

The Life of Abraham - Part 8

by W.F. Anderson

Abraham's repeated sin of lying about Sarah is a reminder that we must continually seek to understand God's ways and trust in his sovereignty, even when we don't understand why he allows suffering and evil in the world.

Scripture: Genesis 20:1, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Suffering And Faith", "Trusting God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of unfairness and suffering in the world. They highlight the examples of the children killed in Bethlehem and the martyrdom of James, contrasting it with the deliverance of Peter. The speaker acknowledges that there are no easy answers to these difficult questions. They emphasize the importance of re-examining our beliefs and being open to new information and perspectives. The sermon also emphasizes the need to trust God, even when we don't understand the reasons behind suffering, and acknowledges that we live in a sinful world where we are not exempt from the consequences of our own choices or the choices of others.

Transcript

We're very happy to see Bob and Genevieve, too, and I was going to say I'm glad that Bob is getting older. Because the older he gets, the worse his golf game gets, and he's getting down to my level now, and that's a pleasure. I discovered that I can't sell you those large, relatively expensive books.

It's wasting my time, but if any of you is interested in some good Bible study material, you'll see me afterwards. We'll go in the bookstore. There are all kinds of good helps in there.

If you want to spend a little money and do some serious Bible study, except for Mr. MacArthur, who is still waiting for a reduction on the annotated Bible. But there are a lot of good Bible study guides in the bookstore, and I'll be glad to share what I know about them with you. But here are two paperbacks.

One of them is a series of radio messages given 30 years ago on WNBI in Chicago by Nathan J. Stone, who was on the faculty at the time, and it has to do with the names of God. Dr. Stevenson of England also has a book titled The Triune God, but this one will stand by itself. It doesn't need to be supported by Stevenson.

This is an excellent little book, careful scholarship, and an examination of the different titles of God in the Scriptures. So, if you're interested in this subject, if you want to do some Bible study in it, and get your own

soul stirred up as you realize God's self-revelation in His names, *The Names of God* by Nathan J. Stone. This is a book I mentioned last year, and I see there's some coffee still on the shelf.

What are you people doing? But it's David Winter's book hereafter. I think I told you I had the pleasure of reading the manuscript before Harold Shaw decided to publish it. It has to do with life after death.

That is, that we don't stop existing when we die. And I remember I was so excited about his chapter on resurrection, and particularly the resurrection of Christ as a pattern of ours, that I was reading the manuscript, it must have been 11, 30, 12 o'clock at night, and I called Harold Shaw at midnight and got him out of bed and I said, You've got to publish it. The book is worth that one chapter.

You've got to go ahead and publish it. So, here it is, *Hereafter* by David Winter. And if you read nothing in that except the chapter on the resurrection of Christ as a pattern of ours, it'll be well worth your time.

Okay? Now let's turn to the book of Genesis again tonight, chapter 20. Genesis chapter 20, verse 1. From there, Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negev, and dropped between Kadesh and Shur, and he sojourned in Gerar. And Abram said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister.

Sounds like an echo, doesn't it? And Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife. You talk about a nightmare.

How would you like to have that come to you in the middle of the night? You're a dead man. Now Abimelech had not approached her, so he said, Lord, wilt thou slay an innocent people? Did he not himself say to me, She is my sister? And she herself said, He is my brother. In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.

Then God said to him in the dream, Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. Now then, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you shall live.

But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all that are yours. So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid.

Then Abimelech called Abram and said to him, What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said to Abraham, What were you thinking of that you did this thing? Abram said, I did it because I thought there is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother.

And she became my wife. And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, This is the kindness you must do to me. At every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother.

Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham and restored Sarah, his wife, to him. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before you. Dwell where it pleases you.

To Sarah he said, Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is your vindication in the eyes of all who are with you. And before everyone you are righted.

Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves, so that they bore children. For the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. God is not fair.

Of course, he never said he was. But God isn't fair, or so it seems. Not in this life.

If by being fair you mean giving the same to everybody, it's obvious that that doesn't happen in this life. One of the things I try to get across to my kids is that life isn't fair. And they come to me and say, Well, you're not fair to me.

I say, Of course I'm not. Who said I was supposed to be? You don't treat me the same as you treat my sister or my brother or whatever it is. No, of course I don't.

Didn't intend to. And if we mean by fair that everybody gets the same treatment and everybody gets the same amount of goods in life, then no, God isn't fair. God won't be until the Day of Judgment.

