these days can be pretty worried about a lot of material things, and they need to be assured of the fact that God is the possessor of heaven and earth, or like it says in 1 Corinthians 10, 26, the earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord. That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians. That's what Melchizedek said here.

Everything on this earth belongs to God. Abraham, all this wealth that you have acquired after this victory, it belongs to God. Remember that.

That's an indirect way of saying it. And the second thing that he reminded Abraham of was this, that you didn't get this victory yourself, but he didn't put it like that. He put it in such a gracious way, and that's where we need that wisdom.

You can go to a brother and say, well, brother, don't get too proud, don't get too puffed up because you got the victory. Remember, you didn't get the victory. You'd be saying the same thing, but you'd be saying it with a total lack of wisdom.

But Melchizedek had wisdom. He didn't say it in that crude, carnal way, considering himself to be some type of prophet, like some carnal believers sometimes talk, particularly when they are young. Here he said, blessed be God who has delivered your enemies into your hands.

And that reminded Abraham that it was God who gave him the victory over his enemies. These are the two problems that we face on earth. One is concerning material things, and that's why we need to know that God is the possessor of everything on the earth, and He can provide our needs without any difficulty.

And the second thing, the second thing is we have problems with enemies. Disease, that's an enemy. Difficult neighbors, bosses, landlords, people who, relatives, various things, and the worst enemies of all in our own flesh, the lust in our flesh.

And these are the main causes of problems that most people have on earth, and Melchizedek spoke about God being the provider of all our material needs and God being the one who can give us victory over all our enemies. What a wonderful message. The Bible says, Exhort and encourage one another, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Here is a wonderful example of what true encouragement is to a weary brother, to encourage him to have faith in God. We can say that the ministry of Melchizedek is one that stirs up faith in the heart of the person. God is the possessor of earth.

God is the one who will deliver all your enemies into your hands. A ministry of stirring up faith, and that's our calling. Now, we can look at it another way, also these two sentences.

In one way, he said, Blessed be Abraham, in verse 19, and in verse 20 he said, Blessed be God. And that's also another way that we can look at these two sentences, and that is, one is a word of encouragement to man, and the other is a word of praise to God. Blessed be God means, praise the Lord who has done such a wonderful thing and given you the victory.

And these are also two ministries that the priests of the Order of Melchizedek need to engage in all the time. Constantly, encouragement to man. Blessed be you, brother, sister.

And second, praise the Lord. A ministry of encouragement to man and a ministry of praise to God. And Abraham gave him a tenth of all that he had.

Now, there was no command to give a tithe in the Old Testament up until the time of Moses. It was a spontaneous giving. It was not the giving as a result of a rule.

After the commandments were given through Moses, after the law came, when people gave a tithe, it was an obedience to a commandment. But when Abraham gave ten percent, he wasn't obeying any commandment. He was just giving.

He gave something out of all that he got to this priest and blessed him. And there we find Abraham's attitude also. He didn't have to give.

There was no command. There are so many things in the Christian life which we don't have to do, but people like Abraham will still do it even though there is no command. Particularly in this area of generosity and blessing others, there is no command that we have to fulfill.

But it's a question of an attitude of heart, and that's what we see here in Abraham giving a tithe to Melchizedek. And it's interesting how in Hebrews chapter 7 it says, the Holy Spirit says, this act of generosity of Abraham proves that Levi, who was in Abraham's loins, was inferior to Melchizedek, who received a tithe from Abraham, proving that the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant. And then, immediately after Melchizedek came, he went off.

It's a tremendous ministry to come and bless a brother and then move off, so that you leave him with God. You see, it's so different from so much of what we see in Christian leadership, where a man with all his soul power just sits on top of a person till the poor fellow has got hardly space to breathe, and always hanging around him, telling him what to do and what not to do. That's not the ministry of Melchizedek.

He blessed him and he went on his way. That's a tremendous ministry, brothers and sisters, to bless a brother and then to move on, so that he doesn't get attached to us or think of us as something important. Just bless him and move on.

