

## Father Abraham • Genesis 12:1–9

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Ryan Perz • January 28, 2024

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If you grew up in a church or ever helped with a VBS, then the song “Father Abraham” is one stuck in your back pocket.

You know it:

*“Father Abraham had many sons;  
And many sons had father Abraham  
I am one of them, and so are you,  
So let’s just praise the Lord.”*

Simple. Sticky song. But lacks a lot.

It says zero about God, his covenant, his call.

—The story of Abraham (12ff. in Gen.) is not about Abraham, but Abraham’s God.

But one thing the song gets right and teaches us: Abraham is a forefather of faith ([Gal. 3:7](#)); “those of faith are the sons of Abraham”.

Which brings us to the central idea in this passage: Faith.

### ***What does a life of faith look like?***

A life of Faith

- Begins with a Call
- Follows through with obedience
- Shaped by worship
- Founded on the Gospel

- This may be one of the most central texts we cover in Gen.

“It is the central passage of the book, the foundation of the Abrahamic promise, the beginning of the nation of Israel as a worshipping community.” (Alan Ross)

Seeing how important this is, is vitally important, but if studying it does not move us to more faith—it means little.

- › Which is just a reminder how to listen to God’s Word. *Always listen with faith-shaped hearing.*

In other words, always be asking: “How can this grow my faith, stabilize my faith, increase my faith, challenge my faith?”

### **Begins with a Call (1-3)**

- Abraham is introduced in Ch. 11 with the genealogy; the main purpose of 11:10-32 is to show where Abraham came from.
- *Genealogies show God’s faithfulness; they are not so much about the names on the list, but the God who keeps it all going.*
- The first major thing we see in the Abraham story is not what Abraham does, but what the Lord does: He calls.
- The calling, according to Acts 7:2 takes it a step back to see the call originated in Ur.

This becomes an important theme of who are the people of God—they are called by God.

Elected. Chosen. *There is nothing here that originates with Abraham; it’s all God.*

- › This gives us something foundational: God’s People are a called people.

\*This is a strong call: leave.

When I worked for UPS, I had a supervisor who, when he wanted you to be done with work would say, “Get out of here! Go home!”

After stacking cardboard in a box truck for half the night.... “Go home” was great to hear.

...but for Abraham, it's the opposite: He is not told to Go Home...but Go *away* from Home.

This was not a “Abraham, what do you want?”, from God.

That would sit well on American ears of religious consumerism.

But it would not sound like a Sovereign Kings' call.

- We also need to see Abraham's call as a conversion of an older pagan man—nothing short of a supernatural call—a gracious call.

Joshua 24:2 (ESV)

'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.

In the calling, there are some distinct things that the LORD promises to give: land, offspring, blessing (and curses).

Notice also that the focus is on what the LORD does. (“I will”...)

Now here are two things to keep in mind:

1. God's calling/election is irreversible.

God never withdraws his calling...ever!

**Romans 11:29 ESV**

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

2. Yet the call and promises of God must be met by faith.

\*God will work grace of the faith, but the faith must be there.

**Followed through with Obedience (4-6)**

A life of faith *will* be followed through with obedience.

—It's not merely with a word of response. "Sounds good"; "sure thing".

Abraham went.

This is what marks him as a man of faith.

### **Hebrews 11:8 ESV**

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

That is no small thing.

It might help to put ourselves in Abraham's shoes.

For us, if we move to a new location we can do a lot of research—crime rates, schooling, property values, etc.

We can look at Google Maps; find pictures of the geography.

Abraham had none of that...just sheer faith.

- › In fact, the *only roadmap* that Abraham has are the words from the LORD, "I will show you".

A few things to note about *his obedience*:

1) It's not just "individual" —others are affected (4-5).

Sometimes people try to isolate obedience and disobedience.

E.g. porn use isn't just "private". It's not ever; neither is your "personal devotions".

Or the busy mom who still finds that sacred time for private devotions.

- › *Wherever you go in paths of obedience/disobedience, you take others there with you...especially the little ones.*

2) *His age*. Now part of that is to show the miraculous nature of how God will bring his promises. We read in 11:30—Sarah was barren.

But, we don't see Abraham as an old man just stuck in his ways.

At 75 years old, we see the LORD at work...and he is ready to go.

