

# Abraham: The Life of Faith - Part 1

by Roy Hession

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*Abraham's life is a supreme illustration of the life of faith, and his story shows us that faith is not something we naturally possess, but rather something that God develops in us through our experiences and failures.*

**Duration:** 18:40

**Scripture:** Genesis 11:27, Genesis 12:1, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 8:28

**Topics:** "Abraham"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God's purpose and plan for our lives. He encourages listeners to give up their old ways and embrace something better for Christ. The sermon highlights the need for separation from worldly things in order to fully grasp the purpose for which we have been called. The preacher also emphasizes that our new birth and conversion are part of God's endless strategy for the world, as seen in 2 Timothy 1:9.

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## Transcript

Now we're going to turn together to this wonderful book of Genesis, the beginning of God's revelation to us in his word, and we're going to read a little bit about the start of Abraham's pilgrimage with God. Will you turn to Genesis chapter 11? We call these Bible readings and we read the Bible, and if we don't remember what the speaker may say, we've got the foundation of it all within the pages of the sacred book, and we can turn back again to it. Genesis 11, 27.

Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abraham, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran begat Lot, and Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abraham and Nahor took them wives.

The name of Abraham's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife Milcar, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcar, and the father of Isca. But Sarai was barren, she had no child. And Terah took Abraham his son, and Lot the son of Abraham, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abraham's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran and dwelt there.

And the days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran. Now the Lord had said, had said, not when he got to Haran, but when he was in Ur of the Chaldeans. Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee,

and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curses thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him, and Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abraham took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and this time into the land of Canaan they came.

And Abraham passed through the land unto the place of Sikkim, unto the plain of Moriah, and the Canaanite was then in the land. And the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, unto thy seed will I give this land, and there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east.

And there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abraham journeyed going on still toward the south, and there was a famine in the land. And Abraham went down into Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was grievous in the land.

And it came to pass when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, behold now I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon. Therefore it shall come to pass when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say this is his wife, and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive, say I pray thee, that thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass that when Abraham was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house, and he entreated Abraham well for her sake. And he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, men servants, maid servants, she asses, and camels.

And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai Abraham's wife. And Pharaoh called Abraham and said, what is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou she is my sister, so I might have taken her to be to me my wife? Now therefore behold thy wife, take her and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him, and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

And Abraham went up out of Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and lot with him into the south. And Abraham was very rich in cattle, silver, and gold. And he went on his journeys from the south, even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been pitched at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first.

And there Abraham called on the name of the Lord. You and I, if we've become Christians at all, are called supremely to a life of faith. We began the Christian life by receiving the Lord Jesus and his salvation by faith.

And if we're going to go on with him, you and I are going to go on by faith. And in this pilgrim journey that we have embarked upon, I'm going to suggest to you that nearly all the biggest transactions that will take

place between us and God are going to be transactions of faith. Now the story of Abraham is perhaps the supreme illustration in the whole Bible of the life of faith.

He was supremely the man of faith. But only because he had to be. God put him in circumstances and embarked him on a course which involves him in becoming a man of faith.

If he didn't become that, he would crash and sink. It was either the whole treatment or utter abject failure. And so he was embarked upon a life and put into circumstances where he had to be faith or sinking.

And as we read his story, we shall see many failures into which he fell along the line of faith. And that was the way by which he learned faith. He learned to walk by faith through his very failures along the line of faith.

If you can list, and you can, all the steps of faith and the surrenders of faith that Abraham took, you can also make a list of the failures along the line of faith into which he fell. And so it is that if he did ultimately become a man of faith, which he did, it was no thanks to Abraham. Abraham became what he was only by the grace of God, and the grace of God worked in him through his failures.

And that is true of us. If God wants you and wants me to be a certain sort of person, he's going to put you in circumstances and call you to a course of life where you simply got to be that sort of person or completely crash. If he wants you and me to become men of faith, which he does, he'll put you in a situation where you simply got to become a man of faith, or you give up everything.

If he wants you and me to be men of humility and brokenness, which he does, he knows how to put us in situations and call us to a course of life that you simply got to be that, or you quit everything. If he wants you and me to be men of love for our brothers and the world, he's going to put you in a position where you've simply got to find the secret of Calvary love, or you'll be a misery to yourself and to everybody else, you'll probably split the church. And of course, in the course of learning what God wants us to learn like Abraham, they are bound to be many failures.

But that's the simple way by which God is going to teach us faith, brokenness, love, and everything else. So if ultimately we become what God wants us to become, it's going to be no thanks to us. We weren't naturally men of faith.

Abraham wasn't naturally the man of faith at all. It was God who made him such by putting him in a situation where he had to become that or sink completely. And so it is for us.

And we shall have to say ultimately, when people say, oh I don't know, I see this and that, and you say, by the grace of God, I am what I am, you are little known. Now that's the very thing I failed on, I have to come back and back again. And as we do so, grace ultimately makes us to be the men and women that God wants us to be.