And you've helped him, because immediately after that, we read, the King of Sodom came, and here's the temptation. You see, this is the ministry of Melchizedek, to help a brother just before the temptation comes to him. That's how it must be in the Church, that we hear God and are led to bless a brother with appropriate words and thus save him from the moment of temptation that he will face later on.

And so we see here, that immediately after that, the King of Sodom came, and here was the temptation. He said to Abraham, just give me the people, and you can take all the goods for yourself. But after all, the King of Sodom had lost everything, and Abraham had risked his life to save all that.

The laborer is worthy of his hire, and it was right for Abraham to take all that. He had won it back, otherwise that other king would have taken everything. And the King of Sodom recognized it and said, you can keep the goods as payment for all the sacrifice you made for us.

Just let the people come back to Sodom. But Abraham says no. Notice what he says here.

I have sworn, he says, I made a promise, to the Lord God most high possessor of heaven and earth. How did he get that title of God? He got it from Melchizedek. You see, Melchizedek's influence, helping Abraham in the moment of temptation.

He says, my God is the possessor of the earth. I don't need these few paisas that I have. Really, all of Sodom's wealth were just a few paisas compared to heaven and earth.

Isn't that right? Sure. It's like if you give one paisa coin to a beggar, even he'll throw it away. He says, that's worth nothing.

Even if he's got none, he says, that's nothing. And then something like that, that Abraham looked at all this. He says, that's just, you're asking me to take this one paisa? I who own, belong to God who owns heaven and earth? No, you see the influence of Melchizedek's ministry on Abraham, that he got a revelation of God.

Think of having such a ministry, to share a revelation of God to a brother that, or a sister, that influences him. It was not a sermon that protected Abraham in that moment of temptation. It was a revelation of God as the possessor of heaven and earth.

And he tells Sodom's king, Lord God, most high possessor of heaven and earth, I have sworn to him that I will not take a thread or a sandal or anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich. I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me, Hannah, Eshkol and Mamre. Let them take their share.

He says, I don't want to interfere in other people taking their share. These other heathen people, let them take it, because they believe in fighting and getting the reward for their fighting, but not me. You see, that is true greatness, where you have convictions for yourself and you don't become a busybody in other people's matters and begin to judge Anna and Eshkol and Mamre and ask, why are they taking it when I'm not taking it? That is to be stupid.

To be wise is, you mind your own business, brother. You don't want to take it? Fine, don't take it. If somebody else wants to take it, let them take it.

That is large-heartedness. It's a mark of selfishness that when we don't take something out of conviction, we don't want any of the other brothers and sisters around us to take that either. It's a carnality.

No, let them take. God bless them. But I've got certain convictions, I don't want to do it, that's all.

And that's how Abraham did. But also, I think that Abraham had learned a lesson from Egypt. How did he become rich in Egypt? Pharaoh, we saw that, had given him so many animals and so much wealth, and as a result of that, we saw in Genesis, Chapter 13, when they came out of Egypt, there was conflict.

Pharaoh could say, I have made Abraham rich. And Abraham learned a lesson. No one else is ever going to say that he made me rich.

I made a mistake there in Egypt, but I've learned it. The word of God says in Proverbs, he who repeats a folly is like a dog who turns to his own vomit. We are permitted to do a foolishness once, not a second time.

And Abraham didn't do that a second time. He learned riches can cause problems. Why do I need all this that the king of Sodom can give me? This fellow is a compromiser.

This fellow is a heathen. Why should I take from him? You know, Abraham did live even before the old covenant. Now I'll tell you the sad thing.

There are Christians who claim to be living under the new covenant, who receive gifts from unbelievers for their ministry. You see Christian magazines urging people to give. Have you ever seen a Christian magazine where it says that you cannot give if you're not a believer? I've never seen it.

Everybody is invited to give. King of Sodom or any king of any place, please give for the Lord's work. This is the tragedy of Christendom today.

That Abraham had a dignity, the dignity of a man of God, which a lot of today's leaders just don't have. They haven't even got as far as the old covenant. They're nowhere near that spirit of Abraham who told the king of Sodom, God doesn't want your money.

