

# Genesis 12:1-9

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 July 2023

Preacher: Pastor Jared Bromka

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Let's pray. Father, thank you for your story that you've weaved together through history, Lord. Thank you for this book you've given us, Lord. Thank you for Jesus, the Word made flesh.

And so, Lord, we want to see you today. We want you to jump off the page to us. We want to see your love and your grace for us through the text, Lord. We thank you for this man, Abraham. Lord, we thank you for his faith, his simple faith, to believe you and to take you on your terms.

We ask you to bless the study of your Word. In Jesus' name, amen. My theme this morning, I guess, for the topic is whose terms? Whose terms?

We'll understand more of that as we go on a little further. But whose terms? Remember, Abraham is in Ur of the Chaldees, which is essentially he's in Babylon.

You see that? Babel, Ur, Chaldees, Shinar. It's just the name for Babylon. It was a happening place. You know, this was the epicenter of the world at the time. This is after the Tower of Babel.

[ 1 : 0 2 ]     They've spread out. But there are those who stayed and continue to build the city of Babel. And Abraham's there. He didn't leave. Him and his family are there. The Tower of Babel we looked at before.

It was in Babylon at the time, but it was not the tower at that time. It was to the south. It was kind of left in disrepair. And then they had other temples they made. But it would have been there, right, all the way through Daniel.

Daniel could have walked over and seen the Tower of Babel, what was left of it. But Abraham, this is where he lived. This was his hometown and where God's calling him out of. And to kind of get a picture of where this is, if you look on the map, you can see down in the bottom right, there's Ur.

There's Chaldea. And way up at the top, there's Haran. And then we're going to see down, there's Israel or Bethel over to the west. And so he's going to make this journey as we move through the text.

But we know that Abraham, if we look in verse 4, it says he departed as the Lord had spoken unto him. He was 75 years old.

[ 2 : 0 4 ]     And if you're just reading through Genesis, you think, good on, Abraham. You know, Abraham, God told you to leave and you left. That's great. But if we look over at Acts chapter 7, where Stephen's giving his account, his defense before the Sanhedrin, he gives us this little insight that we wouldn't have had otherwise.

In Acts 7 verse 2, he said, Men and brethren, fathers, hearken. The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.

Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land wherein you now dwell. And so Stephen tells us that when he was still in Ur of the Chaldeans, when he was still in Babylon, God came to him and said, Hey, get out of your country.

Get out from among your kindred and among your family. Come to the place I'm going to show you. He doesn't do that. He doesn't go all that way. Reading Genesis makes it sound like he just took off and left.

Like we said last week, we know from the genealogies, we know how old Abram was when his father died. And so we can surmise that he was in Haran with his dad a good deal of time, in spite of the fact that the Lord had told him to up and get out.

[ 3 : 33 ] So in verse 1, We have no context for this. What was Abraham doing?

What was his life currently like? What was his occupation? Was he seeking the Lord? One of the things we're going to find later on about Abram in Genesis 18, verse 19, the Lord will say, Hey, I know that he will instruct his children after him.

I know that he will. I know that my servant Abraham will do that. I think that was one of the things that really set him apart. Because we've just gone through the flood. And the only people to go on the ark were Noah and his house.

That was it. Enoch walked with God and he was no more. What about his kids? He had other sons and daughters. Lamech's sons and daughters. So there seems to be this kind of disconnect between the generations. Noah gets off the boat.

Three generations removed, they're building Babel. They're rebelling against the Lord. There just doesn't seem to be a continuity among the generations. And one of the things God will say about Abraham is, I know that he will instruct his children after him.

[ 4 : 41 ] So whatever is happening here, God steps into his life and he gives him this call. And if you look at the way the call breaks down, what does he say? He says, get out of your country. That's pretty broad. From your kindred, it's narrowing down.

From your father's house unto a land I will show you. And so we see that the call, the call is all-encompassing. It affects every area of his life. He's like, you cannot respond to this call in only one area of your life.

This is going to affect every area of your life, Abraham. And so what does he do? He believes, because we know that the word tells us Abraham believes, but he doesn't respond right away, does he?