Now I call that encouraging, don't you? There was nothing innate in Abraham that he should become. The author of the whole thing was God himself. He would tell you, a believer, a man of faith, oh why, why? Failures.

He did, he had some ignominious failures, classic failures, in process of becoming what God wanted him to become. So let's be encouraged as we find ourselves perhaps sometimes failing. It's all part of the process of you learning, me learning, what he's going to make us and cause us to learn and to become.

Now before going further to look at Abraham, to look at Abraham's life and his course, I want to take a minute to look at Abraham's place in divine history. We shall never understand the Bible at all, I think, until we realize that there's a golden thread running right the way through the Bible, and all the rest of the Bible, its teaching and incidents are simply beads upon that thread. If you don't see the thread, you won't see the connection between bead and bead.

What is the golden thread? Where does it begin? Well it begins in Genesis 3 15, where sin had come into the world and where you had the first promise of the gospel, the first promise of a redeemer that was to come to undo and gloriously restore all the damage that sin and Satan had produced. Genesis 3 15 is the beginning, I suggest, of the golden thread. I will put enmity between thee, Satan, and the woman, and between thy seed, Satan's seed, and her seed.

It shall bruise thy head, Satan, but in the process thou shalt bruise his heel. It, this promised seed, will bruise the most vulnerable part, the head. When the heads bruise, the thing's finished, but in the process the serpent will bruise his least vulnerable part, the heel.

And so, as just as soon as sin came in and spoilt the fair handiwork of God, God revealed the fact that he had a man in reserve, already slain from the foundation of the world, perfectly adapted to the situation which sin and Satan had produced. That's where the golden thread begins. And Abraham is one of the first of the beads to be threaded onto that golden thread.

His call by God was the result in the creation of a nation through which all other nations were going to be blessed, through which this promise in Genesis 3 15 was going to reach the whole world. There was no special nation here. It was the whole world as it was that was ruined, and all Adam's descendants.

And God's love purposed a glorious restoration for the whole world. But in order that that might actually come to pass, he selected one man out of the world, and through him produced a nation, and concentrated thereafter simply on the development of that nation as far as the Bible's concerned. That's why you don't get the story of any other nation much.

If other nations' history is mentioned, it's only in relation to Israel. Abraham's seed, because from Abraham's seed is going to come the fulfillment of this promise. Then the seed comes, the deliverer from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

And thereafter the golden thread goes on to concentrate now upon the new elect race that results from his redeeming work. Until ultimately in the book of Revelation, you see the glorious final complete implementation of the promise of Genesis 3 15 for the whole wide world. Now there is the golden thread, and Abraham, as I've said, is one of the earliest beings threaded on that thread.

You can see then that when Abraham was called, the whole initiative was from God. It wasn't because of anything special in Abraham. God must think of something much bigger than Abraham.

But he had to make a beginning, and he began by calling one man. Israel later on, in a little ceremony that used to happen every now and then, used to say, a Syrian ready to perish was our father. They are referring of course there in Deuteronomy 26 to Jacob.

But it was true that Jacob was a Syrian ready to perish. It was much more true that Jacob's forefather, Abraham, was no different from anybody else. He was a Syrian ready to perish.

And the same is true of our call from God. He called me long before I heard, before my sinful heart was stirred. The whole initiative was from God.

You didn't take one step in the first case. It began with God. You wouldn't have made the first response to him had he not first made an initial initiative with you and with me.

The whole thing began with the grace of God. And the reason why he called you, the reason why he called me, was not merely because he loves us, he does. Not merely because he wanted to make us happy.

It's like something bigger in mind. He wanted those whom he was going to fit in to the implementing of a purpose of grace for the world and for others, much larger than you can ever understand. I tell you, your new birth, your conversion, is part of an immense strategy of God.

You see that clearly in mind, clearly shown in 2 Timothy 1.8, if you will turn to it. 2 Timothy 1.8, 1.9 rather, verse 9. It talks about God who has saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works. In any case, they were all in the wrong direction.

But according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. As one of Beverly Shea's songs says, long before time began, you were part of his plan. And his plan wasn't merely that you should be eternally blessed, but that you should be part of a plan for the world, for others.

That was the case with Paul. God had the plan that the gospel should go to the Gentiles. You would have thought, well, who have we got on our hands? Who's been converted already? You see, he had quite a bunch who'd found the Lord by that time.

Now he said, I'm going to have that man who's opposing me. And the plan was made, the blueprint was complete in God's mind, indeed way back before the foundation of the world. And the day when God called Paul on the road to Damascus, it was simply the first step in the implementing of an eternal plan.

Think of it, you by your name, me by my name, Rome, Ephesus. As a young fellow of 18, after meeting in a camp, walking up and down the seafront, having resisted Jesus for 12 months, and at last opened the door and let him come in, with all with a purpose in view. And the same is true.

Oh, this marvellous God that designs extraordinary, glorious, thrilling purposes for each of his children, not merely for their blessedness, but for the work to which he calls them. And the very day that Paul was converted, it was intimated to him that he was a chosen vessel to bear his name.

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