I am a representative of God most high, and I'm not going to take your money. You can keep it. If Aner, Mamre, and Eshkol and all these other Christian organizations want your money, take it, brother.

Give it to them. But we don't want it. We don't want any of the king of Sodom's money.

That is the attitude of a true man of God. And by this, you can distinguish between the Abrahams and the Anners and the Mamres and the Eshkols, even today. Sure, the Anners and Mamres and Eshkols are glad to grab whatever the king of Sodom can offer, but not Abraham.

He says, I won't even take a thread or a shoelace. Think of that. Not even a thread or a sandal thong, not even a small thing.

I don't want it. Reason, lest you say, I have made Abraham rich. Be very careful, brothers and sisters, when receiving gifts, that we are not put under obligation to those people who give us those gifts, that we don't put ourselves in a position where later on they can say, oh, I supported that person, or I did that for that person.

Better not to take from such people. No, if we can trust in God, the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, He will provide our need. We don't need to depend on the kings of Sodom or any other wretched, evil city or country.

And there we see the dignity of a man of God. And we also see how he was helped in taking that position by Melchizedek. And I can imagine that when Melchizedek heard about how Abraham reacted, it must have thrilled his heart.

He must have said, Lord, thank you that you led me to go and speak those words to Abraham, that you saved that man from making a mistake with the king of Sodom. And so, we see here in Abraham a contrast to another man we read of later on in the Bible called Balaam. Balaam was also a prophet in touch with God, just like Melchizedek.

And just like Melchizedek's name stands out in the Bible as someone to be respected, Balaam also could have been a respected name. But when a king offered him money, his attitude was quite different from Abraham's. He, he just ran after it.

I was reading a verse the other day in the Gospels that really struck my heart. It says, Herod heard about the miracles that Jesus did, and he was longing to see him. How would you feel if the, if the, if you heard that the prime minister of India was longing to meet you? Wouldn't you make it convenient for yourself to meet him somewhere or the other? But Jesus didn't.

Think that the great ruler of Palestine was longing to meet him, and Jesus had no interest in meeting him. That is the mark of a man of God. He has no interest in meeting all the great people of this earth, even if they are eager to meet him.

That's really an example. Keep that in mind. And that's how Abraham was.

Now we come to chapter 15 and verse 1. After these things, now this is a very interesting phrase. After these things. Somewhat similar to what we read in chapter 13, 14.

After Lot had separated from Abraham, the Lord said to Abraham, You see, when Abraham and Lot were discussing about which part of Palestine each person's going to take, do you know that God was watching the whole thing? And God was watching Abraham's generous, unselfish attitude, and telling Lot, Brother, you take what you want. And God said, I have to bless that man. I must bless that man for his unselfishness.

And immediately, God went to Abraham. In the same way, when Abraham and the king of Sodom were having this conversation, God was watching. Let me see now how Abraham is going to react.

And he sees Abraham standing there with the dignity of a man of God, distinct from Anna and Eshcol and Mamre. And God said, That's a man after my own heart. I've got to bless him.

And immediately after the king of Sodom goes away, God comes to Abraham immediately. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision. He says, Don't fear, Abraham.

I am a shield to you. Abraham may have thought, Now I have made enemies of all these kings whom I have defeated. They will come after me now.

And I'll be helpless. They'll get another ten armies with them and come and finish me off. And God knew that and said, Don't worry, I'm your shield.

Nobody can touch you without my permission. And secondly, I am, in the margin it says, your very great reward. I am your reward.

I am your shield and I am your reward. You didn't get any reward from Sodom. Don't worry.

I am your reward. You know, when we refuse to take a reward from Sodom, God says to us, I will be your reward. And that is what people miss when they get a reward from Sodom.

When we take Sodom's money, we don't hear God saying to us that I am your reward. Abraham heard it. And so we see here that God watches our financial transactions.

