

Winning God's Approval - Part 3

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of winning God's approval through faith and total obedience, illustrated by the life of Abraham and the blessings that follow faithfulness.

Duration: 51:56

Scripture: John 2:24

Topics: "Approval"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of moving from simply believing in Jesus to becoming a person whom Jesus can entrust Himself to. The ultimate goal is to receive Jesus' commendation and approval. The blessing of Abraham is described as being both blessed by God and becoming a blessing to all the families of the earth. The speaker also highlights that Jesus' death on the cross not only removes our sins but also brings the blessing of Abraham upon us. The sermon concludes by introducing a series on characters in the Old Testament who received God's approval through their faith.

Transcript

Yesterday evening I commenced a series titled, Winning God's Approval. It's going to be a study of characters in the Old Testament. It's going to be a series of nine studies, actually.

Three this weekend, three the next, and the three weekend after that. And we're going to see how these men, like it says in Hebrews 11.39, receive the approval of God through their faith. Many Christians are happy that they have been accepted by God.

But many Christians who are accepted by God are not approved by God. Just like we accept all our children and love them, but we don't always approve of what they do. And so, God's desire is, as he places us on earth, to make us like Christ.

And the interesting thing is that even when Jesus was on earth, he had to win the Father's approval too. At the age of 30, you know, the voice from heaven said, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. So, every man and woman whom God chooses, he allows us to go through testing.

Just like he allowed Adam, we considered Adam and Eve yesterday, and we considered Job in the first service this morning. Both of whom were tested. It's one reason why God allows Satan to exist on earth.

He could destroy him with a word of his mouth, but he doesn't do it. Sometimes we may wonder why, with all the havoc that Satan has caused and is still causing, we wonder why God doesn't destroy him. And we certainly see from the example of Job anyway, that because he was tempted, because he went through those trials that Satan brought into his life, he came out a better man.

And that's why, one reason anyway, why God allows Satan to exist. He uses him to tempt us so that we can become stronger. In John's Gospel chapter 2, we read these words, which I don't know whether you have noticed.

It says there, that there were a number of people who believed in Jesus. Verse 23, John 2, 23. A number of people who believed in Jesus at the Passover feast.

But, listen to this, because this has application even today. But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them. They entrusted themselves to him, they believed in him, but he did not entrust himself to them.

He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Is it possible that those words could be written of you? That you have believed in Jesus, verse 23, but he cannot entrust himself to you. Why? Because he knew all men.

He knows every one of us, and he did not need any testimony from others, concerning what type of people we are, because he knew what was in man. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. From the time I became a Christian, my great longing was to move from verse 23 to verse 24.

To move from just being one who believed in Jesus, to one to be a person whom Jesus could entrust himself. And say, I'm backing you up, I'm with you. And before the Lord can do that, I tell you, my dear brothers and sisters, there's absolutely no honor on earth to equal what you read there in verse 24.

Jesus commending you, approving of you, not just accepting you. Praise God that he's accepted most of us. And if you're not one of those accepted, you can be accepted today before you leave this room.

If you open your life and give yourself to Christ, he welcomes all who come to him who are sick and tired of their defeated lives. But more than that, once he accepts us, he wants us to be among those whom he approves of. Who are tested in the time of testing and found faithful.

He does not entrust himself to someone whom he has not tested. Just like in an earthly factory or company, they would give you responsibility after you have been tested. And that's exactly the reason why God allows us to be tested.

I also want to turn to this verse in 2 Timothy chapter 2, which has been our theme verse sort of during the study of 2 Timothy 2.15, where Paul told Timothy to be diligent, to work hard. Work hard to present yourself as one who is approved by God, not just accepted. And remember, Timothy was not a carnal, half-hearted Christian.

He was Paul's most devoted, most wholehearted co-worker. And Paul did not say that to Timothy at the beginning of his Christian life, but when Paul was ending his life, the last letter Paul wrote, he wrote to Timothy and said, Be careful, my son, that God approves of you. All the commendation of men, all the opinions that men have about you as a spiritual man are fit for the trash can if God doesn't approve of you.