Remember, Tara's name meant delay. His dad's name meant delay. I don't know if he goes to his dad and is like, hey dad, God came to me. Which God, son? The one true God.

Remember the God of our fathers? The God that was passed on down through Shem, you know, the one that Shem talks about or Noah talks about. Noah would have been dead, but Shem was still alive at this time.

[ 5 : 44 ] That God. The one true and living God. And so it says he takes Abraham and he takes Lot and he moves to Haran. And this is quite a journey, as we saw, moving up into Haran.

And if you look at the map, you can see why they would go along the Euphrates River. It was just desert. So they have to kind of go up to come down. And so Abraham's moving to Haran. And he's obeying, right?

He's obeying the Lord as he, in his mind, is responding to what God has called him to do. But the call is meant to be all-encompassing. And Abraham is called by the Lord to leave and to come.

Those two things. What does he say? He says, you must leave and you must come. You must come out, but you may enter in. We talk about that all the time. So sanctification is separation. We're separated from to be separated unto.

Separated unto the Lord as we are separated from the things of this world. And so Abraham, or Abram at this time, he responds, but not fully.

[ 6 : 46 ] Why did God receive that? God looked down at the Tower of Babel and he looked at their hearts and he looked at what was going on. He said, we got to end this. We got to wipe this out. But he looks at Abraham and he says, hey, I'm going to bless you.

And Abraham's response is so half-hearted. And yet it seems like the Lord doesn't seem to take any issue with that. And I think it's because God delights in weakness because he can show himself strong.

He delights in our weakness. We don't think that. I think God's probably a little upset with my weakness. Or maybe God's a little down on my weakness. God wants to help my weakness. But the Lord comes in and he says, I'm just looking for someone who I can show myself strong on their behalf.

I'm looking for someone who's willing to accept their weakness so I can be strong. So what is the disconnect in my life, in my weaknesses and failures, and God's strength?

Where's that disconnect that I'm not experiencing in the victory in spite of my own weaknesses? Because what do I do? I think, I got to shore that up. I got to get strong in that area.

[ 7 : 49 ] I got to take victory there. I got to figure this out. The Lord isn't telling me to do that. He's asking me to come to him and receive his strength. And that's where I think Abraham, what he did, or Abram, what he did so well, that Abraham accepted God on his terms, God's terms.

What do I mean by that? We know that we're saved by grace through faith. That not of ourselves, that is a gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. We know that. So we say, okay, I've accepted God on his terms.

I've received God on his terms. I have to come by grace and by faith. I have to come as a sinner. I believe that. But I think what Abraham did, he had that faith like a child that Jesus talks about in the New Testament, where he just accepted God.

When God came and said, hey, Abram, in verse 2, he says, I will, notice the context, the strong language here, I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing.

I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee. And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Abraham, I will do this. And Abram just said, okay, okay, okay.

[ 9 : 00 ] He accepted God on his terms. I don't. What do I mean by that? Oh, I want to be in God's blessing. I want to receive God's blessing. Why am I not? Oh, well, probably because of whatever in my life.

Well, I need to spend more time in the work. I just don't spend enough time with the Lord. Or, you know, I've got this area in my life, this besetting sin, or that is completely immaterial to what God wants to do in your life.

God wants to bless you. In Christ, we enter into a life of blessing that's completely apart from ourselves. We'll see more of that as we go. But that was the key, I think, to Abraham's faith.

And I think it's why he stood out. Because Noah was a preacher of righteousness, for sure. And he trusted in God. He came the same way we do. By grace are we saved. But I think Abram had a faith that just said, okay, okay.

And as you see his journey here, as we're going to go through, we're going to see God said, come out from among your family. Leave your land. But he doesn't do that. He leaves the land first, but he's still with his family. Finally, he leaves his family.

[ 10 : 01 ] He takes a lot with him. And you see God whittling down this process of sanctification. Never any condemnation. As God is walking Abraham through this process. But what's the difference?

I think Abraham's heart was just always, Lord, it's all you. You just do it. And as God walks him through these trials and failures, I think his response to the Lord is so consistently just, yes, Lord, you do it.