There is no way he can be right now. But God isn't fair. I thought of this as I read the story.

Sarah is taken into the harem of Abimelech. I take it because Abraham, not because of her beauty and youth now, because she's 90 years old, but because of the wealth and power of Abraham. It would be a good alliance to form with this very powerful prince.

And the Abimelech king of Gerar would do that. But she's taken into the harem of Abimelech, and God delivers her and leaves every other woman in that harem. Out of all the women in the harem, the only one delivered is Sarah.

And God isn't fair. I thought of that as I came to the New Testament. When our Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem and the tidings of the whole thing came to King Herod, Joseph and Mary and Jesus escape, and then the sword of Herod kills all the children two years old and under in Bethlehem.

And God delivered Jesus and let the other children get killed, and it isn't fair. It seems as though God doesn't care about those broken-hearted mothers in Bethlehem who watch their children snatched from them and murdered by the brutal soldiers of Herod. The only thing that seems to matter is that Jesus is safely on his way to Egypt and let the other kids get killed.

I thought of it in the book of Acts, chapter 12, where James and Peter are imprisoned. Peter, by a great miracle, is delivered. James gets his head taken off.

It isn't fair. When our Lord Jesus had spent three and a half years training James, very early in the history of the church, he ends up a martyr. Peter gets delivered, and it isn't fair.

Now, please don't come back at me with the easy answers. When you begin to face the problems of life, there aren't any easy answers. There are many circumstances in life that knock the easy answers out of your mind.

I remember hearing Joe Bailey say, as he was quoting some psychiatrist or psychologist, when you go into a hospital, when you go into a ward, and you hold in your arms a mortally ill child, screaming in pain

that cannot be relieved, all your answers go out the window. No, God isn't fair. Many of us feel that way in our own experience.

We see other Christians who seem to go through life very, very easily. God provides them everything they want and more. They seem to have a full life with very little suffering to it.

And for some of us, it doesn't work that way. We seem to be in perpetual suffering, unrelieved. We seem to go from one tragedy to another.

And if that's your comparison, then you have to say God isn't fair. And mind you, that's one of the strongest arguments for atheism. If there is such a being as an all-powerful, loving God, why does he allow all this to go on? Either he is not all-powerful or he is not loving one or the other.

Or else there is no God. And it's one of the strong arguments for atheism. I suggest you read C.S. Lewis's book, *The Problem of Pain*.

For all of us as Christians are aware that this is a world gone wrong in sin. We've lost our moorings, we've revolted against our Creator, and we are all paying the consequences. And those consequences are not distributed evenly, but they come to all of us in one form or another.

And the even-handed justice of God will not be seen until the day of judgment. But there it is. And we live in a world of evil.

And some are delivered and some aren't, and God is under no obligation to explain to us why one is delivered and why one isn't. And I have no right to demand an explanation from him unless I can show that I deserve the explanation. I don't know how to do that.

But God is under no obligation to explain to us what he is doing. And I think I have suggested to you on previous occasions that one of the lessons that was given to me out of Romans chapter 9 from a theology professor, it was really a discussion of the sovereignty of God, but as he talked about Paul's use of the figure of the potter and the clay, he said one of the things he got out of that was this. There is no way the potter can tell the clay what he's doing with that lump of clay.

Have you ever seen a human being try--well, they talk to plants, but I don't know how you talk to clay. Have you ever seen a human potter try to tell a piece of clay what he's doing with it? No way he can do it. And there's no way God can tell us right now what he's doing with us, why he lets things come into our lives and not into somebody else's life.

And then everything depends on whether or not you trust the potter. And so the question comes to us, do we trust the potter? That without telling us, he knows what he's doing. If we really know the potter, then we don't have to know what he's doing.

It's enough for us that he knows, and that we know him. So no, life isn't fair, and it seems that the way God lets the world go, no, God isn't fair. But he never said he would be.

The only thing I do know is that he does not act on the basis of partiality. I know he does not have any favors. The scriptures are clear about that.

God is unable to be partial. So whatever happens, it's not a result of God's partiality towards certain people. God doesn't act that way.

And of course, I can see in this chapter in Genesis the reason for Sarah's deliverance, because of God's purpose to bring the Messiah into the world through the descendants of Abraham and Sarah. But we see that because we know the whole story. We know the biblical revelation about Abraham and Sarah and the children of Israel and the coming of Christ into the world.