And Timothy took that to heart, I believe. So, now we want to consider in this service, in this session, how God tested Abraham and approved of him. It wasn't just over a period of one or two years.

God's testing continues throughout our lifetime. And we read that God tested Abraham at the beginning of his encounter with him. And fifty years later, in Genesis 22, I want to show you the certificate that God gave to Abraham when he had passed the test.

Genesis chapter 22, it says here, in Genesis chapter 22, verse 16, the Lord says, By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing, because you have not withheld your son. In other words, you have passed this final test. I will greatly bless you.

I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, as the sand on the seashore. Your seed will possess the gate of their enemies, and in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, just because you obeyed my voice. There was a certificate of approval that he got towards the end of his life.

That wasn't some cheap Bible college degree that Abraham got after cramming his head with knowledge for three years. It was through many years where God had tested him in different situations. He didn't always pass.

We see that he failed sometimes, but he came back and passed it on a second try. And that gives hope for us. God's men in the Bible were not people who passed the test first time always.

Peter failed miserably three times, and yet he came back to be the greatest apostle. And so here with Abraham, at the end of his life, God could give him the certificate and say, Abraham, I'm not only going to bless you, but bless your children. This is something we see right through Scripture.

That when God finds a man who is faithful, somehow and for some reason, his children get blessed too. And not only his children, his grandchildren, great-grandchildren, they get blessed because of one man's faithfulness. David said in Psalm 37, verse 25, he says, I was young, and now I am an old man.

But in my entire life, I have never seen a righteous man without a job having to beg for bread. And I have not seen his children having to beg for bread. His seed, children, grandchildren, having to beg for bread either.

You know, it's a tremendous thing to be blessed by God. The blessing flows on to generation after generation. Many people wonder today, they ask this question, even Christians sometimes.

Is God, is Israel the favorite of God, are Jews the favorite of God? No, they're not. God has no favorites. No nation on earth is His favorite.

But, God keeps His promise. When He found a man, God didn't choose Israel. No, He didn't.

He chose a man. And if through that man, some other nation had come, they would have been blessed because of that man. Because God had to keep His word.

That I will, you have obeyed me so much, Abraham, that I'm going to bless you and your descendants. That's not just for Abraham. That's for you and me.

Your children will be blessed. Your grandchildren will be blessed. If you pass the test.

It's a wonderful thing to gain God's approval. It passes on to others. So, we want to look at Abraham's life and see some of the tests he passed, where he failed, and how he got God's approval.

First of all, we turn to Genesis chapter 12. We read here, when Abraham was 75 years old, living a comfortable retired life in Ur of the Chaldees, having built his house and settled down, one day in the middle of the night, God says, you've got to leave all this. I'm sure it wasn't easy.

All that he knew was in Ur of the Chaldees. He lived there all his life. All his friends and relatives were there.

And the surprising part of it was that God didn't even tell him where he was going to take him. He said, leave all this and follow me. Where do I have to go, Lord? I'm not going to tell you.

Just trust me. It says, the Lord said to Abraham, go forth from your country, Genesis 12, verse 1, and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you. And I will make you a great nation.

I will bless you and make your name great. And I will bless all those who bless you. And I will curse those who curse you.

And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you. Now why do we study the life of Abraham? See, these Old Testament people, there are warnings and examples for us today. When you turn to Galatians chapter 3, verse 14, it says there, 13 and 14, that when Christ died on the cross and became a curse, that's exactly what it says.

Jesus became a curse for us. The curse that we should have got, he took on the cross. Not only to remove the curse, that itself would have been enough.

But more than that, not just to remove the curse, the negative side, but beyond that, it says in Galatians 3, verse 14, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us who are not his physical descendants. Who are not Jews, who are not members of the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It can come upon us too, because we have the same faith that Abraham had.

If he passed the test, he passed. Well, that's the implication of there. And that blessing is described here.