When you're having a financial transaction with somebody, you think God's not watching? You've got to be a person completely ignorant of scripture to think God's not watching. Look at the number of instances in scripture where God was watching financial transactions. When Gehazi was talking to Naaman, God was watching the whole thing.

When Judas Iscariot was talking to the high priest, God was watching the whole thing. When Balaam was discussing with the representatives of the king of Moab, God was watching. When Abraham was having this financial transaction with the king of Sodom, God was watching.

Remember this, that every financial transaction we have, we can have it secretly with some king of Sodom, some discussion somewhere, but God is watching. And depending on how we conduct ourselves in that financial transaction, it will depend whether we get a revelation of God in the future or not. Because He gives the true riches to those who are faithful with unrighteous mammon.

And I'm absolutely convinced that the devil knows this truth more than most Christians. Do you know the devil knows that? The devil knows that if I can't ruin a man with stealing and cheating and sex and things like that, I can ruin him by just making him a little unfaithful in some financial transaction, or making him a little covetous. May not be unfaithful.

See, a lot of people are not unfaithful, but they can be covetous. Even the man who wanted his share of his father's property in Luke chapter 12, Jesus said, you're covetous. Do you know that if you desire your share of your father's property, according to Jesus' standard, you're covetous? According to the Old Testament standard, you're not covetous.

According to the law, if you get, if you ask for your share of your father's property, you're not covetous. But then you're an old covenant Christian. A new covenant Christian, according to Luke chapter 12, Jesus said so clearly to that man who went to him and said, tell my brother to divide the property with me, Jesus said, beware of covetousness.

Take that seriously. It's a very high standard in the New Testament, that I'm not even to demand my share of my parent's property. That is the new covenant standard.

If God wants me to have it, He'll let me have it. And if He doesn't want me to have it, I don't want to have it in any case. But very, very few come to this standard.

Like Walter said, when it comes to money, everybody's got the same religion. They all fight and demand for their share. But there we find there are some who enter into the new covenant and who get revelation from God.

It is not just unrighteousness. We can be absolutely righteous in money matters, and yet covetous. And that covetousness hinders us from getting revelation on God.

And I'm absolutely convinced that because the devil knows his truth, he has succeeded in leading so many Christians astray. I believe the reason why most of today's preachers are dried up, no revelation, no anointing, no ministry, no prophetic utterance, is mainly because they are not faithful in money, or if they are righteous in money matters, they are still covetous. God does not give us riches to those who are not faithful with unrighteous mammon, those who want the king of Sodom's money, those who are expecting somebody to give them gifts.

Never can we get revelation, and such people can never get revelation. But Abraham, he got revelation. God watches our attitude.

And another thing we notice here in verse 1 is the first time in the Bible that the word fear not comes. You know, that comes many times in the Bible. Jesus often used it to his disciples.

The book of Isaiah, a number of times it comes. And this word, do not fear. You have taken a stand for what is right, Abraham.

You have gone to help your brother. You have risked your life to help your brother. And as a result of it, you have made enemies of all these mighty kings.

But do not fear. And when you take a stand for the truth, and when you take a stand for God, when you take a stand because you want to help your brothers, and you want to build a church, and you want to stand for the Lord, we can hear this word of God speaking even to us today. Do not fear.

I am here. Those who refuse the king of Sodom's money, those who are faithful in their financial transactions, they will hear God speaking to them. Do not fear.

I am your shield. You don't have to look for a reward from man. I am your reward.

There's a very beautiful phrase in the book of Numbers, in chapter 18 and verse 20. Numbers 18.20. The Lord said to Aaron, who was the high priest, You shall have no inheritance in their lands. Do you know that when the land of Canaan was distributed among the tribes of Israel, every tribe got a portion except the tribe of Levi.

Do you know that? The tribe of Levi, the sons of Aaron. Aaron and his sons got no allotment of land. Think of that.

Because they had to minister to God. And the Lord said to Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in that land, nor any portion, nor own any portion among them. But instead, I am your portion and your inheritance.

Is that enough? And that's what the Lord says to us today. I am your portion. I am your inheritance.

