

HISTORY OF REDEMPTION

BY

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Lesson 3

The Drama of Redemption Begins

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Let's pray.

Father, we do want to pause and just thank You so much for this day. Lord, we know that our redemption is something that You planned from the beginning. And it is just so overwhelming to think that You have chosen us and You have set Your love upon us. You know, and here we are wanting to know more about You, about Your Word that You gave us, that You inspired by the Holy Spirit, that canon of Scripture that was collected and testified to that the Holy Spirit wrote it. These sixty-six books we have, Lord, we just stand in awe sometimes of Your revelation. And we see in it there is a unity and a plan and we just want to thank You for the plan You have had for us from the beginning, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And we thank You for our salvation, Lord. It is just good.

And so Lord, we thank You that we stand here today right before You, not because of anything we have done or said but because of what You have done, because of what You said about us in Christ Jesus, in whose name we pray, amen.

So we saw that God is working. He is doing things. He is saying things. And it is an activity of God that saved us. It was not just an idea but it was the real cross of history that brought about our salvation. And the Lord has promised that as the waters cover the

sea so will the knowledge and the glory of the Lord cover the earth. That God is going to have a people on earth that is filled with Jesus Christ, conformed to His image, and it is going to bring glory to Him. So, God is going with purpose toward a goal.

You will need to know those Scripture verses, Habakkuk 2:14 and Numbers 14:21. Those are important verses because they explain the goal of God. And we see His target that He is shooting for is not so much heaven as it is earth, right now. I mean, that is why we are praying, “Your kingdom come on earth. Let it be done just like it is in heaven.” That is the way He wants it done.

And so God has set the stage. He has created man but man has fallen. He has had to destroy the earth with a flood because man was so wicked. And even at the tower of Babel now, He has scattered man. Because the real issue with God—and it is still His issue this morning—is, who will rule for God? It has always been the big issue with God. Because His throne is the center of the universe, the thing that stays on His mind often is: who will rule for God? And that is what God, ever since He created man, has wanted a man to rule for Him. “Just have dominion and rule for Me,” that is all He really asked.

But man decided, “Well you know, I would rather rule for myself. I appreciate everything you have done for me, God. But I would like to just kind of go it on my own.” And that has been the problem. And so God is desiring to have people who would rule for Him.

ACT I

Genesis 12 – I Kings 10

Act I Abraham – David (14 generations)

Act II David – Babylon (14 generations)

Act III Babylon – Christ (14 generations)

(Matthew 1:17)

So let's begin Act One, actually. There are five acts in the drama of redemption. Act One begins in Genesis 12 and goes to 1 Kings 10. That is Act One that we will begin today. It has eleven scenes in it. We are going to do, hopefully, six of the scenes today and five of the scenes next week. And so we will hopefully finish Act One in two weeks. So, Act One starts in Genesis 12, goes to 1 Kings 10. What God is doing, as the drama of redemption begins? He is building a nation through which they can be a channel for redemption. That is God's goal. And He wants to bring salvation to the world, but He builds this nation to do it through. And we are going to see today He chooses one man.

Now, I like the way the Holy Spirit divided up the Bible in Matthew 1:17. He made it real simple and real clear, when He said that from Abraham to David were fourteen generations. And from David to the Babylonian captivity were fourteen generations. And from the Babylonian captivity to Christ were fourteen generations. Matthew 1:17. And that really is Act One. Or the drama of redemption that we are going through goes from Abraham, the one man, until Christ finally comes.

The Patriarchs

Genesis chapters 12-50

**God begins to build a nation
through Abraham.**

And so we are going to begin to look at Scene One today, the Patriarchs from Genesis 12–50. As we saw, God did all these big things in Genesis 1 through 11. Now, from chapter 12 to the end of the book of Genesis, all God is going to talk about is this one guy and his family pretty much. And it is quite amazing.

So, God starts with one man. He gives a covenant promise to Abraham in chapter 12. He says,

Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

Five Seed-thoughts

“I will make you a great nation.”

“I will bless you and make your name great.”

“You shall be a blessing.”