What is the blessing of Abraham? It is in two sentences. I will bless you. That's in verse 2. And I will make you a blessing.

Just two sentences. I will bless you and you will be a blessing. To whom? To all the families of the earth.

Now that is God's promise for us. Why did Jesus die on the cross? Many people say, just to remove my sins. Forgive my sins.

Praise God, that's true. But it's more than that. He not only took away the curse, like I said in Galatians 3, verse 14, that this blessing of Abraham might come upon us.

What is that? I want to say to every one of you, in the name of Jesus, that if you have given your life to Christ, you believe that Christ died for your sins, that he became a curse for you, don't miss out on what God wants to bless you with, which is, he will bless you and make you a blessing to every family that you encounter in your life. That is God's will. And if you have been a nuisance and a curse to people till now,

there is a promise for you too.

Yes, because God is a good God. He is not a person who makes, who holds things against us. And it says in Zechariah 8, verse 13, as you have been a curse among the people, I will now make you a blessing among the people.

Isn't that wonderful? That just like we've been a nuisance and a pest to people, God's going to make us a blessing to those very same people. And to many others. It's very important for us to see that.

This is the blessing of Abraham, and it is for every single child of God. But in my experience, and I've been a believer for 47 years, I've seen that the vast majority, I'd say much more than 50%, I'd say 75% or more of God's people do not claim this as their inheritance. It's something like, if your dad was a wealthy man with a lot of property, and left you a will, where you inherited all that, and you don't go and claim it.

We wouldn't be so stupid in earthly things, but we are pretty foolish when it comes to spiritual things. There's an inheritance that Christ purchased through His death on the cross. And do you know what that is? Listen, God will bless you.

And, He will make you a blessing to every family you come across. And this it says in Galatians 3.14, is through, listen, through the Holy Spirit. This is why, being filled with the Holy Spirit, or being baptized in the Holy Spirit, immersed in the Holy Spirit, is so important.

You just saw immersion in water. You know what John the Baptist said? I can only immerse you in water. There's someone else who wants to immerse you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

That's the thing that makes us, by which God blesses us, and makes us a blessing to others. That is the blessing of Abraham, we read in Galatians 3.14. So, having said that, let me see how, let me show you how, when God said this to Abraham, his obedience was partial, not total. God told him, you got to leave your country, and you got to leave your relatives, and your father's house, leave your father, leave all your relatives.

And you and your wife, just two of you, come with me. You know what happened? It says here, in verse 31 of chapter 11, that's actually following what God had said in chapter 12, verse 1, because in 12.1 it says the Lord had said this to Abraham. Terah, that is Abraham's father, took Abraham's son, imagine this dad holding his 75 year old son's hand and taking him and saying, come along with me.

And Lot, the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarah, and they went together. That's where Abraham disobeyed. He left, he told his dad, hey dad, God told me to go to some land, he's going to bless me in some wonderful way.

And dad said, I'm coming along too. And Lot said, I think I'll come along too. That wasn't God's will.

And you see the problems he had, because of these two people he took along. You know, when God calls us to obey something, he expects us to obey implicitly, totally, immediately. Abraham obeyed immediately, but not totally.

It says here, they went out, and here's where the first problem arose. God wanted to lead Abraham to Canaan. And instead of going to Canaan, when they came halfway to a place, chapter 11, verse 31, called Haran, Terah looked at the land and said, well, this is a nice place for our flocks, I think we should stay

here.

I have a feeling this is where God wants us to be. And Abraham knew that's not right. But, he listened to his dad, and stayed there.

You know, one of the things we see in scripture, is how our relatives can make us miss God's will for our lives. The Bible begins with that, with Eve, who was Adam's wife, making him miss God's will. She was the one who tempted him.

Throughout scripture, that's why Jesus said, if anyone loves his father or mother more than me, he can't be my disciple. Sorry. He doesn't mean that we shouldn't honor our parents, or love our wives or children, but you've got to make sure in your life, one of the first things we read, if God will test us in this area, are you going to listen to God, or to what your relatives say? We have numerous cases in India, of people who, given their lives to Christ, young men who give their life to Christ and want to obey Him, and their parents come along and weep and shed a few tears, and say, well, how are you going to leave our religion that we've had from our time of our forefathers, and some of them break free and those are the ones who go on with God, and some of them listen to their relatives and usually backslide and lose their salvation.

