

Abraham:

An Example For Our Calling And Response

Abraham was the first person to be called [and by implication chosen] by God to start in earnest His two-fold plan for fallen humanity, justification and reconciliation.

Abraham was chosen for no other reason than God in His Sovereignty was pleased to choose him.

The task that Abraham was given to fulfil as a physical instrument in God's hands was different to all who had lived before him.

Abraham was the third "*beginning*" out of three that God had made in His dealing with the humans He had created.

Adam – the physical beginning of humanity and the God-given task of ruling His creation.

Noah – the first introduction of The Law after he was saved by God from the devastating and terminal effects of the flood.

Abraham's task did **not** involve administration [Adam] nor legislation [Noah] for the nations of this world.

In fact Abraham was commanded to turn his back on the world.

Genesis 12:1 [NIV] "*The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."*

Abraham had to leave his home, family and country.

John 17:14-19 [NIV] "*I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."*

We too are to be separated from the world as Abraham was to become part of reconciling the world to the Creator.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] "***Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.***"

We also, apart from the world, have to experience a change of mind and lifestyle even as we will see that Abraham had to experience.

Hebrews 11:8-10 [NIV] "*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. **For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.***"

Abraham was looking for a new home that was **not** constructed by human hands but by God.

Noah's task given by God was to establish order in human society and to give divine instruction to this world.

Abraham was a pilgrim, called to pass through the world but to have his eyes constantly on heaven and the future world where God reigns supreme.

Abraham's task was not to improve the society he was born into but to move out of it physically, mentally and spiritually.

Today, God's principle way of working with humanity is as He did with Abraham **not** Noah.

It is **not** that God has forsaken the world but He is going to deal with its needs through Abraham's children [Israel, the People of God, the Church], not directly with the whole world.

Tremendous responsibility was laid on Abraham's shoulders by God.

Speaking in human terms, the whole plan of God, His whole divine will and purpose for humanity, depended on this one human being, Abraham.

No wonder then that God caused Abraham to go through so many trials and testings in order to bring him to know God so well that others could speak about "*the God of Abraham.*"

Even to the extent that God could call Himself by that name, "*the God of Abraham*" without any moral violation.

Galatians 3:7 [NIV] "*Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.*"

This is an interesting statement for it shows us that all spiritual principles are based on "birth" not on "preaching".

John 3:3 [NIV] "*In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

For us to enter into the spirit world we have to have a new "birth".

For a new "birth" a death of the old life has to take place.

Romans 6:1-6 [NIV] "*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin,"*

We, our old life, is crucified with Christ. Our baptism [by total immersion] depicts our death in the grave with Christ. Our new life is our joining Christ, now back in a spirit existence as the Son of God, but also remaining the Son of Man. As we also remain physical but in addition experience a spiritual life.

How do we make this transformation spiritually?

Acts 8:15-17 [NIV] "*When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."*

Physically by the laying on of the hands of those who had already received the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Acts 2:1-4 [NIV] *“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”*

Peter and John were among those who received the gift of the Holy Spirit on the first Day of Pentecost, the birth of the New Covenant Church.

First God chose one man, Abraham, who believed, then from him [Abraham] many children of faith were to be born.

It is God in His Sovereignty who always calls a person, they are chosen by God just as Abraham was.

John 6:44 [NIV] *“No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

Only those called by God can become Christians at this time.

The next step is the Holy Spirit brings that person to repentance through conviction of guilt.

John 16:6-8 [NIV] *“Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:”*

After His ascension to become our High Priest, Jesus Christ requested God the Father to send the Holy Spirit to continue His work on earth, among all whom God the Father would call.

The next step towards the new birth was the gift of faith by God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast.”*

This is a “down-payment” of faith that had to be increased by our working with this gift of faith.

Just as a physical muscle is strengthened and increased in size by working it hard.

The final step is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as the result of our submitting our will to Christ.

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

First the Holy Spirit works with us, alongside us, then He enters into us and the conception of the new child in Christ begins. A child of faith, the child of Abraham.

Christ the Son of Man was born in the same way.

Luke 1:30-31, 34-35 [NIV] *“But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.” ... “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered,*

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”

The Holy Spirit entered into Mary and she became pregnant by Him and the child born was the Son of God and the Son of Man.

The working of the Holy Spirit in us will also bring about the spiritual birth of other children of God.

Paul understood this.

1 Timothy 1:2 [NIV] *“To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Paul looked on Timothy as his spiritual son.

Titus 1:4 [NIV] *“To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.”*

Titus a son of a common faith, that is a son of Abraham.

Philemon 10 [NIV] *“I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.”*

The relationship that Paul had with Onesimus while in prison made him a son of Paul's, by faith.

Now let us consider the personal call of Abraham.