It's all you. It's not me. Romans, we're going to look at a bunch of scriptures, giving us some background to this to kind of like flesh out all that I just said, to give some authority to that, what the scripture says about Abraham.

It says in Romans chapter 4, verse 3, What's that saying?

Essentially, you can't receive something freely that you're going to try and work for. Then it's a debt. And God is bringing this, we know, justification comes by grace through faith.

[ 11 : 17 ] But it's linked here to Abraham. And so our faith is supposed to mirror that of Abraham. Essentially saying Abraham believed God. In other words, Abraham expected all of the work to be on God's part.

And God said, I'm going to bless you, Abraham. He fully believed it was all on God's part. And God said, I credit that for righteousness. Because you are fully trusting in me. We know Hebrews tells us Abraham's heart at this time, as he's leaving Haran, as he's leaving Babylon.

It tells us in Hebrews 11, verse 8, By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed. And he went out, not knowing whither he went.

For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. In other words, he expected everything to be done by God. Everything was on God's part. He had no part in this.

What's his big failure that we're going to eventually get to? He takes it all back into his own hands. He's like, ah, I have Ishmael. I have my son. As long as he left it in the Lord's hands, all of his weaknesses and failures, God protected him and guided him through them.

[ 12 : 24 ] When we get into with Pharaoh, it's just the Lord's right there. He's like, I know this is a weakness. It's all right. I got this because I see your heart of faith. You're still trusting me.

But when Abraham takes it into his own hands, he gets Ishmael. But here we see he's looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. He fully trusted God in this. You don't have to turn over there if you want to.

You can. We're going to be in a few verses in Galatians chapter 3. Abraham, this man, his heart that, you know, like I said, we just read it right here and it seems like he's in Babylon, he's in Haran, and then he's in Canaan.

It's like, wow, this is a quick process. Thank you, Lord. But we find out it's really a much longer process. But Galatians gives us a little picture into this man. Galatians chapter 3, verse 6 through 9.

It says, This is where we get Abraham's our father, Father Abraham.

[ 13 : 27 ] They which are of faith are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. It says there that God preached before the gospel unto Abraham. Remember, Jesus says to the Pharisees, Hey, Abraham saw my day and was glad.

And they're like, Are you greater than our father Abraham? We're going to find out in verse 7 that the Lord will appear unto Abraham. And that's the same word when we saw that the dry land appeared.

It means to like see the face of. Or literally to see the face of the king. Like a revealing. And that the Lord physically showed up and appeared to Abraham. He will later again, before he takes out Sodom and Gomorrah.

But continuing in Galatians, jumping down a few verses, in verse 13, So Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For it's written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.

[ 14 : 29 ] Like we know that. Okay. Now it's linked with Abraham. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

So Abraham's promise that he's receiving isn't just, Hey, I'm going to give you a bunch of kids and I'm going to give you some land. It's the promise of the Messiah. It's the promise of a life of the Spirit. And we see that, as Hebrews tells us, Abraham's looking for something that's not of this world.

There's something more. In the same way, we receive that promise. Verse 18 in Galatians 3, For if the inheritance be of the law, it's no more promise. It's just logical.

I can't give you a gift if you want to buy it. It's no longer a gift. But God gave it to Abraham by promise. And Abraham's faith was just to receive and say, Yes, God. I believe you and I receive the promise you give me.

I believe God wants to bless my life in spite of my life. That's essentially what Abraham said. Galatians 3, 26 through 29. For you are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

[ 15 : 33 ] For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There's neither Jew nor Greek. There's neither bond nor free. There's neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. Equal playing field, right?

There's no junior believers. There's no hierarchy in Christ. And then here's the link to Abraham. And if you be Christ, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Again, according to the promise. The same way Abraham receives the promise that God promises to him, God's going to take him on this long journey and it's God who does the work and Abraham accepts that.

But Paul says, that's our faith. If you think your faith is in anything other than God's promise, then you're trying to do it by works. God is a God of promise and of blessing.

And God's word plus God's promise equals God's blessing. God's word comes to Abraham and it comes with a promise. And those put together, God's blessing. It wasn't that kind of like, no kidding?