So this is what happens when a person does not put God first in his life. I want to say to you that God may test you with someone whom you love, your relatives, your wife, your husband, your parents, that's what we see here, and then if you listen to them and do what they say, they may obey partially, because Abraham's father was willing to go, but they went halfway and got stuck. But God was so determined to lead Abraham on.

You know what he did? He killed his father. What a price to pay. It says here in Genesis 11, 32, Terah, Abraham's father died, and then chapter 12, verse 4, then Abraham went forth as the Lord had told him way back in Ur of the Chaldeans.

Don't wait till that happens. Obey the Lord when He's told you, and say, Lord, you mean more to me than my father, my mother, my brother, my sister, my wife, my children, especially those who are close to you whom you love. I don't know whether you know why God chose the Levites to be His priests.

You know there were 12 tribes in Israel, and God didn't just out of some whim or fancy decide, okay, Levites are going to be my priests. No. There was a particular time in the history of Israel, when they came out of Egypt, when they all started worshipping a golden calf.

You know that. Moses was not there. He was up in the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, and when he came down, he saw these people worshipping the golden calf, idol worship, which God hated, and he stood there outside the camp of Israel and said, who is on the Lord's side? Who is going to come and stand with me against all this idolatry? All the 12 tribes stood there.

None of them moved. Then the sons of Levi, the tribe of Levi, went forward and said, Moses, we're standing with you. And Moses said, okay, this is a serious situation.

Take your swords, go out, and don't spare even your own relatives. Destroy these idolaters. And the Levites did that.

I want to turn and read a verse to you from Deuteronomy chapter 33 and verse 8 to 10. Moses' blessing to Levi was this. You're going to be the ones who are going to have the Urim and Thummim, which is the

priests handled, who said because you said to your father and mother, verse 9, I do not consider you.

He did not recognize his brothers or his own sons, but kept God's word and your covenant. Therefore, verse 10, they shall teach my ordinances to Jacob and they shall put incense before me. So you see, it's because the Levites decided God is more important to me than my brothers and children and parents and everybody else.

God said, okay, you're the ones who are going to be my servants. It's the same thing Jesus said when he came and proclaimed the conditions of discipleship. So that's what we see here in the case of Abraham too.

I want to move on from there and I just want to say one thing before I move on and that is, I have sometimes thought when God came to Abraham when he was living that retired, comfortable life and said, Abraham, I want you to leave all this and come and follow me. It looks as if you're going to lose everything, but if you trust me, you'll find that you get something far more than you've given up. It's the type of call that God gave to Peter and James and John by the plague of Galilee and that he still gives to different people at different times.

Chuck this, leave this and come and follow me. It may look as if you're losing everything, but you will not. You'll get something better.

Supposing Abraham had said, well, Lord, I mean, I'd like to follow you right here. I don't want to, I want to honor you and all that, but I don't want to leave this country. I'm living a comfortable retired life.

Don't ask me to leave all this now at the age of 75. Do you know, God would not have forced him. God never forces anyone.

God would have said, okay Abraham, that's fine. Goodbye. I'll find somebody else.

And he'd have gone to somebody else and said, what about you? Will you follow me? And if that man had said yes, you'd never have heard about Abraham. And whichever nation came through that man would have been the chosen nation of God. Now, thank God that Abraham obeyed.

There is a verse in the book of Revelation chapter 3, in the message that God gave, that the Lord gave to the church in Philadelphia, which says, be careful that no one takes your crown. How can somebody take my crown? If I'm not faithful to fulfill the ministry God has for me, you know what God will do? He'll give my ministry to somebody else. And that fellow will get his crown and mine.

