

Hebrews Ch11v8-19

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Preacher: Peter O'Donoghue

[0 : 00] Good morning. It's an honor to be here and our sympathies brother with you. Indeed. I enjoyed much fellowship with Michael, Johnny's dad, and thankfully he is with the Lord.

Yeah, we meet in Douglas, Betsy, my wife and I. Sorry she couldn't be here. She has a touch of a cold, so have I. So apologies if I haven't shaken your hands. I'd love to, but I don't want to afflict you. I grew up in Limerick. I was a Roman Catholic and I got saved and I was in Mallow Street Hall. Betsy worked actually with Crossworld, which is now, or was, UFM. And we met in Limerick. So we married and that was 89. I should remember that.

And we went to the States in 95 and hearing about the challenges, we decided we would come back. She's a biblical counselor. She got two doctorates in that. And I was able to retire from my job. And we decided we would come back and serve and do what we can here.

So we attend Douglas. We live in Shan Valley more. If you haven't heard of that, that's okay. You've probably heard of Mallow and Mitchelstown, which is between those two towns. So that's us. And one hope of yours for the coming year?

[1 : 16] Oh, the rapture. That's a good question. I used to set goals. I don't know how many here have set resolutions already. You're wise. They don't really laugh, do they?

You know, I'd like the fellow who said I was told I could lose weight if I joined the gym. I didn't know I had to show up, you know. But I like to set goals. And I used to set spiritual goals, like read some biographies and maybe read a few biographies of good Christian missionaries.

Get through my Bible maybe once, if not. I haven't done it yet, but I'd like to get through it twice a year. But I'm getting in shape. You know, we always like to do that. Brilliant. Brilliant. Can I pray for you?

Sure, brother. Thank you. Lord, we just thank you for what you've given Peter from your word to share with us this morning. Thank you for his willingness to come and be with us here and for the preparation he's put into this.

Now, Lord, we pray that you'd work in our hearts, that you'd open our ears to hear wonderful things from your word. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. And thank you for the refreshment here.

[2 : 23] Try to make sure that stays there. So, again, Happy New Year. I remember last year like it was yesterday. It's the only day of the year I could say that. But it's wonderful to hear your singing and to enjoy fellowship.

I've gotten to know your Pastor Johnny from the prayer meetings where they diligently come and pray for the churches in the area here and enjoyed fellowship with him. So, it is an honor to speak here today, brother.

I appreciate that. You have a wonderful gentleman here looking after you. Yeah. I don't know if you guys need any structure for your Bible reading throughout the course of the year, but I left you one of these at the back of the church.

Sometimes it's challenging, I find, to go through Genesis to Revelation. And you may have seen this 52-weekly Bible plan. It's a way of reading through different books throughout the week. So, if you think that's a help.

If you have a good plan working, I'm not trying to interrupt it, but this might enhance it or whatever. Also, I came across something called How to Have a Holy Hour. And it divides it into 11 different sections.

[3 : 24] It says, you know, the best thing we can do when we come before God is to humble ourselves and to confess our sin, that we are broken, sinful people. But to then give him praise. And it's self-explanatory.

But then to wait upon God. And then to read his words so he can speak to us. And then intercede for others. And then have our own petitions. And then to be thankful. And then to sing. Now, if you prefer to do that in your head, to be nice to your neighbors, that's okay. But then to meditate upon, have something that you can read that will encourage you. Some writing, some book or whatever. And then listening for what he has to tell us to do today. And finish with psalms and praise as well. So, I left them out there as well. They may be an encouragement to you. It's a new year. I read this this morning. It says, welcome to flight 2023. We're preparing to take off. Make sure your attitude and blessings are secured and locked in an upright position. All self-destructive devices should be turned off at this time. All negativity, hurt, and discouragement should be put away.

[4 : 24] Should we lose altitude during the flight, reach up and pull down a prayer. Prayers will be automatically engaged by fate. Once your fate is activated, you can assist other passengers. No baggage allowed in this flight. The captain has cleared us.

Destination greatness or glory. Book your flight. But I thought that was interesting. Because of the beginning of the year, I want us to look at the man called Abraham. The great father of our faith. The friend of God. Because he set out on a journey. And this is a journey for us, 2023. If you look at Hebrews chapter 11, we'll read there about Abraham and his faith.

And I was thinking about this. What would be the title I would put on this? But I would say his faith in the midst of all the adversities that he had to deal with in his life. It says in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 8, By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go and to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

And he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith, he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

[5 : 32] For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith, Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she had considered him faithful who had promised.

Therefore, from one man and him as good as dead were born descendants, as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of the sands by the seashore. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and grieved them afar off.

