

Crisis in Abraham's Life 01

by Rick Bovey

Rick Bovey explores the crises in Abraham's life as pivotal moments that shaped his faith and commitment to God.

Duration: 33:04

Scripture: Genesis 12:1

Topics: "Abraham"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of purging oneself in order to be a vessel of honor for the Lord. He emphasizes the need to separate from worldly things and desires. The speaker also asks the audience if they want to serve the Lord with their whole heart, and a few individuals respond positively. The sermon then transitions to discussing the life of Abraham and how he experienced various crises that ultimately developed his character and faith in God.

Transcript

Boy, this is a right-sided audience. I could have guessed. You know, most Christians are right-wingers, aren't they? Oh, it's good to be back again this year, and it's a real privilege for us to be here, but I do have one complaint to make.

There's something in the water here. I don't know who's responsible, but there's something terribly wrong with the water. I want to warn all you women about it.

My wife is pregnant, and I tell you what, six kids. You know what it's like traveling with five-and-a-half kids and a wife in a van that the air-conditioner doesn't work very well on a hot day on Sunday? You'd better be filled with the Holy Spirit, because you're in trouble. But we're very, very thankful to be here, and I was really looking forward to it until I found out that Dan Smith was the other speaker.

And Dan knows far too much about me and about my wife for me to stand up here and try to speak, so let's close in prayer. I just can't believe this. Back when I first was saved, back in 1963, 20 years now, back when Dan was just a young man teaching at an ant's Bible school.

He's still a young man. And I got saved out of the University of Illinois in Chicago and met a girl at Emmaus Bible School. And we needed interminable counsel, and we kept all of the faculty going.

You know what I mean? It was Paul Flint. It was John Harper, Bill Anderson, Bob Wilson, and Dan Smith. It was just one person after another.

And every one of them said, you shouldn't get married. You shouldn't get married. You shouldn't get married.

Not really. I don't think they did anyway. At least they didn't tell me that.

They just told me that I wasn't allowed on campus. But I can look back, and Brother Dan and his wife Martha, they just were very helpful to us as a young couple before we got married. I can remember when I wrote an article.

I don't remember if Dan remembers this. I was saved at the University of Illinois, and some guy had written a terrible article on our school newspaper. And so I wanted to write a rebuttal.

And I'd never done anything like that before. So I wrote something, and I brought it over to Brother Dan, and he rewrote it. And we submitted it into the school newspaper.

And that was the first time I ever got confronted at the University of Illinois with this militant, hostile group of atheists. And I had been an atheist before I was a Christian, and I didn't realize that there were those kind of nasty, ugly people out there like the Madeline Muriel hair type. And they were, and I'll never forget that confrontation.

But anyway, Brother Dan helped writing that article. Do you remember that? No, he doesn't. See, he was a young man back then.

He's still young, but his memory is fading quickly. You know what? I have found out in asking people at our assembly, you know, if you speak on something on Sunday, don't ask them on Wednesday what you spoke about. Because they say, the Bible! Or something like that.

And I wouldn't want to go so far as to ask you if you remember what we spoke on last year. And I'm not going to. So we're going to pick up the same subject and do it again.

No, not really. If you're turning your Bibles, please, the book of Genesis. Genesis chapter 12.

And while you're turning, think with me for a few moments about some significant things in your life. Let me ask you a question. If I were to ask you right now, and I know this is in a conference of an assembly of Christians, so I'm not going to ask you to respond.

This is not a Baptist conference where we could get you to raise your hand or something like that. But let me ask you a question. How many of you want to serve the Lord with your whole heart? Oh, we got one.

Praise the Lord. Two. They're both from Nashville.

See, Baptist country. Bible Belt. I mean, people from Iowa, I know that would never happen.

Missouri, show me. No, that wouldn't happen. But let me ask that question again.

How many of you want to serve the Lord with your whole heart? Now, having said that, I got another one. Praise the Lord. Here we come.

Here we come. We'll work on you this week. Ah, there we go.

Praise the Lord. Georgia. Okay, now slow down.

All the rest of you. We've got to have some carnal Christians out here for this sermon. You know, I believed that when I first got saved.