I have a, I don't have scripture to show this to you, but my own personal opinion, you know, Paul sometimes said, I don't have a commandment, but I give you my opinion. So, let me make that clear. Before you folks challenge me at the end of the meeting, where's that in scripture? This is my opinion.

I believe that Judas Iscariot was chosen by God. He was not a traitor when he was chosen. Luke chapter 6, verse 12 makes it very clear that when the Lord chose him, he was a wholehearted disciple.

He became a traitor, it says. That he was the one who was, he was the smartest of the disciples, the cleverest, most intelligent. He was the one chosen to write the epistles, but he failed.

And his crown was taken by Paul. Paul wrote what Judas should have written. Anyway, that's my opinion.

But, it's, I believe it's true that many a person whom God has chosen through these 20 centuries of church history have failed because they did not get his approval. They did not pass the test. So like we read, they believed in Jesus, but Jesus would not commit himself to them.

And so God took their ministry and gave it to somebody else. I remember once I asked the Lord, I said, Lord, India is a country with 1,200 million people. 99% of them, 98% of them anyway, don't even claim to be Christians.

Where are the prophets in our land? Where are the ones who stand up and proclaim God's word fearlessly, even among those who claim themselves to be Christians? And this is the answer the Lord gave me. The Lord said he had called many young people in India to serve him. But most of them fell by the wayside, running after money, marrying the wrong woman, or something like that, and missing out on that prophetic ministry that God called them to.

I believe it's absolutely true. I hope in the day when you stand before the Lord, you will not discover that God had a ministry for you on earth, which you missed because you put something else as more important than God in your life. There are lots of Christians who are going to have tremendous sorrow, even if they get to heaven, at the judgment seat of Christ when the Lord shows them, I don't know how he'll do it, but in some way like seeing on a video screen, this is what your life would have been like on earth, this is what your ministry would have been, but you missed it.

You went after money. You went after the honor of men. You went after seeking your own comfort.

So, did my work get hindered? No. I just took your ministry and gave it to somebody else. This other guy fulfilled it.

Can you imagine how you'll feel in that day if that happens? Think of that, when God called Abraham, he said yes, and even though he didn't obey fully, God still led him on. The second thing I want you to see here is the Lord tested him in relation to his attitude to material things. It says here that when Abraham and Lot went along with Abraham and Abraham prospered, and when you go along with a godly man, you get some of his blessings too.

So, Lot prospered as well, and it says here in Genesis 13 that their flocks became so large that there was not enough pasture for all the flocks to feed themselves. And then the servants of Abraham and the servants of Lot started fighting with each other. And Abraham said to Lot in verse 8, he said, Please, Lot, let's not have a fight over these things.

Now, what Abraham could have said to Lot was, Listen, Lot, you're my nephew. I'm the senior fellow around here. I'm your uncle.

And God didn't call you. Why in the world did you? You get back to Ur of the Chaldees. This is my place.

And go where you like, but get lost. But Abraham didn't say that. You know what he calls him? He says in verse 8, We are brothers.

Imagine this 75-year-old man looking at this young 30-year-old and saying, You're my brother. And he said, Let there be no strife. And he said, Lot, you choose what you want.

If you go to the left, verse 9, I'll go to the right. If you choose the property to the right, I'll choose the property to the left. You have first choice.

This is the mark of a man of God. He doesn't fight over property. When his family property is being divided, he says, You take what you want.

Give me what's left over. Where do you find men like that today? Those are the people who God chooses. And it says here, Lot, covetous, selfish man that he was, lifted up his eyes, verse 10, and saw, Oh, this is great.

This dumb uncle of mine has given me the first chance. I'm going to grab it. You know, the world is full of grabbers waiting for the opportunity to grab something free, something which a man of God is willing to give up.

And it says he saw the well-watered valley of the river Jordan down Sodom and Gomorrah side. He said, I'll choose that. And listen to this, verse 11, Lot chose for himself.

God chose for Abraham. That's the difference between a spiritual Christian and a carnal Christian. Why do I say that? Because the Bible says Lot was a righteous man in 2 Peter chapter 2. You know, there are believers who are righteous, declared righteous by the righteousness of Christ, but they're like Lot.