[ 16 : 34 ] Well, yes. God's promise comes by way of his word. Without God's word, you would not know God's promise. But God's word always brings promise. We know that in Christ, all the promises of God are yes and amen.

So what's the application there then for us? Well, to the beginning of Galatians chapter three, Paul would say, oh foolish Galatians, who's bewitched you? Who's tricked you? Who's pulled the wool over your eyes?

That you should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you. What's the truth they weren't obeying? In our minds instantly, especially in this Western world, we think doing.

I didn't obey. I should have done something. I did something I shouldn't do. I've now disobeyed. But Paul's going to tell us what that obedience is specifically. It says, this only would I learn of you.

Received you the spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh? Or by the hearing of faith?

[ 17 : 42 ] Even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. The obedience is being obedient to believe all that God had said he wants to do in your life.

Paul says, the people of Galatia, you've moved from that. You've removed yourself from a place where God can work in your life because you're trying to do it yourself now. Abraham was a man who accepted what God wanted to do in his life.

Did he do it perfectly? No way. He didn't do it perfectly. Abraham's response to the word of God was not perfect, but it was persistent. He continued to believe God and God continued to bless his life as he said he would.

So back to the text. In verse 3, he says, I will bless them that bless you and curse him that curses you and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And so Abraham's life will directly affect the destiny of others. When God's blessing is on a person's life, their life will affect other people's lives. And Abraham's life and now the capacity that every other life would be affected by it because of the Messiah that would come through him.

[ 18 : 53 ] When we enter a place of blessing in Christ, it's not our work. We don't do it. We don't have to make ourselves a blessing. Thank you, Jesus. I don't have to make myself a blessing. But the Lord does that. He just does that in us because of the fruitfulness of the Spirit, as Paul said, if we're in the Spirit.

And so verse 4, Abram now, he departs. He heads out as the Lord had spoken unto him. Was it as the Lord had spoken unto him? Well, we just saw from Acts it was a little bit of a detour, wasn't it?

It was a little bit of an up and down process that he went with his family. He went into Haran. And even now as he departs, he takes Lot with him. But weakness is never a hindrance to God.

Remember that. Weakness is never a hindrance to God. And weakness is also never an excuse for disobedience. Because if God says, my strength is made perfect in your weakness, I can't use my weakness as an excuse for disobedience.

Because God's right there going, hey, I have all my strength for you in that weakness. Let me help you. Let me take care of that. I can't use then that as an excuse for failure or for disobedience.

[ 20 : 03 ] But Abraham departs and he heads out. And Abram was 75 years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered and the souls that they had gathered in Haran.

And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan. I love this part. And into the land of Canaan they came. God's word is fulfilled. So when God came to Abram and says, hey, get out of your land, out of your country, out of your kindred and from your father's house into a land that I'll show you.

I mean, what are we talking? What are we talking? Decades? 10 years? 15? 20? That he waited? I don't know. They moved to Haran and then he waited until his father died and then he moves down into Israel. But look where he came into the land.

Does that mean if he had acted sooner he could have been there sooner? Yes. That's what it means. Exactly what it means. Because God's word and God's promise will be fulfilled.

It will. He who began a good work in you will complete it. We will get there. We will be sanctified, spirit, soul, and body. We will stand white, clothed in white before the presence of Jesus.

[ 21 : 11 ] We will. We will be in eternity in Christ. What we, for some reason, disconnect is, we go, well, that's then. That's when I'm in heaven. That's when God, yeah, at that point he'll do that for sure.

What does the scripture say? He who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. That God is continuing to perform that work. Who does the work? He who works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.

For Christ lives in me, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. So I guess the idea that I'm trying to get across and what really has been speaking to me is just, man, God is there to fulfill everything he said he will do.

And he's a God of blessing and at any time I can fully partake in his blessing. The only thing that keeps me from that experiencing that is just my own inability to receive and to believe it because God will bless and fulfill his word.

And so the Lord in verse 7 appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land and there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him. And I had this thought realizing, you know, it's kind of like, it's almost like God was sitting there waiting.