When I first got saved, I really was committed to serve the Lord with my whole heart. I believe you were too. But I have found, in the process of my Christian experience, it doesn't just automatically happen that the process of learning how to serve the Lord with your whole heart is something that you grow into.

That there is an initial commitment, sure, but there is a growth in that commitment and a development of it. And I don't know about you, I think I do, but I know about me that the way God has increased that commitment in my life has been through a series of crises. Through a series of problems.

Through a series of pains and heartaches. The first one I hit, I thought I couldn't last through. Praise God, I think I did.

That was almost 20 years ago. And from that time on, there's been a series of crises in my life. And I think I can look back and see some order to the process that there has been some rhyme to God's reason in my life.

There's been a developing process. And I think that each of us, if we look back in the development that God has been bringing about in our life, that we can see that our sovereign God, who is omnipotent, who is in control, allows and brings things into our lives that are progressively used by Him to develop the character of Jesus Christ in our lives. So what I would like to do is see four types of crises in the life of Abraham today.

So in Genesis chapter 12, we're going to see the first of these crises that the man of faith, Abraham, experienced. Now, let's entitle this the faith to separate. Now, before you get all nervous about that word separate, just hang in there and let's wait a while.

But let's define these four crises as a developing faith in Abraham's life to separate. This man is characterized in the book of Hebrews as a man of faith. But his faith was manifested in times of crisis.

And that is when it's manifested in our lives as well. So the first crisis we'd like to take a look at is in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1. Now, the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee. Okay, this is the first crisis that Abraham is faced with.

Now, let me see how many of you are Bible scholars. What city is Abraham living in when God says this to him? Ur. Really? Genesis chapter 11, verse 31.

And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, and his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son's Abram's wife. And they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan. And they came unto Haran and dwelt there.

Where were they living? Okay, now you want to back up to Acts chapter 7? You know where Stephen says? Before he lived in Haran when he lived in the land of Mesopotamia. And so the critics love this. You know they just love it.

Oh, they can't get their story straight. He said it in Ur, and then he says it's in Haran. They can't get their story straight.

Well, what do you think about that? How are you going to resolve that problem? Was he in Ur? Or was he in Haran? Since that doesn't have anything to do with the message, I'll let you figure that one out on your own. And I think Roy Warren has probably got a book over there. I hope I haven't had a chance to go through.

He's probably got a book over there that can help you resolve that problem. And if that can't resolve the problem, we have the president of a Bible school here in our midst who will be able to give you any answers to this that you need. See, it's always an advantage to go first.

Okay, so he was called either in Ur or Haran. I think probably both. He went part of the way, but he didn't do all of Genesis 12, verse 1. And his father Terah dies.

And then God reinstitutes that call in the city of Haran. And he still doesn't completely follow this thing. But notice, he is called to leave the city of Ur.

He's called to leave the city of Haran. And all you have to do is go back into some archaeological books to find out what Ur was like. Ur was a very cosmopolitan city.

It was the place to be. Now, I'm not sure where you consider the place to be. I want to guarantee you it's not St. Louis.

Even the Veil Prophet's Fair with 4.6 million people showing up in a three-day period. We went down there and found out that that is not the place that might consider cosmopolitan. We just had a man from our assembly go up to New York.

And he told me about what he was experiencing up in New York. So, I'm not sure that's the place to be. But maybe there's some place to be.

Well, back then, the place to be was Ur of the Chaldees. That was a place where the rich people lived. That's where there was culture.

That's where there was all the things in the ancient world. One of the great wonders of the ancient world was there in the city of Ur. That it was the place to be.

And Abraham was living there. And he was a rich man in the city of Ur. And God called Abram to leave that city.

And then Haran was not quite as much that way. But it was also a good city. And it was called to leave Haran and to go out and serve the Lord.

Now, notice it says, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house. Now, that's a separation. Separate from the country, from your kindred, and from your father's house.

And then, that's a separation from. Then separate unto the land that I will show thee. So, here is this necessity of leaving and going to the place that God has for them.

Now, when does this happen? When does God usually call people? Usually right around when they're 20. Right? 19, 20, 21. I mean, how many people go to mass Bible school at 75 years of age? You know many? Some of you, I think, I'm too far from there.

I feel like I'm not too far from there. I did hit 40 this year. And I'm not talking about my waist measurement.