They choose for themselves. There are others who are spiritual, like Abraham. God chooses for them.

Lot chose for himself, verse Genesis 13, 11. And listen to this. There was a silent observer to this transaction.

That's what we sometimes don't realize. That in all our transactions, particularly financial transactions, there is a silent observer. Like Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 12, 3, Lord, you examine my heart's attitude to money and to you.

And God was observing. Lot didn't know that. Even Abraham didn't know that.

But when the Lord saw this, the Lord said to Abraham in Genesis 13, 14, after Lot had separated from him, Abraham, you thought you lost something? Not really. Just stand up. You gave one part of this land to Lot.

Let him have it. But he's not going to have it for long. Now you stand and look north, south, east, and west.

The land which you see. Listen, these are the words of God. You can't fight with them.

I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. And if there are people who are the descendants of Abraham who have got it, it's because God said that. People have tried to push them out at different times, but God made sure they get it.

And so, there it is. I mean, I wouldn't like to fight with God over this. It's the blessing not upon a nation.

Remember this. It's because God blesses the descendants of any godly man, and it applies to you as well, and to me. This is what God's word says.

But the point here is that Abraham did not lose out by letting God choose for him. And you will not lose out if you let God choose for you. You lose out when you choose for yourself.

When you don't seek God's will. When you try to grab something for yourself, and especially when you want to grab something and get the better deal in something. A man of God never does that.

A man of God says, you choose first. I let God choose for me. And you will get the best when you let God choose for you.

Now you may find yourself in situations like that, where you will be tested, just like Abraham was tested, and perhaps some of you are being tested right now. In some situation in your life. And God is the silent observer, watching to see what you are going to do.

And whether you are going to live in the blessing of Abraham, depends on whether you react like Abraham or like Lot. What did Lot get by what he chose? He lost his property. He lost his wife.

He lost his two sons-in-law. And morally, he lost even his daughters. What did he gain? You never gain anything.

A lot of people like Lot who'd gone after money, have lost their children to the world. Thousands of cases of believers like that. These things are written in the scripture for our instruction.

Let God choose for you. And then, in chapter 14, we read another time, when Abraham was tested. See, God doesn't commit himself to someone who he hasn't tested.

Here was Abraham with 318 untrained servants, went out and defeated a number of kings, obviously with the help of God, and came back recovering all that property of Sodom's land, which I mean, he went after that only because Lot, his nephew, had also been captured. And when he came back, you know, those days, the rule was that winner takes all. That means if you won the battle, all of what you recovered is yours.

All of that wealth of Sodom, which had been stolen by these other kings, which Abraham went and got back for the king of Sodom because Lot was there, rightfully was his, according to the laws of war in those days. But God sent a servant of his called Melchizedek down to Abraham in Genesis 14 and said, Hey, don't forget that it's God who gave your enemies into your hand. Genesis 14.20 And don't forget, verse 19, that your God is the possessor of heaven and earth.

Don't covet all this. Thank God for faithful servants of his who come to you with the right word at the right time to deliver you from pride and covetousness. That's the ministry of Melchizedek if you want to know what it is.

And Abraham was challenged by this two-sentence message. And the king of Sodom comes along a little later and says, Abraham, according to the laws of battle, all this is yours. Abraham says, no.

My God is the possessor of heaven and earth, verse 22, and I will not even take a shoelace from you, lest you say one day that you made Abraham rich. I'm going to be rich, but God's going to make me rich, not you. I'm not going to take anything from you.

You know, if Christians lived like this, and with all this prosperity gospel going on these days, if people could say, I'm not going to be rich through you and through collecting your tithes and offerings, but God's going to make me rich, that would be a different story. But the type of deception going on today is quite different from Abraham's message here. I will not take a shoelace from you, lest you say you have made

me rich.