I am your reward. What God gives to us, the worthy things, whether He gives little or much, it makes absolutely no difference to us. That's how it must be in our life.

Lord, you are my portion. Give me little, give me much. It's just the same.

Paul said, I know how to handle prosperity. I know how to handle tight circumstances. Because he found his contentment in God.

And that's how it was. So there's no need to fear for such people. And then, verse 2, Abraham said, O Lord God, what will you give me, since I am childless? The heir of my house is Eleazar of Damascus.

Abraham longed for a child. And Abraham said, Since I was given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir. Then, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, This man will not be your heir, but one who shall come forth from your own body.

He shall be your heir. And he took him outside. And God took Abraham outside and said, Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you're able to count them.

And he said to him, So shall your descendants be. Did you notice the difference between what God said to Abraham here and what God said in chapter 13, verse 16? In chapter 13, verse 16, God says, I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, your descendants can also be numbered. He compared Abraham's descendants, first of all, to the dust of the earth.

Then he compared his descendants to the stars of the sky, saying, If anyone can count them, so shall your descendants be. In other words, there was going to be an earthly seed for Abraham and also a heavenly seed for Abraham, one like the dust of the earth and the other like the stars in the sky. The earthly seed were the Jewish people who multiplied through the centuries, and the heavenly seed is the church.

Abraham is called the father of faith, the father of us all. And God fulfilled that, because through Abraham came Christ, through whom came the church. So there's an exactness in God's statement to Abraham.

He was going to have, though Abraham probably didn't understand it, I'm sure he didn't, but his seed was going to be earthly and heavenly, natural and spiritual. But though he didn't understand, he believed. And that's a great encouragement to us, that what we need is not understanding, but faith.

It's difficult to understand how a man without any children can have seeds like the stars in the sky and seeds like the dust of the earth. He says, Lord, I don't try to figure all that out. Like David said in one of the Psalms, I don't exercise myself in matters which are too great for me.

But he believed. And the Hebrew word for belief is a word, amen, which we say at the end of our prayers. Like many do things without understanding, I think many say amen also without understanding.

Like people say hallelujah without understanding. Hallelujah means praise the Lord. You must have something to praise the Lord for, to say hallelujah.

And amen means it shall be so. When a brother prays and you say amen, you are giving an expression of faith to what that brother is saying. Yeah, it's going to be so.

And you don't have to say it only at the end of a prayer. You can even say it in the middle if you believe that it's going to be so. Or it deserves to be so when we praise the Lord.

Amen. And we can read it like that here. Abraham amened the Lord.

That means when God said, your seed is going to be like the stars of the sky, Abraham said amen. It shall be so. That's it.

And that is the answer we have to give to every promise that God gives us. You turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 we read in verse 20, as many as may be the promises of God, and we have many more than Abraham had, as far as he's concerned, they are all yes. In Christ, every promise of God is yes.

That means Jesus Christ has put a signature to every promise of God. But still, those promises will not be fulfilled in us until that second part of that sentence is also fulfilled. Wherefore, by Him also is our amen.

He says yes, I must say amen to the glory of God. Things shall not have dominion over you. Jesus says yes.

What am I supposed to say? Not how can that be, since I am being defeated for so many years. That's like Zachariah the high priest. When he was told he was going to have a son, he said, how can that be? I'm so old now.

How can that be? I've been defeated in the same area for so long. And the angel said, you'll be dumb. If you don't want to be dumb, it's better to say amen.

Yeah, Lord, I don't understand that. But amen, you've said it. If you haven't said it, that's another thing.

But if you have said it, you see, we need to understand here something about the basis of faith. Because I think this is the first place in scripture where it says about a man that he had faith in God. And the first time something comes in the Bible is very significant.

And here it is, the first time a man has written about a man that he had faith in God, it is written that he said amen. That's the meaning of faith. And that's where people have, particularly a lot of Pentecostal magazines that come out from the West, have taught people wrong concepts about faith.