[ 22 : 26 ] When's he going to get here? Come on. Hurry up. And when he gets there, he appears to him. And you picture, you know, Abram going back to Sarai that night and being like, hey, man, I had a really sweet time with the Lord.

Like, yeah. What was it like? Oh, he gave me these promises. You know, remember back when we were in Babylon and I told you how he spoke to me? Well, he appeared to me. He spoke to me again. This is the land he told me to come to.

And you can picture, picture him and be like, you know, I wonder if we came sooner if he would have appeared to me sooner. And she's like, yeah, I told you we should have left. So God, God is there.

And I think of the verse in Ephesians 2, verse 10 that says, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Like, checkpoints on the way.

And that is, they're there. They're ready and waiting for you. God has them for you. I know the thoughts that I have for you sayeth the Lord. Thoughts to prosper you and give you an expected end. God has a purpose for our lives.

[ 23 : 22 ] And if we will walk in his will, what's his will? To believe him. To believe him to fulfill in us what he's promised he will do. Not to try in our own effort. I mean, God has things already planned out.

These checkpoints in your life. And I wonder, I think, I wonder if I could have hit him sooner. You know? Now, there's the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. You know, man's responsibility.

It all works together. And God weaves this beautiful picture of our lives. Right? So, who we are today is because of the story and the spirit of God what he's weaved us into.

But I do wonder sometimes, could I hit a checkpoint sooner? I mean, Abraham could have left sooner and gone into Canaan. He could have, as soon as the word came, been like, honey, we're out of here. I know it's crazy.

We're not even going up to Haran. We're going across the desert because God will provide for us. We're getting over to the land that he's going to show us. And could he have got there sooner? I don't know. I think, could I have, you know, been called to be a pastor sooner?

[ 24 : 19 ] Maybe. If I wasn't so hung up over trying to do everything on my own. Trying to figure it out on my own. Instead of just getting to the point where it's like, oh, wow, Lord, you want to do this? How are you going to do that? Well, just follow me.

Oh, okay. So God has these same checkpoints. And here he appears unto Abraham. And like I said, in Philippians 1, 6, we can be confident that we will reach those checkpoints that God has for us.

That we will reach the end and that God will do in us what he wants to do. Because we are confident of this very thing, that he which began a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

Get your eyes off yourself. Get my eyes off my failures, my weaknesses, my sin. When I was in youth ministry, I used to tell the kids this all the time. I don't care what your sins are. Stop worrying about them and look to Jesus.

Whatever that besetting sin is in your life, get your eyes off of it and look to the Lord. He's got big enough shoulders to handle that. And so Abraham says, the Lord appeared unto him.

[ 25 : 22 ] And that, like I said, literally means like to see the face of. And so now Abraham, walking in the faithfulness, of the promise, responding to that, ends up here now to see the Lord.

You know, we think a lot that faithfulness, we hear that word and I think often we think that's a doing word. Something I gotta do. I gotta be faithful. But it has the word faith in it.

And faith is in an object. Faith has to be in an object or it doesn't exist. Right? Like love. Love has to have an object. You can't say you're a loving person. I'm such a loving person. Would you love anybody? No. Well, you have to have an object for your love.

The same with faith. You have to have faith in something. You can't have faith by itself. That's why it's such nonsense when you hear in the world people like, oh, I'm a person of faith. But they don't have faith in anything.

Maybe themselves. So our faith is only as great as what is our faith in. And so our faith is in a great God. But when you look at scripture, you won't see anything about your faith growing.

[ 26 : 23 ] Our faith doesn't grow. Our faith is tested and proved strong because God is faithful. And so our picture of God grows bigger and bigger and bigger. The more we trust Him and the more we see Him come through.

But our faith is likened to what? A mustard seed. A little tiny mustard seed. Jesus said, hey, if you have faith like that, mountains are going to move, sycamore trees are going to be thrown into the ocean.

I don't know what God has against sycamore trees, but throw them in the ocean. Right? So your faith doesn't need to be big. It just needs to be in the Lord. Remember, the disciples came to Jesus and said, Lord, increase our faith.

And that's when He said, uh-uh, uh-uh, that's not what you need. He said, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, not a big faith, you need a big God. And so we are confident that our big God will fulfill His promises.