How many preachers can say, my congregations did not make me rich, God bless them? Unfortunately, no. All these preachers who preach the prosperity gospel, they have become rich at the cost of poor people sitting in their congregations. And they are deceiving so many.

It's true. Abraham was of a different caliber altogether. He was a man who lived before God.

He had no interest in money. Did he suffer? No. God took care of all his needs.

But God tests us in this area of material things to see what is our attitude. He's not going to make us starve. Remember what David said, I've been young and now I'm old, yet I've never, never seen a righteous man forsaken or his seed begging for bread.

God is faithful. He said if you seek God's kingdom first and his righteousness, all the other things will be added to you. So, but he tests us first.

And then we see in Genesis 15, another test. Abraham didn't have any children. He says in chapter 17 to him when he has no children through Sarah.

First of all, he told him in Genesis 15, you're going to have seed like the stars of the sky, Genesis 15, 5. And it just says Abraham said, yes, Lord. It says in Genesis 15 verse 6, he believed in the Lord. Now that word believe is a Hebrew word Amen.

Which we use at the end of our prayers. Did you know what Amen meant? I mean for many Christians, Amen means it's time to open my eyes. Prayers are over.

That's not the meaning of Amen. Amen means, Lord I believe it shall be so. What that brother just prayed, it shall be so.

What I said prayed just now, it shall be so. It's a Hebrew word which means, yes, I believe so. Abraham, I mean if I were to paraphrase Genesis 15 6, it is, Abraham, Amen to the Lord.

When God said something he said Amen. I mean here's a guy who's got no children. He's 80 years old, his wife is 70 years old and God says you're going to have children like the stars of the sky.

No questions, Lord. Amen. It'll be so.

That's faith. See, faith is not, it's very important to understand this, faith is not just going to God and say, I'd like to have children. No.

That's prayer. But faith is when God says something to you and you say Amen. Abraham didn't just visualize like people say, visualize that you've got so many children.

No. Faith is not born out of visualization. That is new age teaching.

Faith is born in scripture from God's word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. If you don't have a promise in scripture, I mean, God may be good to you but you may not get it.

I mean, I can visualize seeing my head full of hair. Lord, I claim it in Jesus name. I'm not going to get it.

I will get it one day when Jesus comes back. Believe me. There is a time and a season for everything.

But there are certain things God promised us only when Christ returns. Perfect health, head full of hair, no glasses, etc. Many things.

But you've got to wait for some of these things. If God has promised something now, what has he promised me now? I'll tell you what he's promised me now. Sin shall not have dominion over you.

Romans 6.14. That's for now. A full head of hair, no glasses, eternity. I'm willing to wait.

But sin shall not have dominion over you now. And what do we have to say when God says that? Amen. It will be so.

If you say that God can do something for you. That's what we learn from Abraham. You're going to have children like the seed of the sand on the seashore, star sky.

Amen. It can look impossible when you say, you mean, Lord, I'm going to get permanent victory over my anger? God says yes. Are you going to say yes? If God says sin will not rule over you, you can overcome your anger, you can overcome your lust.

If you say amen, it will be so. If you say not so sure, Lord, you don't know my case. My case is a hard case.

You'll be like those Israelites at the borders of Canaan, looking at the giants and say, oh, this is tough. And God let them wander. A lot of Christians are wandering just because they don't believe.

So say amen to the Lord to what God has promised. And the Bible says he even changed his name. God told him, change your name.

If you believe me, change your name. Say from now on, I'm the father of a multitude. So he calls the people today, together the next day and says, I've changed my name.

What's your name, Abraham? Father of a multitude. How many children do you have? None so far. I'm going to call myself a father of a multitude because God told him that.

You can't say that before God tells you. He didn't just suddenly get a bright idea. Faith is.

It's so clear. Abraham, the father of faith, we see so clearly again and again and again. His faith was based on what God told him.

He didn't just act out on his own. I'm trusting God for this. I'm jumping off the top of the temple, trusting God to protect me.

No, no such thing. So let's understand what faith is. Then I want to come to the final test which came to Abraham.