Acts 7:2 [NIV] *“To this he replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.”*

God called Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia [modern-day Iraq].

Nimrod the mighty rebel had established his kingdom of Babel and built a great tower in the land of Shinar. From there humanity had then been scattered all over the then world.

The nations everywhere had forgotten the true and only God and worshipped false gods.

Abraham and his family were no exception.

Abraham was very much a part of his human society and followed their ways and traditions.

God started this work of reconciliation with a man we can easily relate to.

There was nothing in the moral character or path in Abraham's life to give God a reason for calling Abraham to be His instrument of faith in this plan of reconciliation.

God brought Abraham to the point of his new birth. During this long process Abraham learnt the meaning of the fatherhood of God.

This is a vital lesson for us.

We cannot look back to our own existence physically to anyone other than our physical father.

We cannot look back to the beginning of our changed new life as a spiritual child of God to anyone other than our Spiritual Father, God.

We have to accept by this fact, the total sovereignty of God over our lives.

Our physical life totally depended on the will of our physical father.

Our spiritual [eternal] life totally depends on the will of our Heavenly Father.

Nothing starts with us.

Note certain things about Abraham's call and initial response.

Acts 7:2-4 [NIV] *“To this he replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’ “So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living.”*

God called Abraham before he dwelt in Haran, he was still living in Ur.

Genesis 11:31 [NIV] *“Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.”*

The initial move from Ur to Haran, on the way to Canaan was **not** done by Abraham himself. **Abraham moved out of where he had first encountered God not totally because of faith in God's Words but just following the family as they moved.**

This does not show a great deal of faith on Abraham's part at the beginning of his new life after God called him.

All of us can relate to this, as we begin our new life in Christ our faith in God is also small.

Mark 9:24 [NIV] *“Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”*

We can all relate to this father who had brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus for healing.

Up to this time this father had only heard of what Christ was doing to heal people, he had **not** personally experienced Christ's power in his life.

In other words, **Abraham was just like us, his spiritual life began with very little faith.**

But as God dealt with Abraham his personal experience of God in his life brought him to the place where he had great faith, in fact total faith in his Creator God.

Abraham's initial faith only took him halfway to where God wanted him to go, Haran, not all the way to Canaan.

Abraham still continued to dwell with his extended family. He did not appreciate the goal to which that first call was leading him.

Abraham is not the history of a person who is being saved but the history of a person whom God wants to use as a vehicle to bring many others to become children of God.

Such a calling demands great sacrifice.

We have all been called at this time to be such vehicles in God's hands.

Are we willing to make the necessary sacrifice?

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

God seeks a total sacrifice; body, mind and spirit.

When Abraham was 75 years old there came a second call from God.

Genesis 12:1-4 [NIV] *“The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.”*

Abraham thought his life in Haran was what God wanted, yet in hindsight we see it was many years of wasted time.

Acts 7:4 [NIV] *“So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living.”*

It was only after the death of Abraham’s father that God made this second call, and God put pressure on him to make this move to where He wanted Abraham to be.

It was God’s persistence with Abraham that brought him to the Promised Land.

Let us not be ashamed to admit that in this life of call and response, nothing is of ourselves, all is of God.

We all would stay on in Haran if it was not for Divine perseverance.

What amazing grace, that Abraham could still become *“the father of all who believe”* even after the wasted years in Haran.

Genesis 12:5 [NIV] *“He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.”*

Abraham’s coming into the land that God had calling him to dwell, and his coming out of the society in which he was born, has great significance for us.

It was not a question of owning a piece of land, Abraham did not own even enough to be buried in.

What was important was the power of God in Abraham was able to possess and influence all who dwelt in the land that would in the end be the inheritance of the children of Abraham, the children of faith, the children of God.

Matthew 5:5 [NIV] *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”*

The meek, those who submit to the will of God in their lives will inherit the earth.

Our inheritance is the ground we take and hold for God now.

Where we dwell is where the Kingdom of God is on earth today.

Matthew 6:9-10 [NIV] *“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Does this prayer now have real significant meaning to each of us.

I hope it does.

Genesis 13:3 [NIV] *“From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier”*

Bethel [the house of God] was the final dwelling place of Abraham.

In New Testament terms, the Church or the Body of Christ, is Bethel.

This was the place where through Abraham, the power of God would be felt throughout the land.

Individuals cannot bring to bear upon the earth the Sovereign rule of heaven, only the Body of Christ, the fellowship of believers in Christ, can do this.

We are all called to take our individual place in the Body of Christ, the Church.

1 Corinthians 12:27 [NIV] *“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”*

Each of us is a part of the whole.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 [NIV] *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”*

We have all received the gift of the Holy Spirit to individually and as part of the church as a whole to bring honour to God.