**“I will bless those who bless you, and I will
curse him who curses you.”**

**“In you all the families of the earth
shall be blessed.”**

So He gives five seeds for the recovery of man. The first seed is: “I am going to make you a great nation.” God says, “I will do that.” Secondly He says, “I will bless you.” Then He said, “You are going to be a blessing.” And then He said, “I am going to bless whoever blesses you and curse whoever curses you. In other words, I am going to sovereignly protect you.” And then He said, “In you all the nations and ethnics of people on earth will be blessed.” So He made five promises to him in Genesis 12:1–3. But He started off simply by just saying, “I will bless you.”

Now, what does it mean when God says “I will bless you”? What did that include? It included these five seeds. What else did it include? I mean, it included redemption. But did it include breakfast? Yeah, it included breakfast. Did it include marriage? Yeah, it included marriage. God just simply says, “I will bless you” and then He starts unfolding the blessings. And when you get through unfolding them, it is everything. But He starts with a little seed—just, “I will bless you”—and before it is over, look at all the things that have happened to Abraham, his family, this great nation. And even his seed, Jesus Christ, who is going to come back and rule and reign and all the earth is blessed.

So God is doing this and He is revealing it progressively like He likes to do. And so the key phrase is: “I will make you a great nation.” His whole plan is presented here like a blue print. This is where it starts, Genesis 12, with one man. God is going to do it.

Now all the families of the earth will be blessed. In light of the command in Matthew 28 which says,

Jesus came and spoke to them saying, “All authority has been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations [every ethnicity] baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

In light of that command, in other words, how does it relate to Matthew 28? When God says, “Abraham, I will bless you. I will make a great nation of you. I will curse people that curse you. I will bless people that bless you. You are going to bless all the nations of the earth.” Do you see how He started with Abraham and He went through ‘til the time of Christ, because we know from Galatians 3 that the seed is really Christ.

Turn in your Bibles for just a moment to Galatians 3 where it says in verse 14 that Christ was cursed. And why was Christ cursed? He says, in order that,

In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (cf. Galatians 3:14)

Wow! So the very blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles. But that blessing, it says even in Galatians 3:14, is found where? In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham comes.

So God is going to build this great nation by providing the Savior in the Old Testament. But when the Messiah comes, the Messiah is going to build the church by proclaiming Himself as the Savior. And so in the Old Testament we have the Savior provided. In the New Testament we have the Savior proclaimed. But they are tied together in the promise that God made to Abraham. Galatians 3:14, Paul's understanding of it by the Holy Spirit is that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham comes. And he calls it the promise of the Spirit through faith. In other words, you can be born again and receive the Holy Spirit, be born of God, brought into His family, and receive the very blessing that was promised to Abraham. That is pretty radical, isn't it?

Turn to Romans 4. We see what He said. In Romans 4:9, speaking of this blessing, he says,

Is this blessing then upon the circumcised or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.

So he brings up Abraham because that is where it started. And it was through faith that Abraham received the righteousness because he was looking forward to the promised Seed, which was Christ.

Again, in Romans 4:16,

For this reason it is by faith that it might be in accordance with grace in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. As it is written: a father of many nations have I made you, in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being those things which do not exist.

So the promise was made to Abraham and anyone that believes the promise really is a true descendant of Abraham. They are made so by their faith. And they enter into all those covenant blessings that have been promised by God.

Is the Church a Nation?

- **Do we have a people with a language?**
- **Do we have laws, leadership, and government?**
- **Do we have a homeland?**

And so God begins with this one man. And this is huge as far as God is concerned because He set the stage, showing man what a failure he is. But if God is going to build a nation through this guy, what do you have to have to build a nation? Well, three things are required to build a nation. You have to have a people with a language. You have to have government. That is, leadership and laws by which to govern them. And you have to have land, a homeland, to live in. Without those things you do not have a nation. Any nation that is recognized by the United Nations today has to be a people with a language; they have to turn in their constitution, their laws, their government, how they function; and they have to actually have a homeland, a place to dwell. If they do not have those three ingredients they cannot be a nation.

And so God is going to build a real nation. And I think that is important because Jesus Christ is going to return to earth physically, bodily, and He is going to rule on a real earth. It is not just some pie-in-the-sky thing. It is something God has been doing from the beginning.

