

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM
"The Call Of Abraham"
Genesis 12:1-3
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This morning we begin a study of the life of Abraham. Next to Jesus Christ, Abraham is probably the most important person in the Bible. One indication of this is the amount of space given to him. Only eleven chapters of Genesis are devoted to the entire early history of the human race, from creation to the Tower of Babel -- But fourteen chapters are devoted just to the life of Abraham. His stature is greater than Moses or David or Paul. These were all great men, but each of them would have agreed that Abraham was his father in the faith.

No one can understand the Old Testament without understanding Abraham. In many ways the history of redemption begins with God's call of Abraham. The story of Abraham contains the first mention in the Bible of God's righteousness imputed to us as the only way of salvation (Genesis 15:6). The Apostle Paul looked back to Abraham as the greatest example of how God's people are to be justified by faith and live by faith.

In Genesis 17:4 we read of God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. This was fulfilled physically and spiritually. On the physical side Abraham became the father of the Jewish people, through whom Jesus the Messiah was born; he became the father of the many Arab tribes through his son Ishmael. On the spiritual side, Abraham has become the father of a great host of believers from every tongue and nation. Paul says in Galatians chapter 3: "Consider Abraham: He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then, that those who believe are children of Abraham..." (Galatians 3:6-7).

BIG IDEA: In this first message we will learn that Abraham's call is a pattern for your call and my call as Christians today.

ABRAHAM'S CALL WAS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD

After all we have said about Abraham, it comes as a shock to learn that here was nothing in Abraham himself that commended him to God. His calling was the result of the sovereign grace of God. God does not look down from heaven to find a person with a little bit of righteousness or a little bit of faith and say, "I think I'll save him." When he looks down from heaven he sees that all men are without faith, and without righteousness: *"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one"* (Romans 3:12).

The biblical doctrine of man's natural inability is illustrated in the life of Abraham. He came from a family that had sunk to the level of worshipping idols rather than the true

and living God. This means that Abraham was probably an idol worshipper himself before God called him.

In the last chapter of the Book of Joshua, Joshua is delivering a final spiritual charge to the people of Israel. He begins by reminding them of their pagan past. Joshua 24:2-3,14 is a clear statement of the fact that Abraham came from a pagan ancestry and that he and Terah had once worshipped false gods.

The same thing is said by Isaiah in Isaiah 51:1-2. The thrust of these verses is that there was nothing in the ancestry of the Jewish people that could commend them to God.

The third passage that reveals the truth about Abraham's ancestry is a story from the life of Abraham's grandson Jacob in Genesis 31. Jacob was a schemer and his underhandedness made his brother angry enough to want to kill him. He was forced to flee for his life. He ended up back in Mesopotamia, the place from which Abraham had come. He associated himself with his uncle Laban. In time he married both of Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel. As time passed, bad feelings arose between Jacob and Laban. Jacob decided to return to the land of Canaan. Laban was away on business at the time. When he returned, his nephew, his daughters, and much of the property was gone. The household gods were also missing. Laban set out in pursuit. When he overtook Jacob he accused him of stealing the family idols. A search was made, but no idols were found. Rachel had hidden them in her camel's saddle and was sitting on them.

This story in Genesis 31 shows that Abraham's relatives still owned and cherished idols at least three generations after God had called Abraham out of Mesopotamia.

So, why did God save a guy like Abraham? The answer is simply that it was God's will. In Deut. 7:7-8 Moses tells why God chose Israel to be the nation through which he gave the law and would one day send the Savior. READ. Why did God love them? Just because he loved them. Why did he chose them? Just because he chose them. It is the logic of grace.

The way God loved Abraham is the way God loves us. We are like Abraham. There is nothing in us to commend us to God. When God looks upon each one of us in our natural state, he sees us in the same condition as Abraham. Yet God loves us. As he sought Abraham, he seeks to draw us into fellowship with himself. READ John 1:11-12. Then read verse 13. God did not give us the authority to become children of God because we believed. We believe because we are born of God (verse 13). We do not make the first move toward God. Salvation begins in heaven. Salvation begins with an efficacious call of God, an act of sovereign grace!

Just as in the case of Abraham, our Christian lives begin with a special call from God. It is by his sovereign grace that we are children of God today.

But the call of Abraham was not simply a call to salvation. The call of God demands a new priority in life....

ABRAHAM'S CALL DEMANDED A NEW PRIORITY

Abraham was called to commit himself to the Lord, to walk obediently, to trust the Lord and go where the Lord would have him go.

God's call to separate from his own country, from his kindred and from his father's house must have been very painful for Abraham. God said, get out of your country, become an alien and a stranger and a foreigner! Go forth from your relatives and your father's house. Acknowledge another father and seek another house.

The call of Abraham has a counterpart in the life of every Christian. God's call involves a call to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every area of our lives. The call of God is a separating sword, cutting us off from old associations. A Christian becomes a person who is "in the world" but not "of the world." As the Apostle Paul says, "Our citizenship is in heaven." We become aliens and strangers on earth – pilgrims passing through.

We read of Abraham in Hebrews 11: *"By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow-heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."*

Abraham was called upon to do the same thing that Jesus asked his disciples to do. The disciples of Jesus discovered that following Christ demands a new priority (READ Luke 14:26-33).

John and Betty Stam were martyred by the Chinese Communists 60 years ago. Just nine years prior to their deaths, Betty Stam wrote: "Lord I give up my own purposes and my plans, all my own desires, hopes and ambitions, whether they be fleshly or soulish and I accept thy will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all utterly to Thee, to be Thine forever. I hand over to Thy keeping all of my friendships. All the people whom I love are to take a second place. Work out Thy whole will in my life – at any cost, now and forever. To me to live is Christ. Amen."

What God called Abraham to do, what Jesus called his disciples to do, what John and Betty Stam did, God also calls every child of God who is called by grace to do.

Charles Spurgeon has written: "The man who is called by grace lives in the same house, but lives not under the influence of the same motives, nor is he ruled by the same desires. He is so different from others that very soon they find him out; and as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the sons of the world mock at the children of the resurrection. At first, with some believers, they only go part of the way in non-conformity to the world; they are only partly conformed to Jesus Christ's image, and partly led out of worldly influences. Indeed, this is the case with most of us; but as we ripen in the things of God, our decision for God becomes more complete, our obedience to the law of Christ becomes more perfect, and there is a greater division between us and the world. Oh! I wish that all Christians would believe this great truth, and carry it out, that 'you are not of the world,

even as Christ was not of the world' Whatever it may cost you, if you are truly called by grace, come out and leave all behind.”

What motivated Abraham to re-order his priorities. What gave him the grace to make such a commitment to the Lord?

ABRAHAM'S CALL WAS SUPPORTED BY THE UNCONDITIONAL PROMISES OF GOD

God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3. God said, I will begin with you. From you I will make a great nation. From that nation I will bring blessing to all the families of the earth. That is the Abrahamic Covenant! He promised to make Abraham a great nation, and he has. He promised to bless him, and he did. He promised to make his name great, and it is. He promised to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham, and he has! This final promise has been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Despite all the failures of the Jewish people down through the centuries, God has not failed. He has been faithful to his promise.

CONCLUSION

The LORD became the new priority in Abraham's life, in response to the unconditional promises of God. The call of God still demands a new priority. It involves a call to the total Lordship of Jesus Christ over every area of our lives (Luke 14:26-27, 33). Have you responded to that call? Are your priorities transformed because you have come to know Jesus Christ? Say today, with your spiritual father Abraham, "From this day on I want Jesus Christ to be Lord and Master of my life."

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