We don't know our own story yet. The last chapter hasn't been written. We don't know our own story.

It's in the process of being written, and it's not yet complete. And so we trust the author, we trust the potter. Without explanation, we learn to trust him.

Another thing we realize is that we are in a world of sin. We ourselves are sinful, and we live among sinful human beings. And God will not separate us from the effects of our own choices, nor from the effects of the choices of other people while we are in this world.

A man like Abimelech made certain choices to have a heron. Abraham made certain choices to lie about his wife. And God lets the effects of those choices go.

There will be no complete separation from sin till we're in heaven. And even then, God is not going to eliminate sin. There's still such a place as hell, but God will put a separation between us and it.

And we shall never again come into contact with it. We shall never again be tempted. God will change us so there is no root of temptation in ourselves.

And he will put an eternal separation between us and sin so that we are never faced with temptation outside ourselves. The final answer of God is to separate us from sin, but it will never be eternally eliminated. It is there.

So in the meantime, until that occurs, we pray, deliver us from evil. The daily prayer we make is this. Deliver us from evil.

Abraham should have prayed it before he went down to Gerar, but he didn't. So let's first of all have a look at Abraham and his sins. And then we'll look at his deliverance and something about the God of Abraham.

Twenty-five years before, Abraham had committed the same sin when he went down to Egypt. It comes back to haunt him now, twenty-five years later. I hope that doesn't surprise you.

Sometimes naive Christians are surprised that they are continually tempted. They think that now that they've reached some degree of spiritual progress, some of those temptations ought to be behind them. And they're even more shocked when they discover that they have the same temptation.

They've met it, faced it, sometimes fallen, or maybe on occasion conquered it, but it keeps coming back. Same old sin, same old temptation haunts us over and over again. And I hope we're not shocked or surprised by it, because the Bible is full of people who faced the same temptation more than once.

Our Lord Jesus did. Satan left him for a season. And the fact that our Lord was tempted in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry was not the end of it.

He would be faced with it again. Satan was just waiting for another opportunity. And more than once he was faced with the temptation by Satan to avoid the cross.

Faced with that in the wilderness, faced with it through the voice of Peter after Peter's great confession, This be far from thee, Lord. Faced with the same temptation more than once. The apostles, great men of God, were faced with a repetition of temptation.

Peter, who because of the fear of men, denied his Lord in the high priest's courtyard, denies the gospel years later because of the fear of men, and nearly split the church in Antioch. Same sin, same temptation. And people sometimes say the Pentecostal experience so totally changed as a man that those fearful disciples were made bold as a line and they're never faced with the same problem.

That's not true. It was after Pentecost that Peter wavered because of the fear of the men who had come up from Jerusalem. We're not perfect yet.

And we are faced repeatedly with the same temptation. And we repeatedly pray, deliver us from evil. And Abraham was faced with the same temptation 25 years later.

He fell the same way he fell the first time. And I hope we're not naive enough to be shocked at that either. How many of us have fallen the same way more than once? We thought we had learned our lesson.

We thought we had learned to avoid that temptation, or at least if we attempted that way to avoid falling. And here we go. We fall the same way as we did before.

And 25 years of his maturity, his growing faith, reaching great heights, Abraham falls into the same sin. So it's a repeated sin. And something else we ought to say about Abraham's sin.

It follows great spiritual heights. In chapters 17 and 18, man reached a tremendous peak in those two chapters, interceding with God for himself and then for Sodom, grasping through the promises of God to the very character of God in those chapters, reaches tremendous spiritual height, falls flat on his face in chapter 20. And it tells me that no amount of great spiritual experience in itself will deliver me from temptation.

And so I learn to pray, deliver us from evil. The root of that sin goes back over 30 years. And when God separated him from his father's household at the death of his father and brought him into the Promised Land, Abraham had said to Sarah, Now look, wherever we go, you tell everybody, I'm your brother, you're my sister.

It was a decision that he made 30 years before. And he was still acting on the basis of that decision. And that's why he did it.

What he had experienced subsequently had not changed his decision. All of his experience with God had not altered that basic decision of 30 years before what they were going to say about each other wherever they went. What Abraham needed to do was re-examine that basic decision he had made and change it in the light of subsequent facts.