Now the church, in a sense, is it a nation too? Well, you have to ask, it all depends. It is a holy nation, but in what other sense is the church a nation? Does it have a people with a language? Does the church have its own language? Yeah. We do have our own language, don't we? It is a spiritual language. And there is the Abba Father of the Holy Spirit within us. But we do have a language. We are a people with a language. Do we have government? Do we have laws? Do we have leadership? Yes, we do. Do we have a homeland? Yeah. It is just not here. But we do have a homeland. And so in a sense, we are a nation. We are just different than a nation that is on earth.

God is building right now a nation on earth because He wants to bring the Messiah through this. He has to have this.

Now how did God do it? God picked a barren woman. In Genesis 15, Abraham is seventy-five years old and God comes and promises that he is going to have a child. Now if you are going to start a nation and you said, "I promise you I am going to make this great nation out of you, and your descendants are going to be like the stars of heaven on a clear night." Would you have chosen a woman that could not get pregnant to start your nation? From a practical standpoint, what would you look for if you were going to build a great nation? I mean, get real! I would be looking for—I would say, "All right. This woman looks like she could have some babies, you know." Okay, you choose them.

But is that what God did? No! God chose a woman who was not able to have children. Why did God do that? Because He wanted to make clear this is God's work, not man's. It was so opposite of everything we would have done if that was our goal to build a great nation. So it tells you that this is a supernatural nation. God is doing it. And it is really neat to see the way the Lord does it.

So Abraham, you know, is seventy-five years old. All God says is, "I am going to do it." And He delights to work in and through impossible situations.

So in Genesis 16, we actually have the birth of Ishmael because Abraham waited ten years and after ten years he took things into his own hands and he tried to do what God said He would do. Now that is a common mistake and we call that an Ishmael. You know, when somebody says, "Don't create an Ishmael," what they mean is do not go out and try to take things into your own hands and make God's will come to pass. But we are so prone to do that. We read a promise in the Bible. And we take that promise and we hold onto it for a while. Maybe we meditate on it. We memorize it. And then all of a sudden, you know, we decide that we just really need to help God cause this thing to happen. And so we find ways to make it happen. And that is usually done in the flesh. Not that it is bad necessarily in and of itself, but that is just still in the flesh. Why?—because it is man trying to do it. But God has promised He will do it if we have faith and if we believe and wait upon God.

Now personally, I think he did pretty good, Abraham that is. Really he waited eleven years. It says ten, but actually when you read it, it was like he was eighty-six. He was seventy-five when he got the promise and he was eighty-six when he had the kid. So really that is like eleven years. We just said ten for a round figure. Now, for me to wait ten or eleven years for anything, I think is pretty good. Matter of fact, to wait ten minutes is pretty good. And so after this time you can see where you might be tempted to go, "Well, you know, maybe God wants me to help out." But God wants to do it because He is great and He wants to prove that He is the one that is doing it.

Now, God came to Abraham in Genesis 17 and you know the story there. The word Abram means "exalted father." And Abraham means "father of a multitude." Well, both of those are pretty strange names for a guy that is ninety-nine years old and does not have any kids. If names mean anything, this guy is walking around and his name means father of a multitude. "Well, how many kids you got, Abraham?"

“Well, none yet.”

“How old are you, Abraham?”

“Ninety-nine.”

“Uh-huh. Who gave you that name?”

“My God. He is so great.”

“I can see your God is pretty—Yeah, He is right on.”

I mean, think about the testimony that Abraham had to maintain. And think about the scoffing or the laughing or the jeering that could have taken place as he walked around with the name, “father of a multitude.” And still, he is not having any kids through Sarah. So it’s pretty amazing.

Now, does God work this way in your life? Often times it seems He does. And what God did when He took Abram’s name in Genesis 17, He inserted His name *Yah* or *Yahweh* and He revealed Himself as *El Shaddai*. He was the all-sufficient God. And He just put His name right in the middle of Abram’s name. Separated it and put *Yahweh* right in the middle. That is what God has always wanted is just to dwell in our midst. And as He builds this nation, a channel to bring redemption to the world, He is wanting to do it supernaturally; so that man will not boast because man will boast wherever he can. And men like for men to boast. They really do. That is why teachers become such an issue in the church. That is why Paul had to write and say, “I wish everybody would just quit saying, ‘I really like this teacher and I really like that teacher. And I really like this other teacher.’” “Who is coming to speak in chapel?” It is like you hear it all the time. It is like it does not really matter as long as the Lord speaks.