They've taught people to go out and have faith for all types of things. It's not God taking Abraham out and taking him out and making him look at the stars in the sky, according to these Pentecostal magazines. What they teach is you just walk out, brother, and have a look at the sky and say, oh, all that's going to be mine.

That's not what Abraham did. He didn't do any stupid thing like that, that one day he just felt like going outside the tent and say, yeah, I'm going to claim seed like all the stars in the sky. And they get disappointed.

There are a lot of people who try to claim their healing that way because they read that in some magazine or some book. Or they claim something else and they try year after year after year after year. It doesn't seem to work.

I'll tell you why it doesn't work. Because you got your teaching from some Western Pentecostal book and not from the word of God. Lots of people suffer like that, financially, physically.

They have more faith in the teachings of men rather than God's word. God spoke to Abraham saying, you will have seed like the stars in the sky. He put his, he said amen to that.

If God had said nothing, there'd have been nothing to say amen to. And that teaches us that faith must have a basis. And that basis is a clear revelation of God's word to your heart.

If God has not said anything to you, you can't have faith, brother. You can try, but it's a human trying to work up faith in something which just doesn't work. So we see right from that first instance that there are promises God has given.

Let's learn to trust them first. For example, it says in 2nd Peter 1.4 that the greatest of all promises relates to partaking of the divine nature. Exceeding great and precious promises by which we can partake of the divine nature.

I wonder how many believers there are in the world who believe that God's greatest promises today are meant to make us partake of the divine nature. No. I challenge you to go to any Christian bookshop and pick up all the, particularly the Western Pentecostal books on faith and claiming the promises.

And you'll never find one of them talking about taking part in the divine nature. They all tell you how you can get a house and a car and health and all types of material blessings because they haven't understood what Peter said so clearly, that the exceeding great and precious promises are meant so that we might partake of the divine nature. What God has said, I want to encourage those of us who've got the bad habit of getting our faith out of Western books instead of God's word to give up reading all those books to get faith and come back to God's word.

Your faith will be more solid and more realistic instead of the counterfeit it has become. That's happened to people. And I just want to warn you to beware.

I believe that the reason why many people's spiritual life is so shrunk and dried up is because they try to get faith out of these books instead of out of God's word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. There is no other way, Romans 10, 17.

Abraham heard God, so he could say Amen. And when we hear God, one sentence from God can change our whole life rather than 10,000 words from men. And God, it says here, the Lord reckoned it to him for righteousness.

Righteousness on the basis of faith, not on the basis of law, is something that came first. The law came afterwards, but Abraham was justified by faith. He turned to Romans chapter four.

We read the commentary of the Holy Spirit on this in the New Testament. Paul is writing to the Jews who think that God is going to bless only them. He says in verse two, if Abraham was justified by works, he's got something to boast before God, but not before God.

What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, said Amen to God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but what is due? When you collect your salary on the first of the month, that's not a gift. You know the difference between a gift and a salary? And we must never think that righteousness is a salary.

That's a mistake a lot of people make. They think righteousness is a salary God gives me for having worked for so much. No.

You know what the Bible says in Romans 6, 23, the salary of sin is death. But what is the contrast? The gift of God is eternal life. There's no salary.

God doesn't give salaries. He gives gifts. Every good and perfect gift comes from above.

If God were to give me my salary, you know what I'd get? Hell. That's my salary. That's what I deserve.

God doesn't give us salary. Don't ask God for a salary. Abraham, it says here, if a man works, his salary is not reckoned as a favor, but what is due? But the one who doesn't work, but believes, whose righteousness comes by faith, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.

We need to understand that very clearly. That is the foundation for our faith. That is how we are justified.

We read further, the Lord told Abraham in verse 18, he believed in hope against hope. He believed in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to what had been spoken to him, that so shall your descendants be. He said, Amen.

And this is a, Paul is using this to illustrate how we can have faith today. And without becoming weak in faith, he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead. And the deadness of Sarah's womb, that didn't make a difference.

But he looked at the promise of God. He says, it doesn't make a difference what my body is like. God has promised.

And he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully assured. This is faith. Here is the definition of faith, if you want it.