I think I'm not far from there either. And my wife doesn't like that. Chief, pass it though.

Most people get called by God, it seems like, right around 19, 20, 21, 22, something like that. Or maybe a little bit earlier, a little bit later. But not many people get called by God, do they, when they're 75 years old.

That's how old Abraham was. 75 years old when God called him out from his country and from his kindred and from his father's house to go to a land that God didn't even tell him where the land was. He said, just go.

And I'll show you. We need 75 year old people, by the way, who are sensitive to that kind of call in their life. And 65 and 55 and 45.

Be sensitive to the call of God in your life at any time. And so he leaves this land with a wife who is childless. And he leaves this land with his nephew Lot.

But he leaves with a whole bunch of things, doesn't he? He leaves with a tremendous amount of substance. He's a rich, rich man. Now, the Old Testament is always written for an example for us.

Let's think about the example that Abraham is showing. What kind of faith to separate is he showing here? Or it would be, I guess, an example of the world of the unbeliever. It's the world of the non-Christian.

So the first call that God makes to you after you are a man or woman of faith and you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. The first call that God is really making in your life is to come out from that world of the unbeliever. Come out from that world of the non-Christian.

That you're in the world, yes, but you're not of the world. Come out and be separate and live a different kind of life. That's what Jesus was saying in Matthew 10 when He says, I haven't come to bring peace, but I've come to bring a sword.

A sword that's going to split right down the middle of your family. There's going to be one on one side and one on the other. And there's going to be splitting within the family.

And what Jesus was saying, hey listen, when you come to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to find out that your relationship with Jesus Christ is going to separate you from people even within the most intimate of contexts with your family. Of course, you immediately become burdened for their salvation. But Jesus said, I've come not to bring peace, but to bring a sword.

And there's this separation that occurs even within families when a person trusts Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is what He is talking about in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 when He talks about the unequal yoke. He says, what fellowship does light have with darkness? And the answer is, none.

See, you're awake. None. There's no fellowship between light and darkness.

And you'll find that out tonight if you drive your car after 11 o'clock with the lights off. You're going to find out there's no fellowship between light and darkness. And I think there's going to be some rearranged trees in cars.

So, late before 11, I guess, is the moral of that story, isn't it? There's no fellowship between light and darkness. What kind of fellowship is there between Christ and Belial? There isn't any. Between righteousness and unrighteousness.

There isn't any. There is a division. There's a separation.

James 4, verse 4. Friendship with the world is what? Enmity with God. 1 John 2, verses 15 through 17. What's that say? Okay.

Love not the world, neither the things that it were for. And then he goes on and catalogs them, doesn't he? The lust of flesh, the love of the eyes, the pride of life. Okay.

Those are things that we're not to love. And, you know, God's Word is very, very specific about this. That when you become a Christian, you're separated from that world of the non-Christian.

Abraham, he was living in earth. And God says, you've got to leave it, Abraham. You've got to come out.

You've got to go to the place that I have for you. But that place is not your home anymore. And I want to tell you, and I think that you know it as well as I do, that when you start going around and seeing what's going on in this world and in this world system that we find out that this world is not our home.

I was listening to Chuck Swindoll the other day. I hope you enjoy that man as much as I do. I just enjoy that man.

He just ministers to my heart. And he was talking about the return of the Lord. And I tell you, I appreciate the fact on his program that they record his prayers as well as the messages.

Because I get as moved by his prayer to the Lord as I do by the message. And he was sitting there praying. He said, Lord, we're homesick.

Isn't that right? We're homesick. This world, because of our salvation experience, is no longer our home. We're pilgrims and strangers.

We're passing through. This is not the place of our primary focus anymore. We're living for a heavenly city.

We're focused upon things above. And Abraham understood that. He was looking for what? A city whose builder and maker was God.

He wasn't looking for Ur. He wasn't looking for Haran. He was looking for the heavenly Jerusalem.

And so Abraham learned the principle that you have to be separated, first of all, from this world of the unbelievers. He gave up the pleasures of the world for the pleasures of God. He gave up the attitudes of the world for the attitudes of God.

He gave up the destiny that this world has for the destiny that God would give him. He gave up the actions of this world for the actions that God would have him to commit. And so he faced his first crisis.