And that's where Abraham finds himself now. He's responded to God's call. God took him through this process. And we're going to continue to see as we dive into, you know, the text more over the coming weeks.

[ 27 : 26 ] Sorry, this is such a long intro. But we're going to continue to see the sanctification process. Don't mistake sanctification. Right? On our part, what we see is sanctification, the ups and downs.

Don't mistake that in any way, shape, or form to how God's looking at your life and dealing with your life. You know, we're going to see here at the end of, through verse 8 and 9, that God's going to prepare Abraham for failure.

God prepares us for failure. He knows when failure is coming. He prepares us ahead of time. He keeps us through it. It's part of the process. It doesn't change his heart towards us. It doesn't change the blessing that he's given us in Christ.

And so, the Lord appeared unto Abram and he said, unto thy seed will I give this land. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him. And so, the promise led to fruitfulness.

Promised fruitfulness or God's blessing. That's what God's blessing is. It's a promise of fruitfulness on God's account. Right? On God's terms, shall we say.

[ 28 : 32 ] That promised fruitfulness leads to worship. And then, God's blessing, we find, as we see here with what Abram's doing, fellowship's a natural response to God's blessing working in our life. We put the cart before the horse.

Or I think we just kill the horse and expect to move the cart by ourself. We think, well, I need to spend more time with God. That will encourage my relationship. I'm going to get my Bible. I'm going to set my alarm.

I'm going to be up every day. I'm going to do this. What we see here is when we believe in God's goodness and his blessing, when we receive from the Lord, it encourages greater fellowship.

When you have moments where your fellowship feels dead, we feel like, I don't really feel like getting in the Word. Don't double down in effort. Go to the Lord. Go to the Lord in honesty.

Be like, Lord, I need a blessing from you. I need you to do this because I can't. My salvation began in Christ through faith. I can't maintain it any other way.

[ 29 : 31 ] Galatians told us that. You can't maintain this but by the Spirit. So why do I think some amount of effort in my faith is going to produce something?

Where when God says, you just come to me. Remember, the disciples, they came to Jesus and they said to him, Lord, what is the work of God that we may do it?

We want to do God's work. And Jesus said in John 6, 29, this is the work of God, that you believe on him who he sent. Just believe. Just believe.

Like, well, Lord, how are we going to reach the lost? Believe me. I got him. You know? How am I going to grow my faith? Just trust me. Look to me. How are my kids going to get saved?

What do I do with that? Just believe me. We're not going to do anything on our own. And so Abram did. And we hear he goes and he worships the Lord.

[ 30 : 32 ] And then in verse 8, and he removed from fence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Ai on the east.

I have a little picture. If we go back to our map, you can see the blow up there shows, as he comes down into the land of Canaan, or as we know, Israel, you can see there he'll hit Shechem.

That's where he first, the Lord appears to him when he gets into the land. And he built an altar. The Lord appeared to him. And then he moves down between Bethel and Ai. And now he built another altar here.

And he pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. Bethel means house of God and Ai means heap of ruin. So he's pitched his tent between the house of God and the heap of ruin. That's where we are today, aren't we?

We're between the heap of ruin of this world, or our past lives outside of Christ, and the fullness of the house of God when we're in glory with the Lord. What does Abraham do there?

[ 31 : 33 ] What's Abraham doing? If you remember in verse 7, it says, and the Lord appeared unto him and he built an altar. So he had a response to what God did. This is just spontaneous.

This is awesome. This is just spontaneous worship. He gets further into the land. He's like, I'm going to build another altar. I'm going to build an altar. And he builds this altar and there we see that the altar is the place of communion.

That Abraham had learned that, hey, this is the place God wants to commune with me. And this fellowship is a natural response to God's blessing. Abraham is learning now, hey, I can at any time have fellowship with God.

I can have communion with God. And so he builds this altar. The altar has some characteristics about it.

As we are moving in God's promise and in God's blessing, responding by faith to that, trusting God to do in us what we cannot do for ourselves, as we are moving between the place of ruin to the house of God, there are moments that are, you know, where our communion with God seems greater than others, these moments.