Paul wrote to the church and said, “As long as you keep thinking that way, you are just proving that you are carnal. You are proving that you are in the flesh.” Men love to boast in men. It is just something about our flesh and it is still in the church today. It is like Paul had to write and say, “Hey, God was trying to rid us of that kind of stuff from the very beginning. What matters is if God has put His Spirit within you and put His name upon you.” Then God can use anybody.

And so, God comes and He has this great name change for Abram because God wants to do a supernatural work. And so Isaac is finally born in Genesis chapter 21. This is twenty-five years after the promise. How many of you have waited twenty-five years for something that God promised you? I mean, that is a long time to be waiting on God. It was not Abraham, but *God* was going to build the nation.

Let's turn to Hebrews 11 and let's read what is there because it is very important to recap what is said here. Hebrews 11, beginning in verse 8. Because, you know, every time when you look through history, every time God wants to do something great, what does He normally do? Think about it. Every time God did something great, pretty much in history, what did God do? It is very simple and very natural. But in His case it was always supernatural. Every time God wanted to do something great He just had a baby born. You can trace the works of God, pretty much, by just a baby is born. And this little baby grows up and becomes some awesome person that God has used and God still works that way today. If He wants to do something great He usually just has a little baby born. That baby grows up. It might be you. And you do not even know it yet. I am sure Joseph did not know it until much later in his life, all that was going to happen. You know, none of them did. They grow up and God then just uses them. Cause God chooses to. And that is the way God likes to do things. And that is what He did with Abraham, He had Isaac born.

But in Hebrews 11:8 we read:

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even

beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.
(Hebrews 11:8-12, NASB)

So through this one man—God calls him as good as dead and I guess God knew. He said, “No way is this guy going to have any kids. He is just as good as dead.” But he did. And even Sarah, by faith, believed in the promise of God. She considered God, just like Abraham did not consider his own body. And so, you know, the real test of faith is found there beginning in verse 17.

By faith, Abraham, when he was tested [and this is always the test of faith] offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offered up his only begotten son. It was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.” He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (Hebrews 11:17-19 NASB)

The Test of Faith

Genesis 22:1-3;11-12

**Isaac was the key to
the fulfillment of God's promise.**

**Abraham trusted the ability of God
doing the work!**

(Hebrews 11:17-19)

So Abraham so believed in God that he was, after receiving Isaac, able to offer him because he believed that God would even raise him from the dead. Now the test of faith is always what you look at. It says, "Sarah considered God and Abraham considered God." It was not like they looked around and—he did not look at her and say, "Dear, you are looking better today. And I am feeling a little better myself. We are both a hundred years old but you are just getting better every day. Let's just have a kid today." It was not like that. They looked at each other and went, "You are old!" And she said, "Yeah, well, you are as good as dead." But they said, "Let's don't focus on what is natural. Let's don't focus on what we see here horizontally. Do we or do we not have the promise of the living God that He is going to give us a child?" And so they considered God and because of faith in God, they were able to enter into and become the instruments that God worked through in the way that He wanted to do it. It is pretty amazing what the Lord is doing.

Faith Tested through the Seven Separations of Abraham

- **Gen. 12:1 Familiar boundaries & country**
- **Gen.12:1 Kindred & old associations**
- **Gen. 13:1 The world, Egypt**
- **Gen. 13:11 Carnal self-advantage**
- **Gen. 14:17-24 Desire of ill-gotten money**
- **Gen. 17:18 Fleshly man-made attempts**
- **Gen. 22:8 The supernatural gift**

I think we have to take a moment and turn to Genesis 12 in our Bible. We have to look at Abraham because he was so great. He was tested in many ways like I am tested and you are tested. I want to look at the test that he went through beginning in chapter 12. And just remind ourselves of them. He is asked to make seven different separations in his life, you might say. It is like, God came to Abraham and said, “Abraham if you want to really be used by Me and you want to see My power, My work, these are some things I am asking you to do to prove that you really trust Me and that you believe. And if that is the case, I am going to work and do mighty things in and through you.” And if he is the father of all them that believe, then he is the father of you and me. And if he went through this as the father of all those that believe, aren’t you going to be challenged on the same kind of situations and testings that Abraham went through? Well, yeah, maybe not exactly. You are not going to be ninety-nine years and be wanting to have a kid probably. But you are still going to face something similar to that in your life.