And this man of faith did what? He separated. He left it. And I want to guarantee you that was not an easy thing to do.

Second crisis we come up is in Genesis chapter 13. First separation is separation from the world and from the world system. Second crisis in Abraham's life comes with another believer.

Not the non-Christians. We've got the place now where we understand that. We're not looking for that city anymore.

We understand we're separated from this world system. But we Christians, we're going to go together. We're on the same team.

We're marching together. Stand up for Jesus, as we sang this morning. And off we go.

The problem Abraham has immediately in Genesis chapter 13 is he still had somebody with him who was a believer, by the way. He made the same separation in the first level. His name is Lot.

It's his nephew. Now, Lot was the son of Haran. Haran was Abraham's brother.

Abram's brother. Haran dies. And apparently through this, the information is that Abram either takes responsibility or adopts Lot.

Now, maybe he adopted Lot in the context of that he and Sarai were childless. And Lot, being his brother's son, would be adopted into the family to be the heir of all these possessions that Abram possessed. Now, it's very possible.

It doesn't say that. But you almost kind of get that idea. So, Lot is coming along like an adopted son.

Now, if you just read Genesis, you would probably write Lot off as a non-believer, right? Listen, if you're going to respond now, agree with me. Otherwise, you'll have to be quiet. It's always tough when you have people messing things up like this.

Well, I would. Until you run into 2 Peter. In 2 Peter, you know what God calls him? Just.

Huh? Huh? You wouldn't get that out of Genesis 13, would you? I mean, Solomon Gomorrah? Having children by his own daughters? Huh? Lot? Just? You mean that same word? The just shall live, I think? Lot? Right. Lot. He was a believer who had also separated with Abram from the world system.

But what's going on? Verse 6, And the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together. For their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle.

And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, Notice, between me and thee. And between my herdmen and thy herdmen.

For we, the brethren, is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right. Or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

Down to verse 11. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan. And Lot journeyed east, and they separated themselves, the one from the other.

Verse 14. And the Lord said unto Abram, After that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward and southward and eastward and westward. And it goes and confirms again this promise that he gave to him in Genesis chapter 12.

So the second problem we have here is the separation from the worldly Christian, from the carnal believer, from the one who has made the separation from the world, but they're living like they're still part of the world system. The affections of the world, the desires of the world, the thoughts of the world, the attitudes of the world, the goals of the world, and all these things that are still part of their lives. I think this is the point that's being made in 2 Timothy chapter 2 when the Apostle Paul says, Now listen, if you want to be a vessel of honor, if you want to be a vessel of meat or fit or prepared for the Master's use, the first thing you have to do is to purge yourself from these things.

These what? Well, one of the laws of grammar is that when you get a pronoun, a pronoun does what? It takes the place of? A noun, right? I know that's tough. That's English. That's school.

And that's hard. We're out. That's for them.

But we've got to read English too. Pronouns take the place of a noun. What noun are these referring to? I think the only noun in 2 Timothy chapter 2 that can be referring to there is these, that is, the vessels that are not fit for the Master's use.

The vessels that are not clean. The vessels that have not separated themselves fully and completely unto the Lord. And he says, you have to purge yourself from these things.

See, if you're going to be wholehearted for the Lord, if you're going to live for the Lord with your whole heart and mind and soul and strength, you're going to find out that you're not going to be able to walk very far with people who really aren't have that same level of commitment. Even though they're Christians. Even though they're saved.

Even though they're people who are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. If they're not walking for the Lord and willing to put off the cares of this world and all these weights and the sin that so easily encumbers and all these things, if they're not willing to put those behind them, you're going to find out that they're going to shackle you in your growth toward the Lord. And Abraham understood that and he says, even though you are my nephew, you are my brother's son, and I love you, we cannot go on together this way because all that we're going to find out is strife.

What's Lot's motivation? Lot's motivation apparently was materialistic. Who did Lot depend upon? Himself. What was Lot's method of problem solving? Strife.

An argument. Who were Lot's associations? He looks out and he sees the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and now we know enough not to live in Las Vegas and San Francisco, don't we? And don't just tell me because you can't afford it. I mean, go to Dubuque.