Romans 4.21, being fully convinced that what God has promised, he is able to do. If God has not promised you something, don't go try claiming it. You won't get it.

A lot of people, when they say, I prayed and I didn't get it, they were trying to claim something God never promised them. But you say God did it for that brother. He may do 101 things for other brothers, which he may not do for you.

If he has promised it in scripture, then he'll do it for everybody. But if he's not promised it in scripture, there may be certain special things God does for certain people, but he may not do it for you or me. God may raise up one man to be a prophet to the world.

He may not raise you and me to be a prophet to the world like that. No. But when there is a promise in scripture that sin shall not have dominion over you, that is for everyone.

Oh, we can partake of the divine nature. That is for everyone. What God has promised, he can do.

Now, you know what the man who lives under law says? See the contrast. What God has promised, I can do. And he struggles to do it, and he never succeeds.

That is the old covenant. What God has commanded, I can do. That's what they said when Moses gave the commandments.

The people said, yeah, we will do everything God has commanded. They couldn't do it. But in the New Testament, it's faith.

What God has promised, he will do. I submit, and he does the work. And it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

And then it says in Romans 4.23, it's not only for Abraham, but also for us. It is reckoned to him. It's reckoned to me also righteousness if I have faith in Christ.

I want to encourage those of us who are still unsure about God having accepted us to take that Romans chapter four and study how it was with Abraham and get really assured of the fact that God's accepted us in Jesus Christ. If you're not clear on this foundation, you'll always have a problem. It's like a building that's always on a shaky foundation.

We talk about working on our salvation. That's like building the walls and the roof and all that. We're all getting confused with all this because we're not clear in the foundation that I am justified by faith in Christ.

Very important, particularly for the younger generation growing up in our midst. Very important for you to understand that salvation is not a salary that God gives you for the work you have done, but it is a gift. By grace, I say it through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast, saying, God's given me my salary.

Abraham couldn't boast. And as you study later on in Abraham's life, you see how God really removed from him every possibility of boasting that he produced a son. And that's what we shall discover.

The reason why God delayed in giving a son to Abraham was to teach him that you can't do it. And the reason why God delays in giving us victory over sin is also to teach us that we can't do it. We have to say amen to God and his promises, saying, Lord, what you have promised, you will do.

Take Romans 4.21 as a definition of faith. Being fully convinced that what God has promised, he will do. Take that into the other promises of the New Testament.

We read further in verse 7, and the Lord said to Abraham, I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess it. You haven't got it yet, but I'll give it to you. And he said, oh, Lord God, how may I know that I should possess it? Now, it's very interesting to see this.

Abraham asked the Lord, how can I know that I will definitely possess this land? And the Lord said to him, all right, I'll give you a concrete proof. And here we see God entering into a covenant with Abraham. That's what it says in verse 18.

On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham. Just like with Noah, God made a covenant. And there was a symbol of the covenant, the rainbow, with the bull having fired the arrow up in the heavens.

In the same way, here also, there was a symbol of this covenant in Genesis 15. And see this. Here is the symbol of a covenant.

Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he these to him and cut them in two. Kill them.

A covenant is always made with death. Just like the rainbow, the bull fires the arrow into the heavens, so that the one up there dies. There is a death in the symbol of every covenant.

The breaking of bread. This is my blood of the new covenant. Death is the way by which people enter into a covenant.

Even in the Old Testament, He cut the animals in two and laid it opposite each other. Just like Jesus broke the bread into two. Jesus' body being broken.

Always this is the symbol of the covenant, of breaking and death. And we read here, and the birds of prey, verse 11, came down upon the carcasses and Abraham drove them away. In one of the parables, Jesus spoke about the birds of the air as the agents of Satan, who come to take away the seed that is sown.

We can look at the birds of the air as the agents of Satan coming down to attack this covenant that you are making with God. Coming to attack this sacrifice that you are making to God. How do they attack? It can

be with words like, pity yourselves Lord, this shall not happen to you.