And He begins giving seven separations. And I want to give you those seven separations that Abraham went through because I believe they relate to your own testing in your own

life. And Abraham is the foundation stone here. Chapter 12:1 The Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from you country.” In other words, the first thing he had to separate from was his own country, everything that was familiar to him, all the boundaries that he had known. He grew up knowing, “Well okay, this is a boundary line and that is a boundary line. And this is my country. I know where that is and I know where that is at.” And he was familiar with it. But God said, “You have got to get away from the boundary lines. You have got to move out, Abraham, beyond the boundary lines. You cannot stay where you are familiar with things because if you do, you are going to trust in the arm of flesh.” That is what will happen.

What about you? Do you enjoy being right where the boundary lines are and you feel pretty comfortable there? I do. But God is calling me out beyond that. He wants me to be able to trust Him and not rely on the things I am familiar with.

And not only that, I mean those are just geographical things. But look at the rest of it. He says, “And I want you to separate from your relatives and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

So I mean, his kindred, his family, his associations, friends and loved ones that he grew up with all of his life. He was from Ur of the Chaldees. And he had to separate not only from geography but from relationships that he had known, very close and personal relationships.

Now God may call you to the same thing. You make friends, they are your good friends; but often times if you are going to follow God, He is going to make you leave them. You say, “Well, that just sounds terrible.” Yeah, but He wants you dependent on Him. “There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother” (cf. Proverbs 18:24). And you have got to put God first. And He is going to say, “You are going to have to separate not only from geography, but you are going to have to separate from personal relationships that you have held dear if you are going to step out in faith and really say and believe that God is all.” And you withhold nothing from Him. You give Him everything.

And so He starts with simple geography but moves on to those harder things to separate from, like relationships. And it is not that they were bad relationships. It is just that God is calling you out to be separate and He is going to carry you on. And that is a real test. Are you willing to give up those kinds of relationships in order to establish your own personal relationship with God? That is one of the areas I believe we fail at pretty quickly. At least I do.

Then he goes on. Look at chapter 13 for the third thing that he has to be involved with in terms of separation. It says, “So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev. He and his wife and all that belonged with him and Lot went with him.” So God called Abraham out of where? He went up from Egypt. God called him out of Egypt—which is actually a prophecy in the New Testament. That is part of the reason Jesus had to go down into Egypt for a time so that He could come out of Egypt because He was fulfilling a type of what from the very beginning Abraham went through. That God was going to call His Son out of Egypt. And we know Egypt is a type of what?—the world. They always looked back. They would be out in the wilderness and they would look back to Egypt and they would think, “Man, I wish I could go back there because it was pretty nice. The leeks, the garlic, the onions—just all the different spices we had to eat. It was just so much better than what we have out here in the desert. And all we get is this manna every day and it is the same thing. You get breakfast, lunch, and dinner and there is no change. It is just I wish I could go back and have the variety that the world provided.” And Abraham had to separate himself from Egypt.

And I think that is one of the things that is going to happen in your life—if it has not already—God is going to call you out to a separation from the world and the things of the world, so that you will not love the things in the world. You won’t love the world system and all it has to offer. Nor will you even love the things that are in the world. They will mean less and less and less if you are called out to be separate to follow the Lord.

And when he got called out from Egypt, look what happened there in Genesis 13:2-3. “Abraham was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.” He had all that stuff. And he went on these journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Aia. Now he was at Bethel when he left and went down into Egypt. When he came out of Egypt where did he go back to?—Bethel—to the starting place. Isn’t that amazing? It was like almost all the time he was in Egypt he did not make any progress. He had left Bethel, went to Egypt, spent all that time in Egypt, came back out and had to start all over again at Bethel, which is the starting place. Read the story of Elijah in 2 Kings 2 and how he started from there and went all the way over to the Jordan.