- › Never let the passing of years blunt your obedience to God, obedience of faith.

We often hear of young people coming to faith, getting serious about Christ...but don't dismiss God's work in those who are older.

- Thirdly, *his wealth and possessions were not a hindrance to his faith* (v5).

Jesus tells the parable about stuff being the obstacle of faith.

### **Matthew 13:22 ESV**

As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

- Finally, obedience is never the easy path (v6). Here, Abraham enters the Promised Land....and there were strange people there.

The anniversary that could have been a nightmare.

A few years back for our anniversary I found a nice place tucked away in the woods of western PA for our anniversary.

It was listed as a bed and breakfast. When I made the reservation, the host asked if I wanted to rent the entire house. "No, I just need a room."

When we arrived at the place, we realized our room was a loft—no door, no privacy.

All the rest of the house was open space.

Thankfully, no one else had reservations that night.

But can you imagine it would have been awkward and uncomfortable to have strange people in a strange place.

What if there was a creepy guy...I would not sleep that night out of fear my murder would make the next True Crime documentary.

Or maybe worse, what if a family was there....with rambunctious kids.

I love kids....but not on an anniversary getaway.

The point is: Abraham's obedience was serious. Go to a *strange* place; *strange* people will already be there..... "But trust my word, my calling, my promises more than what you encounter".

One preacher put it: "The obedience we see here is obedience to the naked word of God."

That's serious obedience.

That's the obedience of faith.

### **Shaped by Worship (7-9)**

- Faith is also shaped by worship.
- V. 7 is marked by the LORD's appearing — Abraham responds by marking out worship spots.

This is vital for the Biblical story: The Promised Land is to be a place of worship.

- The tree at Morah is likely a place of Canaanite idolatry—Abraham turns it into a place of worship (v6).
- Abraham would have traveled from North to South, marking out areas by setting up alters to worship YAHWEH.

Worship is at the heart of God's calling.

He calls a people to One main thing: worship.

We see later with Moses:

#### **Exodus 8:1 CSB**

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him: This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.

- So whether God says “go” or “Let my people go”, it’s so they will be shaped and moved by worship.

So just on a practical level, how vital is worship to you? How do you approach Sunday?

Is church something to just check off your list, or is there really something special, holy, and sacred?

A prayer devotional that many of you use, *Valley of Vision*, helps us to pray and live a worship-shaped life.

4 distinct prayers centered around Sunday — Day of Worship.

One Line: *The Lord’s Day*

“May this day witness deep improvement...

May my heart be fast bound against worldly thought and cares

Flood my mind with peace beyond understanding....

and may my heart be more knit to Jesus”

Deep improvement in heart and mind, devoted more to the Lord Jesus.

Is that what you are about? Is that what you see this day...even more, your life?

People of faith are shaped by worship.

Finally,

### **Founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ**

- This promise to Abraham does show up again—way later in the NT.

#### **Galatians 3:8 ESV**

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

—Note that the Scripture “foresees” —sounds like a Scripture that has divine fingerprints on it.

What is foreseen, becomes the foundation: The Gospel of Jesus.

*Father Abraham moves/points to the foundation of the Gospel....and it's a gospel for the nations—Gentiles. (Gal. 3:14)*

The promise also appears in Acts 3.

‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

*This is key since it shows what the blessing of Jesus looks like:*

*Simple, really “He turns everyone of you away from your wickedness”.*

\*\*That’s the simple, yet supernatural testimony of every gospel-believer:

—Jesus rose

—I believe

—He has turned me away from my wickedness

This point is critical and essential, because it gets to the heart of what it means to have faith.

- Many Jews could and would check the box on the first 3: Believe they were uniquely called; strived after a life of obedience, and made worship a part of life.

Followers of a major cult can check the box in their own way.

*But the question is always, “Do you have Christ? The true Jesus revealed in the Bible?”*

*The one who died for sin, and rose to justify.*

*Is your faith resting on Jesus Christ today?*

Conclusion:

And that is why the “Father Abraham, had many sons” song can fall short.

If Christ is not there, there is not true faith.



Please don't have the main takeaway be: the Pastor hates the Father Abraham song.

Main takeaway does need to be:

What does a life of faith look like?

- Begins with a call
- Followed through by obedience
- Shaped by worship
- Founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Let's fix our eyes on him, our soul's reward.