That is the bird of prey coming down when Jesus has laid down His body to be broken, like Abraham laid out those bodies cut into two. The birds of prey come and say, pity yourself. Don't go that way.

Stand up for your rights. Fight for your rights. The birds of prey enter our thoughts and tell us to do all kinds of things contrary to the way of the cross.

And Abraham drove them away. That's what we must do. Drive them away.

Get behind me, Satan. You are only interested in the things that concern men, the conveniences of men, not in the things that concern God. Brothers and sisters, all types of thoughts will come into our minds when we are called to die in a situation.

Fight. Stand up. The birds of prey are always hanging around.

We are to drive them away. God won't drive them away. God did not drive those birds of prey away.

Abraham had to drive them away. God will enter into a covenant with us, but we have to drive the birds of prey away, that He could interfere there and ruin this covenant, ruin our fellowship with God. So that's what we learn from there.

And then we read, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham. Again, a picture of Abraham going into death to his self-life. A deep sleep.

See, the question Abraham asked in verse 8 was, how will I know that I will possess this promise? God said, all right, I'll tell you. Let me put you into a deep sleep. That's a picture of Christ dying on the cross, a deep sleep of death.

It is through death that the Lord tells us we can possess the promises. That was God's answer to Abraham. Just like God put Adam into a deep sleep, and when He brought him out, He gave him something precious.

God put Abraham into a deep sleep and entered into a covenant with Him. And behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. It's almost as though God was not near.

It's almost as though God is forsaken. But He hasn't. He draws near.

He allows us to face all that. But He's entering into a covenant. But it's like a darkness.

And we can have that type of experience. And then God said to Abraham, know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that's not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for 400 years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

And then, as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they shall return into this land and possess it.

So before they possess the land, they have to go through the experience, verse 13, of being strangers, verse 13, of being slaves or servants, and of suffering. They had to be strangers, servants, and sufferers. Then they will come and possess the land.

But the Lord says that's how we possess the land. And how applicable this is to the new covenant. That it is when we take our position as strangers in relation to the earth, servants in relation to God and to people, and sufferers in our attitude to the whole of life, my calling is only to suffer, then, the Lord says, you will come and possess the land.

It's like that in the Old Testament, and spiritually it's like that in the New. Very exact, God, in His statement to Abraham, He left him in no doubt as to how the covenant was going to be fulfilled. And then, in the fourth generation, they'll return here because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

In other words, I'm giving the Amorites here still some more centuries. One day the cup of their iniquity will be up to the brim, and then I'll wipe them out. But meanwhile, I'm going to train your descendants so that they can inherit this land in a proper way.

And when the sun had set, that it was very dark, here's a very beautiful picture, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch, that's a picture of God Himself who is a flaming fire, a consuming fire, passed between those slain pieces of the animal, as if God were saying to Abraham, Abraham, I will lay down my life for you. When He walked in between, when God walked in between these two broken pieces of the animal, He was saying that He would lay down His life. There's a verse in Jeremiah 34, verse 18 and 19, which says about how people used to make a covenant with one another in the Old Testament like this.

It says in Jeremiah 34, verse 18, that they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts, but they still transgressed My covenant. Those who pass between the cut parts of the calf, when we break the bread and take part in it, we are saying, Lord, I lay down my life for you. Just like when Jesus broke the bread and passed it, He was saying, He will lay down His life for us.

That is the meaning of cutting a calf, or cutting animals, and passing in between. That is what God did way back there in Genesis 15. He went in between those animals.

He didn't ask Abraham to go, He said, I go in between. I will lay down My life for you. This is the basis of all true covenant, between God and man, and between man and man, and between man and wife in marriage.

I will lay down My life for you. Both husband and wife have to go through in between the two slain pieces. I will lay down My body.

Then, on that day, in that way, we can say, verse 18, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying to your descendants, I have given this land from the river Egypt, and the territory that is described there. So we see how God is true to His promise. He has given that land to Jews today.

He keeps this part of the covenant. It's our part to be faithful in our responsibility here. Let's stand up and give thanks to God.

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