So he had to separate from the world if he was going to make progress with God. And the sooner you separate from Egypt, the world, the sooner you will get to the starting point to be walking with God. And it is like until you get separated from the world, you have not even really started. But God takes him to that place and says, “Get back to the place of simple surrender where you worshipped Me at Bethel, at the house of God.” So he did.

All right, the fourth separation is found in verse 11 there in Genesis 13. You know the story. He and Lot are there together. Their cows are just multiplying and their flocks. They are just getting blessed. But they cannot live off the same land anymore because they are so rich and they have so many animals to feed and to water. Something has got to give. So verse 11 says, “So Lot chose for himself all of the valley of the Jordan.” Well, Abraham had said, you know, “Take what you want, Lot. I do not really care.” So Lot lifted up his eyes, he looked, he saw the valley and how watered it was. And right behind it was Sodom and Gomorrah. And he said, “I think I will go that way. That is the best place.”

But Abraham had separated himself from that. Lot chose the carnal walk. And the carnal walk can be determined so simply in the life of a Lot. What is the carnal walk? It is simply what? It is choosing for yourself. That is all the carnal walk is. You do not have to

be a rocket scientist or some spiritual giant to know what the carnal walk is. Lot chose for himself.

How about you, are you in the carnal walk? You say, "Well, I am not carnal!" Well, if you are choosing for yourself you are. That is what carnality is. It is choosing for yourself. You say, "Well, I thought it was when you start listening to all this stuff." No. A carnal person is someone that chooses for himself. That is what Lot did.

Abraham did what? He said, "I am not going to choose. God is calling me out of that carnal walk. God is calling me out of that kind of situation. I will not choose. Lot, take whatever you want. You take the high road and I will take the low road. It makes no difference. I am going to let God choose for me." I do not know what is best for my life and I am not going to make that choice. You look all around and you think, boy, it looks better to go that way. That looks all green. And you look over there and it looks all deserted. That is just dry. But, what do I know? That looks green; that looks dry. Does that mean anything? Well, only on the human level. On the human level it means I ought to go that way. It's green. And I will just not go that way, it is dry and brown. It is a desert. But he says, "You know what? I cannot make decisions that way anymore. I have got to let God make those decisions. I cannot go by the seeing of the eye. I have to remove myself from the carnal walk that Lot got involved in and suffered for because he chose for himself." He looked and said, "That is the best thing for me." And Lot went that direction. And you know what happened and the influence that came into his life.

Whereas, Abraham went the dry direction, the barren direction, the desert direction, and he got blessed because God blessed him. And so it does not have anything to do with circumstances. It has to do with your relationship with God. Do you want to separate from choosing for yourself? Then let God choose for you. You will be blessed.

It is the same thing with marriage. You want to choose your own mate for marriage? That is what most people do. "Well God, this is who I want." And then they start praying for it or they start looking for it, rather than saying, "God, I do not know. Why don't You

choose for me? Why don't You cause my heart to be open to whatever You want and whoever You want in my life?" That is what He did with Isaac. Isaac did not have much of a choice, did he? But the Lord blessed him. Well, Rebecca did not either, did she? But the Lord blessed her. I mean, she had a choice and it was just to go with Eliezer. Will you go with this guy or not? And she said, "I will go." So she made her choice. "I will do it. I believe God is leading and I will do it." And then God blessed them both.

So, you have got to separate from the motive of self advantage. I wish the church today could get that message of Abraham. And it fits so with Jesus Christ, doesn't it? These things that were worked out in Abraham's life are things that we see so perfectly in the life of Jesus Christ, who did not choose for self advantage, who humbled Himself, laid His own life down to save others. But leave it to you and me, if we are in the carnal walk, you will choose for your own self advantage. Even churches do this.

It is hard to find a church that will actually help another church. You know one of the biggest problems we have on the mission field today is that churches will not help the other churches. Everybody is over there trying to build their own little kingdom. And they see an opportunity—whoosh—they go right for it and try to cut everybody else off. "We are the successful ones over here in this area." And that is one of the biggest problems on the mission field today. It is sad because it is a carnal church choosing a carnal walk for its own self advantage. And you see Abraham is called and said, "You got to get out of this." He is the father of all that believe. So I have get out of it too.