Listen, Lot saw Sodom and Gomorrah and says, wow! And you know what? There are a lot of Christians like that. They see the things in the world and say, wow! And associate with it. Listen, if you're going to be wholeheartedly serving the Lord, not only do you need to separate from the world system, but there's a second level of separation that's more difficult because it's from even people within the body of Christ who are willing to go on to the Lord.

There's a separation from the carnal Christian and the carnal believer. Just one side comment. Isn't it interesting here that whenever people started gathering together, sin multiplied.

Cities are not a real blessing to people, are they? I mean, I know it's good to pool talent and all these different kinds of things. It's good economically, etc., etc., etc. But where cities are, evil is multiplied.

Not added to, it's multiplied. In geometric proportions. It's just, you know, you take a look.

People started gathering together in Babel. And guess what happened? Started gathering together in Ur, Sodom, Gomorrah. You see cities? And I'll tell you what.

I haven't gone through many small towns that have massage parlors and XXX rated theaters and all this other kind of stuff. And not many small towns have that. Don't see many of those things on farm places.

Those are things that seem to be associated with cities. But let's go on to the third crisis. Go to... Well, this is going to cover several chapters, but Genesis chapter 16 starts it.

They still got a problem. God's given Abram the promise that you are going to inherit this land. It's going to be yours as far as you can see.

The land, the seed. Seed. Children.

So, they said, okay, God promised it. We do it. They operated under this old principle.

God helps those who help themselves. You ever heard that one? You're right. Good response.

But we have a tendency to do that, don't we? God promised it. I'll do it. God needs my help.

I'm going to get God out of this gym. He went out on a limb and made this radical promise that we're going to have a child. And here we are.

We're getting up in years. There are no children. God needs help.

Lot's not here anymore. So, Sarah comes up with a nice plan. And the plan is still being fought out over in Lebanon, in Syria, in Israel, in Egypt.

It's still going on. Man's plan had fantastic consequences, didn't it? So, Abraham accedes to Sarah's plan and off they go. They have a child by Hagar.

And what's God's response to it? Genesis 21, verse 10. And He picks us back up again in the book of Galatians. Genesis 21, verse 10.

He says, Cast out this bondwoman and her son. For the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

See, he had this son Ishmael and he loved his son Ishmael. And Ishmael was going to be the one that was going to inherit the promises of God. And God said, No! That's not the way it's going to work.

We're going to work on my plan and the plan that I make possible and I make available and I empower. Not your plan. Now, we've got people today who operate under this principle.

We've got to use our common sense. We've got to use sound business principles in operating this chapel. Now, I'm not saying it's wrong to have sound business principles.

And common sense, in the old definition of common sense before Thomas Paine, maybe was a common sense based upon just a legitimate application of Scripture. I think that's where common sense or common law originally came from. But the Word of God says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 7, We walk by faith, not by sight.

That we need to learn when we're operating according to God's plan that this separation we need to separate from our own human effort. God doesn't say, Here's what I want you to do. Now, you go do it.

Now, that's what I do with my kids, right? I want you to clean your room. Go do it. Okay? And they better do it.

Right? But God says, I want you to do this and I am going to enable you to do it. We do it not by might. Not by power.

But by the Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. It's by God's power that we do His will. And the last crisis that we need to take a look at, and this one is in Genesis chapter 22.

Okay, they've had a child now. He's up. Dr. Unger says he's 16 and other commentators suggest he's 25 and he goes to sacrifice his son.

What's this crisis? The crisis now is that he could be focusing upon the promise rather than on a promisor. We first need to learn to separate by faith from the world system. Secondly, we need to learn to separate from the carnal Christians.

The third thing we need to learn to separate from is our own human effort trying to do God's will in our own strength. But the fourth thing is that we need to learn that when God provides, that we don't get all wrapped up in what He provided, but that we get wrapped up with the Provider. You know, last night we were in the Lord's Supper and I was just thinking about... I know in the black book, it's hymn number 105.

It says this, The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face. I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of Grace. Not at the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand.

The Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land. That the fourth thing Abram learned was it was not the end was not in Isaac. The end, the sum, the total, the completion was in the One who had miraculously provided Isaac, the Lord Himself.

And so, he came to a place where he learned true worship. He learned to focus upon the Lord, upon Jehovah Jireh. The Lord will provide.

And the focus was upon the Lord.

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