[ 32 : 43 ] Sometimes it's initiated by the Lord with Abraham where the Lord appeared unto him and he then built an altar. And here we see, though, it's Abraham just initiating this. And we have the same opportunity in Christ that, man, we can initiate the altar at any time.

But some characteristics about the altar that we can learn from Abraham, if you remember, fellowship's the natural response to God's blessing. Well, fellowship just doesn't happen in our life, though. There's a response that happens.

We look at what Abraham's response was. Well, the altar took time, didn't it? He had to stop and he had to do this. Like, this is going to take some time. I'm not going to just do this in 10 minutes. I'm not going to do this with the app that gives me the verse for the day.

John 3.16 again. Amazing. Right? It took initiative. This was something he was going to do. He carved this out. Now, this wasn't self-effort, right?

This is initiative. This was his heart responding to the blessing of God. It took faith. He had to believe that God was going to meet with him. That God would accept this sacrifice.

[ 33 : 50 ] It took resources. He had to take the things that might have been earmarked for something else and use them for the Lord. It took patience. We've said it took time.

But this took patience to get it right. The stone falls down. Oh, this isn't going right. It took some patience. It took practice. This isn't his first time. And the more he does this, the better he'll get in it, in a sense.

Not better as in, I can do this myself, but better as in, it'll become more familiar. The more time we spend with the Lord, the more time we take to create that altar, that place of communion, responding to the blessing that's always in our life.

God's blessing is always there and his presence is always there and his spirit's always there and if I respond to it, the more I respond to it, almost the quicker it is to move into fellowship with him.

You know, prayer is an area that I struggle with doing as a pattern in my life. Right? Get up in the morning, you know, I pray, it's like I'm with the Lord, I spend time in the Word, but like to get alone with him for 20 or 30 minutes and just be like, Lord, I'm just going to do it.

[ 35 : 01 ] And the Lord's been doing a work where that is coming more quickly to the forefront in my life. But I've tried. I've tried.

There's the difference between trying and responding, right? There's trying, that doesn't go anywhere. And then there's responding to like the prompting of the Lord where he's like, hey, just come and sit with me. I'm like, oh Lord, we were going to watch that show right now.

And he's like, no, just come sit with me. Okay. And sometimes you sit there for 10 or 15, 20 minutes and you get up and you're like, well, I did it. You know, nothing happened.

And then there's times where it's just like the Lord just sweetly meets with you. But he's no different, guys. He's no different. He's not withholding anything. He's the same yesterday and today and forever.

So we're the variable. But he's always there to bless our lives. And it took focus, right? When Abram was doing this sacrifice, he wasn't everywhere else.

[ 36 : 00 ] He wasn't thinking about other things, looking at other things, running off, fixing something else and coming back and like, oh man, I forgot to light the fire and light the fire. You know, it was focus. That's where he was at that time.

When it was time to be with the Lord, that's where he was and he made sure to be there. And so we see with Abraham, with his faith, on whose terms, we said, it was God's terms.

He accepted God on his terms. In my life, I want to accept God on his terms so much more than I do. I don't mean, well, I know I'm saved by grace through faith.

That's not what I mean. We're in Christ. The problem is, we take upon ourselves this idea that God has these expectations of what we're going to do for him instead of allowing him to do in us.

And then we'll finish up here in verse 9, setting us up for next week as we'll dig into his life. And Abraham journeyed going on still for the south.

[ 37 : 00 ] Or literally, in going and journeying. There's a time to journey and there's a time just to sit still. Abraham will learn this, but he's not there yet. It's still a weakness and God's going to, he's going to work with him through that weakness.

We look at going to Egypt as a failure in Abraham's life. He didn't need to go down there. He should have trusted God. Well, you know what? Egypt is going to teach him a lot of lessons about that. And yes, out of Egypt is going to come Hagar and then is going to come Ishmael.

But God's going to use all of that in his life. But God prepares us for our failures. How do I know that? Well, Jesus said to Peter, if you remember, when Peter's like, hey, I will never deny you.

And he turns and he says to him, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, to sift you out and prove that you're just chaff. He says, but I prayed for you that your faith fail not and when you're converted, strengthen your brethren.