Well, he goes on to the fifth separation. I love this one. He has another test. And there is a situation because Lot has gone where he should not have gone anyway. And these kings Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar. You know, four kings against five. They rise up and they are going to Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 12 says they also took Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his possessions, departed for he was living in Sodom at the time. It is like Abraham says, "Well, I guess I better go help my carnal, fleshly nephew. He needs help. Somebody

has captured him.” And that always happens when you get in the flesh, in the carnal walk, you get captured.

Genesis 14:14 says that Abraham heard his relative had been taken captive, so he led out his trained men and he went in pursuit. Then he defeated Chedorlaomer.

And that is where verse 17 says, after the defeat, he met Melchizedek, king of Salem. In verse 18, he was priest of God Most High. And verse 19 says,

And he blessed him and he said, “Blessed be Abram of Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” He gave him a tenth of all. The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.” Abram said to the king of Sodom. “I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten. [I am not going to give that back unless you want it back. I do not think you do.] And the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; Let them take their share. (Genesis 14:19-24)

Abraham had to separate himself even from what might have been considered a legitimate supply. Because this guy was the king of Sodom and he was very rich and he said, “You have helped me out, now let me bless you and help you out on your way.” And Abram said, “You know what? I appreciate it but I already told you that my God is the possessor of heaven and earth. My God is God Most High. And if I take your stuff and I am made successful from taking your stuff, then how am I really going to give God all the glory for it?” He says, “I do not want your stuff. I will not even take a sandal

thong.” You know if somebody has blown out a flip-flop, he says, “I don’t even want the stuff to repair or fix it because I won’t take anything from you. I just want God to get all the glory for every bit of the supply that comes because He is God Most High and I can trust Him to supply my needs. And I do not need help from the king of Sodom.”

At first you might think that sounds kind of prideful but it really was not. It was humility. It was God and Abraham having a relationship and Abraham having his face fixed on God. He said, “God you said You would supply my needs, now I believe it. And I am not going to take help from somebody else where it might look like they helped me instead of God.” That is pretty amazing, isn’t it? That is a hard thing to separate from, from the riches that might be available to us. But he is going to trust God.

Well, let’s go on to chapter 17:18. I love that story. Here where Abraham waits about eleven years, goes out and Sarah says, “Here, let’s try Hagar.” And they have a kid by Hagar, Ishmael. And eventually Ishmael becomes such a problem in life that in Genesis 16:12 it describes him as this: “He will be a wild donkey of a man.” In other words, he is going to be a total jackass. And his hand—notice what it says about him—“His hand is going to be against everyone and everyone’s hand will be against him.” I mean what a guy! There is nobody this guy gets along with. Doesn’t it remind you of what we read in Galatians again? “The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit lusteth against the flesh.” And Ishmael is a type of the flesh. And it is like he just does not get along with anybody. And nobody else is going to be able to get along with him.

But here is poor Hagar she has been kicked out of the home because, for one, her son is just a hellion and causes problems. And Abraham finally had to let her go. She is out in the middle of this field and she is like, “What in the world is wrong with my life? I am standing here with my son and it is in Genesis 16:13, Hagar called the name of the Lord who spoke to her: “Thou art a God who sees,” or *El Roi*. And she named the place *Beerlahairoi* which means “the well of the living One who sees me.” Because he came to her and he told her there in verse 11, the angel of the Lord appeared and said, “You are

with child and you shall bear a son and you shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has given heed to your affliction.”

So God still blessed her and He still blessed Ishmael to a certain degree, because He is a God who sees where you are. And even though He was building the nation through Abraham and his seed Isaac, because of the relationship there, He still sees everything. And He is a God who wants to bless.

So anyway, back to chapter 17:18, the sixth separation of Abraham. And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee.” He said, “That is what I want.” Because God had reconfirmed the promise to him and he just wanted the work of his own strength to be blessed before God. And he had to separate from that. God had to say, “Abram, I cannot and I am not going to bless the work of your own flesh. I am not going to do it. You are going to have to give that up, Abraham.”

