

Abraham, My Friend: 01 Introduction

by Ron Bailey

This sermon introduces the life of Abraham as a model of faith and friendship with God, emphasizing the importance of prayer and daily obedience.

Duration: 12:01

Topics: "Abraham"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker explores the life of Abraham and how he became a praying man and a friend of God. The speaker emphasizes that Abraham's journey towards friendship with God was not marked by dramatic events or public displays, but rather by daily obedience and love. The sermon highlights the importance of maintaining relationships with both God and fellow believers in order to be a channel of blessing. The speaker also emphasizes the trust that God placed in Abraham, highlighting the significance of being a person that God can rely on.

Transcript

Well, hello again. You're listening to a Bible Base podcast, and I'm your host, Ron Bailey. These 60 or so meditations on the life of Abraham were first published on the sermon index.net website, where you can still find the original text versions.

The aim of the series is to discover the way in which Abraham became a praying man and the friend of God. This is our introduction. Every story has a purpose, and my retelling of this story has its purpose revealed in our subtitle, Abraham, My Friend, the Making of a Praying Man.

Abraham's life is rich in illustration of the purposes of God and the daily incidents of a pilgrim, but our ultimate goal will be to identify elements in the life of Abraham which made possible this amazing testimony from God himself, Abraham, My Friend. That's his relationship with men and women, but this must be one of the most extraordinary, Abraham, My Friend. If Abraham had referred to God as My Friend, we might have thought that he was guilty of name-dropping, the way in which some folk try to derive significance by association with important people.

If I were to refer to Abraham, My Friend, I might lay myself open to that same accusation, but why should God refer to this man as My Friend? Perhaps there's an indication in the New Testament. These are the words of Jesus in John 15. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you.

Friends become the carriers of unique, intimate knowledge because they can be trusted. It almost takes the breath away to say it, but it's a regular testimony of Scripture that God trusted Abraham. Abraham himself is the archetype of the man who trusts God, but Abraham, My Friend, is an indication of God's reliance upon Abraham.

It brings to mind many another Scripture. For example, Ezekiel 22, I sought for a man to stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Oh, what would he do if he could only find the right man? E. M. Bowne's famous book, *Power Through Prayer*, begins with the statement that men are God's method.

The Church, he says, is looking for better methods. God is looking for better men. And in turn that brings to mind the comment of Paul Bilheimer in his book, *Destined for the Throne*.

Who knows what God would do for his servants if he dared? In Abraham, God found the kind of man he had looked for, a man who would become My Friend. He became God's trusted agent, our man on earth, through whom God would further his purpose, not in ignorance as some kind of automaton blindly following an instruction, but as My Friend. What God accomplishes on earth, he will accomplish through his friends.

Christians love to say that God accomplishes wonderful things in spite of his servants. There is a truth in this statement, but it ought not to blind us to the opposite and equally true fact that he accomplishes even more because of his servants. He will accomplish more through one trusted friend than through a million super-efficient tools.

Men and women are God's methods. Prayer of course functions at many levels. It usually begins with a sense of dependence and need.

A man or woman who does not pray is an atheist, no matter what theology he subscribes to. He is also a fool, a word reserved biblically for those who leave God out of their reckoning. But prayer that remains at the level of personal need is really stillborn.

The unique glory of the prayer is that he has more than one friend. He has two. This is Luke 11.

And he said to them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. That's not one friend, but two. The prayer is the living link between the resource and the need.

If this chain is broken at either end, the resource and the need remain separated. The prayer must maintain living contact with both. There is valuable insight here.

The prayer is conscious of his own lack and inadequacy. He has nothing to set before his first friend. But the wonder is that he has access to another friend who has all necessary resources.

Only by maintaining our links with both friends can we be that channel of blessing. It took the Quakers to remind us that friends is actually a New Testament description of believers gathered in a local church. John's third letter says that I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall see, speak face to face, peace be to thee, our friends salute thee, greet the friends by name.

As we regard the settings where God has placed us, how well are we functioning as friends? The church sometimes comes under legitimate criticism that we would be using our unique role to better purpose if we prayed for our friends. If we know that they lack resources, we know where we can go to find the answer to those needs. It would doubtless have many spin-off blessings, double portions even.

It's recorded that the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends, and also the Perhaps if we are seeking release and blessing, our best route is to pray for our friends. The Greek word for friend, *philos*, is a word of tenderness and companionship. It's a word which speaks of fellowship.

The Hebrew word in Abraham, my friend, however, has another mood. It's the Hebrew word *Ahab*, and it's the word for lover. The Septuagint translators translated it not by *philos*, but by *agape*, giving something like Abraham, my lover.

It shocks us to read it. But God's love is not marked by faithful duty and companionship only, but by passion and exclusive personal commitment. We begin to sense the personal relationship that blossomed between God and man.

If Abraham is a man characterised by his faith, his faith is characterised by his love. This is authentic faith, faith that works by love, as Paul describes it in Galatians. It was not from isolated experience that Abraham was designated as Abraham, my friend, but from a continuing relationship that grew throughout a lifetime.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. And it came not primarily from enormous crises, experiences, characterised by giant leaps into the dark, but through the single steps of that faith of our father Abraham, as is described in Romans chapter 4. So it is with Abraham's children. They grow not by big bangs and heroic set-piece triumphs, but by daily obediences of love.

Not by stage-managed performances in the public arena, but in the secret places where only God is witness. For those who measure success by visible effects, it often seems a weary, plodding existence. But for those who genuinely seek only to be approved unto God, it holds the prospect that in some secret place, one day, God will say, this is Abraham, my friend.

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