

Departed

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[0 : 00] A Pastor's Reflections Departed Genesis 17.22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

John 14.9 Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you? And yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father.

And how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? 1 Peter 1.8 Whom having not seen, you love. And whom though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Abram, now Abraham, has just received some remarkable news. At a set time in the next year, Sarah his wife would bear a son. Remarkable.

That after all of these years of waiting, the fulfillment of the promise was finally at hand. Not only that, but Almighty God had brought to Abraham a covenant of participation.

[1 : 06] The newly made Abraham would have a part to play in responding by faith to God's covenant of circumcision. Again, remarkable. And yet, perhaps the most remarkable thing, in the midst of promise and covenant, in the midst of fulfillment and blessing, wasn't so much what God said, but that God said.

The Almighty God, the El Shaddai, the God above all gods, had chosen to condescend to have a relationship with one man out of all the men of the earth. Abraham, truly, Abraham was blessed. But now it was over. The moment of revelation had come to an end. Abraham's mountaintop experience was past. And the God whom he so longed to have relationship with had departed. Now what? In the silence and emptiness that followed, what would Abraham do? In Genesis 15, Abraham had another mountaintop experience.

Another moment in his life, in which the Almighty God had stepped down to talk with Abraham. And now between that moment, and this one, in Genesis 17, there has passed upwards of 13 years.

[2 : 29] 13 plus years of Abraham living in the silence of God. 13 plus years of no new revelation, no mountaintop experiences, and no manifested presence of God.

What did Abraham do? He remained faithful. Yes, he had moments of weakness and failure, but he never stopped believing in the God whom he knew and loved.

Abraham had met God. Nothing in his life would ever be the same again because of that relationship. And no amount of silence could ever erase what he knew to be true.

He was the friend of God. Isaiah 41.8 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, my friend.

As Jesus was preparing to depart this world, his disciples found themselves in a very uncomfortable situation. The man their whole lives revolved around was telling them he was leaving.

[3 : 44] What were they to do? Perhaps if Jesus would only allow them to see what he saw, to know the Father, El Shaddai, like he did. Perhaps then everything would be okay.

Jesus' response, You have seen and known the Father because you have seen and known me. The relationship you have will not diminish because of my departure.

In the silence of Jesus' departure, what would the disciples do? They would remain faithful to Jesus, their friend. John 15.15 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 unto you. In Christ, you and I have each been blessed with a relationship with El Shaddai, the Almighty God.

We have received his word, his promise, and his blessing. But the most remarkable thing is that we have received him. We have been brought into a relationship with our Father.

[4 : 55] When that relationship seems to go silent, when God is no longer speaking and his presence is no longer felt, what will we do? We will remember, like Abraham, that the friendship we have with our God is not dependent on what we feel and experience.

Whether near or far, God is God, and we are his friends. John 16.7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away.

For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send him unto you.

Father, how hard it is at times to exist in the silence of God.

I would prefer the constant assurance of always experiencing your voice and presence. Help me to exist not on what I experience, but on what I know and who I know.

My Father, my friend. Amen. Amen.