And that is the hardest thing in the world to give up is the work of our own hands because you were so involved in it. And you thought you were blessing God and you thought you were doing God’s will. You made all this stuff happen in the energy of your own strength. You worked hard. You caused it to happen. And then, there it is. You are wanting to say, “Oh, bless that God. Please bless that, God.” And God says, “I am not going to do it. You are going to have to separate from that.” You have got to get away from wanting God to bless the work of your own strength and your own hands. When it has been because you are trying to help God accomplish His purpose. He says, “You have got to give that up.”

It is funny, you know, the church needs to give it up. That is why so many things done in the church today are backwards. They are not what is followed in the book of Acts. Every time in the book of Acts that God worked, there was a prayer meeting first and then there was direction from God during the prayer meeting and then they went and did what God directed. That is not what you see in the church often today. What you see today is men

decide what they are going to do and then they go out and recruit people to pray for it and to back them up in prayer. That is not the way the early church went.

The early church said, “No, first let’s minister to the Lord. Let’s get before Him. Let’s pray. Let’s get before God and let God speak. And if God speaks and says do something that is what we will do.” It was prayer and fellowship with God that was backed up by their work. But so many times it is the opposite of that. It is us just deciding what we want to do and then we start getting people to pray about it. Say, “Would you back me up?” And it sounds all spiritual. “Yeah, I am really getting a lot of prayer warriors to back me up.” But did God direct it, is the issue.

And that is kind of what Abraham was doing. He was saying, “God, bless all that work that I have caused to happen.” And God said, “You have got to separate from that, Abraham. And you have got to wait on Me.” And so he separated the sixth time.

Then finally in chapter 22, we see the last separation of Abraham. And I wish we had time to read the whole chapter but we do not. Chapter 22, He tests Abram and says, “Well, now you have got Isaac. He has been supernaturally born. What I want you to do is go offer Isaac up as a sacrifice.” And this is the hardest separation of all in life. It is one thing to say, “Get out of here; leave geographically what is familiar to you.” That is hard, but you can do it. It is harder even to say, “Cut some of the relationship ties you had so that God will know you are just going to follow Him and you love Him more than you love father, mother, sister, brother or anybody else on earth.” That is a hard thing to do. Or to say, “I am just going to give up the world, the world system, all the things of the world. I do not need those things. I am going to separate from that. I am not going to choose for myself anymore. I am going to let God make the choices in my life. I am not even going to accept money if that money and accepting of that money won’t in some way prove that God gave it, that God did it, then I do not even want it. I want it to be totally God. And I am not going to ask God to bless just the work of my hands or something I caused to happen.”

But then God finally comes through and He does the supernatural thing. And maybe you have got the supernatural gift or some supernatural calling. God does the supernatural thing and then God turns around and says, "Guess what? I want you to give up the supernatural thing too." And you say, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. I thought that was where You were trying to get me to. I thought I have been doing all this other stuff and I have separated and separated and separated. And then You finally did the supernatural thing because I had faith and I trusted You and I separated from all this stuff and now you are telling me you want me to give up the supernatural thing too." And God says, "Yeah. I mean, I want it to be about Me and you and our relationship, man. I can do supernatural stuff all day long. I am God. Just because you cannot do supernatural stuff and you feel like the supernatural thing is a big deal, it is not a big deal with Me. I am supernatural. I just do supernatural all the time."

And so He says, "You have even got to give that up because I want to test you and prove where your heart is really at. Is it for God?" Easy to say, "My heart is for God." But look at the father of all of those who believe, Abraham, the one that the nation was built through. And look at what test he went through and he did prove his heart was for God. And he believed, "Okay, if You are the supernatural God and You gave me the supernatural gift of the son, I can give You the son up and if You need to You can raise him from the dead. I guess that is Your business. I will be all about the obedience and trusting You and I guess You will be about the miracles."

And that is exactly what happened. And God intervened because God Himself would provide a lamb. But do you see in Abraham's life, as God begins to build the nation, what kind of man does God want to build anything through? He wants a man that will rule for God. He wants a man that will be in relationship with God. It has all been about that from the beginning. That is what He has always wanted. That is what He wants today. And it can be a woman, a man or a woman, just a person that will just rule for God. That is what He wants. And He chooses this man to build the nation through. So the test of faith; Isaac is the key to the fulfillment because Abraham is counting on the ability of the One doing the work, and that is God.

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