Hadn't God delivered him? Hadn't God taken care of him on that occasion down in Egypt? He needed to re-examine the basic decision he had made years and years before. But like so many of us, he didn't. And sometimes we need to sit down and re-examine our basic decisions and presuppositions on which our actions are based.

We need to let new information and new facts and new light come into our thinking. And we shouldn't be living in that closed little world that we make for ourselves. And one of the marks of maturity is that a man is able to examine facts, rethink a decision that he made, and change it without fear.

And Abraham needed to re-examine that decision he had made 30 years before because we need to re-examine our presuppositions. But there was a second root to that, to his sin here, and that was fear. When he came into this particular country where Abimelech was king, he said, there isn't any fear of God here.

Now, he didn't know that. And it's astonishing how God could get through to Abimelech when all the time Abraham was saying there is no fear of God here, and yet it says that Abimelech was scared to death. He got up early in the morning, got his whole household awake, told them what had happened, they were all scared to death.

And Abraham said, there isn't any fear of God in this place. Well, it didn't take God long to put the fear of God in the place that wasn't there before. But that was Abraham's idea, and he was afraid because he assumed that there was no fear of God in the place.

And so he acted in fear when he really didn't need to. Now, this is an amazing thing, and yet I can understand how it happened. Abraham could think of Lot down in Sodom, and he could trust God to deliver Lot out of Sodom, but couldn't trust God to deliver him from Abimelech and Geron.

Maybe it's easier to trust God for somebody else than it is for yourself, I don't know. But here is a man who, in that great spiritual intercession, could lay hold of God for Lot's deliverance and win it, but couldn't lay hold of God for his own deliverance in Geron. And so he acted in fear, where in chapters 18 and 19 he was acting in confidence in God.

I think there's a third root to his sin, and that's what I would see as a lack of concern for other people. Abraham was thinking only of himself. What is the effect of all this on me? He never stopped to ask, what will be the effect on Sarah? And he certainly never stopped to ask, what will be the possible effect on Abimelech? And he was willing to expose Sarah to that heathen court, and as it subsequently turned out, willing to expose Abimelech to the judgment of God in the attempt to save his own skin.

How far we can fall. But his action was based on a lack of concern for other people. But I want to look at his restoration rather quickly, and it begins with Abimelech's rebuke.

When God woke up Abimelech to what he was doing, he came to Abraham and soundly rebuked him just as Pharaoh had done before, only in much more stinging language than the Pharaoh had used down in Egypt. But it began with a rebuke. And it may be that's exactly what we need.

Thank God for someone, a friend, hopefully, who will come to us and rebuke us when we have gone astray. Do it in love. I'm not sure Abimelech was doing it in love.

He was doing it out of fear, because he was the man who was under the sword if this whole thing weren't straightened out. But Abraham's restoration began with a rebuke from a heathen king. And very often God has different ways of getting to us with a rebuke for our course of action.

But it began with a rebuke. But the second step in Abraham's restoration was a confession of wrong in verse 11. And I did it.

Now, he goes on to say why he did it. But nevertheless, he says, I did it. And the only way to restoration is an acceptance of responsibility.

I did it. And when we come to make confession to God, there's no use bringing in all the excuses. They won't work.

All we're saying to God is that, God, if you really understood me, if you really knew all the facts in the case, if you really knew the situation I was in, if you knew the pressures I was under, if you understood all this, you would understand why I did what I did. So I hope you'll excuse me, but that's not asking for forgiveness. That's excusing what I've done.

The only thing I can do is come to God and say, there is no excuse. I did it. It was wrong.

There is never an excuse for sin. Never. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, tells us, God will never allow us to be attempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it.

We are never in a situation where the only way out is to sin. So there is no excuse for the sin. And I must come to God that way and tell him there is no excuse.

There are no extenuating circumstances. I was wrong. I did it.

Let me go another step. We need to do that with each other. Abraham was talking to Abimelech when he said, I did it.

And when we have wronged our brothers and sisters, again, no excuses, no extenuating circumstances. I did it. I was wrong.

I'm sorry. Will you forgive me? And that's all we can do. And we need to do that with each other.

But do not try to excuse it. Don't tell your brother or sister all the pressures you were under and how hard it was at the office today and all the rest of it. I was wrong.

Now that's the way we do it for ourselves. Now you just reverse everything I've said when you're talking about other people. You take into consideration with other people all the extenuating circumstances.