I would have preferred the Lord to say, but don't worry, I won't let him sift you. Instead, he just said, I'm going to strengthen you through the sifting. There's a purpose in this. But Jesus was praying for Peter.

[ 38 : 08 ] He had prepared him for the failure. And God prepares us for our failures. Just with Abraham, like with Abraham, when was the altar? When was the time of communion? Right before he went down into Egypt.

God was preparing him and strengthening him. You know, when you have those moments of communion and fellowship, when you feel really close to the Lord, man, when you feel God or sense God really moving in your life, respond to that.

Respond to the Lord moving your life. Take advantage of those times when he's drawing you and you feel like, I feel his presence extra close. The word's just opening to me. He's doing things. Take advantage of that, of those times of growth.

Because the dry times come too. And he may be preparing you for one of those. Job tells us, in Job 42, verse 5, he says, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee.

And that was kind of like with Abraham, right? The Lord had spoken to him and now when he had walked in response to the promise of God, he got to experience the Lord in a way he had not before.

[ 39 : 14 ] You and I, do we see the Lord? Man, we see him better than Abraham ever did. He might have seen a physical presence, but he didn't have that inward presence. He did not have the Spirit of God dwelling in him like we do.

You know, we hear of him and then beyond that, we get to experience him. I was thinking about God's terms for us and how so often I have my terms of what I think God requires of me to receive his blessing and his promise and to fully walk in that and experience that.

And so, we'll do something a little different. I'm just going to read a couple of scriptures. I'm not going to give the verses. I'm just going to read it through. I want you to close your eyes and just receive God's terms.

These are God's terms towards you. This is his heart towards you. This is what he says towards you. Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you, continue you in my love. And therefore, will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you.

[ 40 : 31 ] And therefore, will he be exalted that he may have mercy upon you. For the Lord is a God of judgment. For I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.

This is the word of the Lord unto you, saying, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain?

Thou shalt become a plain. You shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it. For by grace are you saved through faith.

And that not of yourself, is the gift of God. And God will be a father unto you. And you shall be his sons and his daughters, says the Lord Almighty. And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

[ 41 : 39 ] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind and I will write them in their heart and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people and they shall not teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

And I looked and there was none to help and I wondered and there was none to uphold and therefore my own arm brought unto me salvation. Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some men count slackness but he is long suffering toward us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed for this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.

[ 43 : 01 ] So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written death is swallowed up in victory O death where is thy sting O grave where is thy victory the sting of death is sin the strength of sin is the law but thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed he has despised and rejected a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and we hid as it were our faces from him he was despised and we esteemed him not surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows yet we did esteem him stricken smitten of God and afflicted but he was wounded for our transgressions he was bruised for our iniquities the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all but this man because he continues forever has an unchangeable priesthood wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them for such a high priest became us who is holy harmless undefiled separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens therefore my beloved brethren you steadfast unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord faithful is he that calls you who also will do it but grow in grace in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all and after this Jesus knowing that all things were accomplished that the scripture might be fulfilled said I thirst now there was set a vessel full of vinegar and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop and put it to his mouth and Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said it is finished he which testifies these things says surely I come quickly amen even so come Lord Jesus the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all amen you know I purposely tried to refrain from using the word obey because when you think of obedience and obeying and for myself it automatically goes to like effort works what I gotta do and I encourage you this week in your own heart and mind and time with the Lord or whatever you run up against speak to yourself the word respond responding to the Lord's love responding to his blessing responding to his grace because that's the heart of faith faith is to respond and believe what he's gonna do and instead of focusing on oh I need to obey or I'm not obeying focus on him and respond to his grace

Heavenly Father thank you for your word Lord Lord it speaks life just thank you that we can respond Lord thank you Lord that you are so quick to respond Lord whenever we'll take time Lord to fellowship with you to focus on you to build the altar Lord bring our time our resources Lord not our effort Lord but our attention Lord you're so good to respond to us fill us with your spirit Lord I thank you for my brothers and sisters and I pray that they are blessed and that they are walking in the blessing of God in Jesus name Amen Amen