Genesis 22. 50 years after God had first called him. 50 years! After he had passed that first test where he left Ur of the Chaldees, about 45 years after he had passed the test with Lot and the king of Sodom in Genesis 13 and 14.

And about 25 years after he got his son Isaac passed the test of faith. It says in Genesis 22.1, after all these things God tested him. After which things? There was an ungodly heathen king there in the previous chapter called Abimelech who had just come to Abraham and told him in verse 22 Oh Abraham God is with you Oh we have seen you are a man of God God says I couldn't care less for the testimony of man I want to test you myself Do you get excited when somebody comes to you and says Oh you are a man of God You are a great man brother Don't take it to heart The same The same people who said Hosanna one day said crucify him a few days later I have experienced that So God said I don't care what Abimelech says I know he is a great king but I couldn't care less what he says.

You are a man of God. I want to test you myself Abraham and I will test you right now Just in the middle of the night Abraham was sleeping in his tent with Sarah and God wakes him up Come outside He goes outside and God says Tomorrow morning No he didn't say tomorrow morning. He said take your son Take him to Mount Moriah which is three days journey away Offer him up to me as a sacrifice And it says here Early in the morning Abraham rose up, saddled his donkey Genesis 20 through 3 And he didn't tell Sarah a word about what he was doing.

Thank God He just took Isaac and went his way Imagine if he had told Sarah Well Sarah I am just going to take our son and kill him up in the mountain He would have had a real problem I don't know what the psychologists say but there are certain things you shouldn't tell your wife If God told you to do something Don't let the left hand of your wife know what the right hand is doing. The Bible says that Do it Secretly In obedience to God And that's what he did And why this place three days journey away Why didn't God tell him just to take him around the corner and kill him Because there is a reason behind everything God says It says in verse 4 on the third day You see God gives us time to think about it You know sometimes we act on the spur of the moment and afterwards regret certain decisions we have made God says I don't want you to regret anything Take time Take three days Think about it, think about it, think about it And you still feel it's worth it Give me your son So Abraham thought about it for three days And he said It's worth it Like we sing in that song It will be worth it all When we see Jesus It will be worth it all.

Everything that we have gone through Abraham said it's worth it This God who has been so faithful to me I don't have a clue why he wants me to kill my son But I'm going to do it And he went up to the mountain alone Put his son on the altar And said Lord here is the proof of my devotion to you You are more precious to me Than anything on this earth And as the night was coming down The angel said stop That's enough I just wanted to test you Abraham To see whether I Mean more to you After fifty years of walking with me Has something else Become more precious to you Do you know the number of people Christians Who started out their Christian life Walking with God Where Jesus was the most precious Person of all to them And as time has gone on Something God given Has become more precious Wasn't Isaac God given Supernatural Be given Their ministry Has become their God I know many a times God has spoken to me about it Don't let your ministry Ever become your God The reason why so much Of Christian ministry Is shallow today Is because the ministry has become more Precious to that preacher Than Christ himself That's the tragedy The gift Has become more precious Than the giver Many a times when I've laid in bed I've said Lord you can take away My ministry, you can take away My voice, you can take away Everything, you can paralyze my body if you like I'll lie down here in this bed And love you and worship you All my life, I don't want anything else Like the psalmist said in Psalm 73 25 Whom am I in heaven but Thee, and there Is nothing I Desire on earth Beside thee I want to tell you this, if a boyfriend Or a girlfriend means more to you Than Christ, you'll never Never, never have God's best That is impossible You may sort of Gradually Drift into God's kingdom But you'll never get God's approval Impossible It could be your ministry If your

ministry is so much to you Or the opinions of men You can't bear criticism You get all worked up if somebody Criticizes you The opinions of men become your God You can never get God's approval God will test you after 50 years of being a believer To see whether he means everything to you Or something else means everything And boy When you pass the test He will Bless you and make you A blessing to every family That you ever come across On the face of the earth You want that? It's very easy Say Lord, I want to love you with all my heart Nothing else will Ever mean more to me than you Let's pray

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