And with other people you take into consideration the pressures they are under, the strain they are under. You take all that into consideration when you're dealing with other people. And you make every excuse you can for the person who has wronged you.

You make no excuses for yourself. And that's the only way to do it. Otherwise what we are going to do is go through life excusing ourselves and judging everybody else.

If I had been in his shoes, God knows what I would have done. And so you hunt for every excuse you can for the other person. And you do not allow yourself any excuses.

I did it. I'm wrong. Will you forgive me? The third step in the solution to this whole problem was that Abimelech and Abram reached a mutually satisfactory arrangement.

Abraham said, I did it. Abimelech was satisfied with that. He restored Abram's wife.

All the money in the presence were to make up to Sarah for what had happened to her and to shut everybody's mouth about the whole thing. And the two of them reached a mutually satisfactory arrangement. Now I want to come to the last step, and what to me is the most difficult step for both Abimelech and Abraham, at least it would be for me.

The whole thing was not satisfactorily resolved until Abraham had prayed for Abimelech. And God said to Abimelech, he is a prophet, he will pray for you, and you'll be healed. Abimelech, when somebody wrongs you, and there's an attempt to settle the whole thing, are you going to let that person pray for you right there in front of you? Abimelech did.

Or let's suppose you have wronged someone else. Can you pray for that person? And that whole thing was not settled until Abraham was able to intercede for Abimelech. And to me that's the most difficult thing of all.

But there it is. So if we are in that particular situation, let me suggest we take the steps that are given there. But finally I want to look at Abraham's God.

And I remember what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy chapter 2 about the faithfulness of God. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful. He cannot deny himself.

It was the faithfulness of God to Abraham. And mind you, this was less than a year before Isaac was to be born. And Abraham lets his wife Sarah.

God has already told him, the fulfillment of my promise to you is going to be a son through Sarah. She's going to bear a son. And less than a year before that boy is born, Abraham lets his wife go into the harem of a heathen king.

No wonder God says, I've got to take the fulfillment of this promise into my own hands. I can't let it rest on Abraham. No wonder when God made that covenant with him in chapter 17, Abraham had nothing to do with it.

God made the covenant. God pledged himself to fulfill it. If he'd left it in the hands of Abraham, the whole thing would have blown up right here.

But God was faithful, first of all, to his own promise. Sarah is going to bear you a son. And God is not going to go back on his word.

And Sarah is not going to be left in the king of Bimelech's harem. And God is faithful to his own promise. He cannot deny himself.

But he is also faithful to his own people. If we believe not, Paul tells Timothy. And that word, believe not, if we are unfaithful, if we believe not, is a word that in the secular world of the first century was used of disloyal soldiers.

Men who had taken an oath to serve in the army, and who put in a very difficult position, would turn and run, and they were not faithful to their pledge. You know, my children, I suppose yours did too, used that as an excuse for not keeping their own word. If we have made mutual promises to each other, I'll do something, then something comes up that it completely slips my mind and I forget.

I was going to do something, say, for my son, and something came up in the course of our responsibilities, that the time got past, I was involved in something else, and the thing slipped my mind. It shouldn't have, but it did. And do you know what he says? I'm not going to do what I said either.

And my unfaithfulness to my promise becomes an excuse for him not to be faithful to his promise. God is not like that. If we believe not, he abideth faithful.

And he will never use our unfaithfulness as a reason for being unfaithful to his own promise. And besides that, he is faithful to us. He knows what we're like.

And that's why, you know, I used to tell my students, and this is probably an extreme statement, don't promise God anything. He knows that 99% of the time you're not going to keep it anyhow, and all you're going to do is load yourself with guilt feelings, because you broke your promise. Don't promise him anything.

You're not going to do anything for him except by his grace anyhow. And his brother Andrew wrote him somewhere in that book of his, Practicing the Presence of God, that when he did fall, he says, Well, God, what do you expect? Except by your grace, I cannot stand. If you leave me to myself, this is what's going to happen.

God knows that. And God is faithful to us human Christians. He is not faithful to us faithful Christians.

He is faithful to us Christians. Not because we are faithful, but because we are his. You mothers know that probably more than the fathers do.

In spite of all the disobedience of your children, at the times when they tax you most, when they have disobeyed you and driven you up the wall, what do you do? Throw them out of the house? Tell them I never want to see you again? Don't you ever come into this house again? You go find yourself another family and get adopted there? You call the police to come and take them to some foundling home? Wouldn't think of it. You are faithful because they are yours. You might throw somebody else's kid out of your house when he's misbehaving, but you won't do that with yours.

And God is faithful to us because we are his. And he will not go back on his word and he will not go against us. But God is not only faithful, he is forgiving.

Sure, this was a big misstep on the part of his servant Abraham. But God has that glorious ability I mentioned before. God has the glorious ability to distinguish between a person and that person's actions.

And God can reject the actions without rejecting the person. God can say no to the act and yes to the person. God can say, I cannot accept what you have done, but I accept you.

Our God is a forgiving God. And even so great a fall on the part of so great a servant, God forgives. And another thing you discover about God's forgiveness is that he never gets tired of forgiving.

Peter thought he was being magnanimous when he suggested that he could forgive his brother seven times. And our Lord really began to stretch his mind when he said seventy times seven. But our Lord didn't mean that literally.

Seventy times seven is four hundred and ninety. And if your brother sins against you four hundred and ninety times, you forgive him. Four hundred and ninety-one, you don't.

But the point is, if you're keeping count, you're not forgiving. And God doesn't keep count of the number of times he has forgiven us. We may be embarrassed to go to him with the same confession.

God never is embarrassed by it. God never gets weary of forgiving us. Because he understands us, he knows we are human, he knows we are not yet home in glory.

He knows that. Of course he's working to make us perfect. Of course he's working to lead us in the way of holiness.

But we are not home in glory yet. And God does not give up on forgiving us. And the lovely thing about God's forgiveness, too, is that as we take that attitude toward those specific sins we know, he wipes the whole slate clean.

Sure he does. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and do what else? Cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And when I take that attitude of confession before God, all that he sees that I don't see, but I'm confessing what I do see, he wipes the whole thing clean.

He cleanses us from all unrighteousness. All he asks is David discovered his sincerity of heart. No duplicity.

All he asks is sincerity of heart. And he wipes the slate clean. Now again, I don't know all of you tonight.

No very few of you. You don't know me. But it may be some of us tonight are struggling with a fall.

And we are telling ourselves you shouldn't have done it. And that's a useless exercise to waste all that energy telling yourself you shouldn't have done it. If you say that once, that's enough.

Of course you shouldn't have done it. Now forget it. It doesn't help you to keep telling yourself you shouldn't have done it.

And you're wasting your energy and your time lying awake at night condemning yourself. That's another waste of energy and time. Don't waste your time doing that.

If God doesn't condemn you for it, what right do you have to condemn yourself for it? The only thing you want to do is go to God and confess it and put the thing behind you. If God wipes the slate clean, you've got the right to wipe the slate clean too. If God says there are sins and iniquities that I remember no more, you have the right not to remember your sins and iniquities anymore either.

And when you lie awake at night resurrecting all those sins that you've confessed or that you've committed, you're fighting against God. God buried them in the depths of the sea and you're going down and dig them up again. And some Christians are excellent deep sea divers.

Give it up. God is through with it. And you have a right to be through with it too.

And finally, when Abraham did this, God never once said, Abraham, you did that 25 years before. God never dug up the past. He's a forgiving God.

I know we sing it as a gospel song, but I like it for myself. Jesus, what a friend of sinners. J. Wilbur Chapman's hymn.

Wrote the words to it. Based on the Rock of Ages. Jesus, what a friend of sinners.

Jesus, lover of my soul. Yes. I like that hymn.

I like the hymn. I don't care whether we sing it in evangelistic service or not. I like it for myself.

Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come. I sing that hymn for myself. Not one plea, but the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

That's all. So if some of you may be struggling with a fall, why don't you just come to him and tell him, I was wrong. There is no excuse.

And if it involves another person, why not tonight go to that other person and say the same thing. I was wrong. Will you forgive me? And before you leave, pray together.

Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you that you can righteously forgive us because Jesus Christ has died for our sins upon the cross. And we thank you, you want to forgive us.

Your love reaches out to us longing to wipe the slate clean. If any of us is here with that burden tonight, help us, help us to come to you in honest confession to receive your guaranteed forgiveness. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Audio: http://archive.org/download/SERMONINDEX_SID7982/SID7982.mp3
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