And have acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

But as it is, they desire a better country that is a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac.

And he who had received the promise was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, through Isaac shall your offspring be named. He considered God was able to even raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

[6 : 43] And may God bless the reading of his word. Let's call and speak to the author. Father, we thank thee for thy word. We thank thee for all the blessings that we have. And that has been prayed already.

And as we ask thee to speak to hearts here today, as we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen. I was thinking about the faith that Abraham had. And we see here, by faith, it says he was called to go and he obeyed.

By faith, he sojourned, or he occupied himself in tents, like as a temporary dweller here. Because he looked for a city whose builder and maker was God. By faith, Sarah was strengthened, given power to conceive.

And by faith, he was tested to offer up his only son, Isaac. Abraham was called to obey.

And as you know, we're called to obey the gospel. It's interesting when you think about Adam. All he had to do in the Garden of Eden was not take from the fruit of the forbidden tree.

[7 : 45] But for the sinner today, he has to actually act. He has to do something. He must come to Christ and receive the Lord as his Savior. Moving is not easy.

I've only had about eight of them. And two of them were international. And it takes some planning and it takes some work. Abraham had to go 1,200 miles. And that was a bigger challenge for him.

He'd never been to where he was going. He didn't know the location. When you leave somewhere, you sever your roots. There's a rootlessness. There's a loneliness.

There's an isolation. And there's an uncertainty. You know, I was driving on the other side of the road. And I had to change all that. You guys haven't caught up yet. I have to go back and change all that. But there is a sense in which I don't have that continuity.

The friends I used to have. The church people I used to have. The stores I used to go for my shopping. The people I'd meet. The postman. All that is different. You have to change. There's a certain amount of difficulty in thinking about doing that.

[8 : 44] And you may have experienced that in your life as well. There was plenty of other challenges for Abraham. He was going to find a land that he was supposed to have. And it's already occupied. His seed would be many.

But then he doesn't have a child. And then he was finally told he was going to have a child when he was 99. And his wife was pretty much done childbearing. And then he was to offer up this child as a sacrifice.

So those were many challenges that he faced. You know, if you had been speaking with Abraham and asked him about his plans. And he said, like, I'm going somewhere where I've never been. Because God has appeared to me.

And I'm going to have a son. You know, if I tell people today that I believe the world was made in six days. And that it's been about 4,000 years since the flood. And I'm going to heaven by faith in Christ.

They might also look at me and say, wow, he's got pretty incredulous beliefs, doesn't he? On the other hand, you believe that this big chunk of matter came flying out of the sun.

[9 : 42] And cooled off for millions of years. And then somehow this rock had some moisture come out of nowhere. And then out of it came life. You know, watch where you're stepping on the rocks.

You might be stepping on somebody's grandfather someday, you know. So, I'm confident in what I believe through the word of God. There was three religions now, you know, in this world that look at Abraham as a very, you might say, important leader.

Islam, the Jew, and of course, Christianity. Christianity. We see many things in the beginning of the Bible in Genesis. We see the beginning of creation, man, and the nations, and Israel.

But also the beginning of judgments. Because we have Adam expelled from the garden. We have the flood of Noah. We have the Tower of Babel. And then we come to Abraham.

Here's a guy. He's in the land of what we might say is Iraq today. And he's in Ur of the Chaldees. And he's an idolater. And the grace of God comes to him and speaks to him.

[10 : 44] But it comes to every one of us. He says, come unto me, all yet weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Abraham got a call from God. Every one of us gets a call from God to come to the Son, to come to Christ as our Savior.

Have you listened to his call to you? Have you come to Christ and trusted him? I hope that this is the best thing you can do on the first day of 2023 is to get right with God, to heed his voice.

Abraham got a distinct call from God to come, as he said, to leave his land, to go where he would bless him, a land that he would give to him. You know that there was times, we know, when Abraham wavered.

But, you know, when you look back and you think of what challenges he had and what he didn't have, he didn't have the indwelling Holy Spirit. He didn't have the full canon of Scripture to look back on.

And as Paul says, these things are written for our example. He didn't look back and be able to see that the child that was born in Bethlehem would be nailed to the cross for sin and understand the fullness of redemption.

[11 : 43] He believed in it and was redeemed, was righteous before God. But he didn't have all that. So if I could judge Abraham sometimes, he might sit down and say to me, how's your walk going? With all that you have, how are you doing?

You know, when you get a new clock, there's no one here, but I won't keep you forever. When you get a new clock, you have to set it to the right time, don't you? I used to fly a small plane in the States, and we'd have a compass.

And then we had this dial which had all the numbers of the compass, but it wasn't actually linked to the North Pole. So you had to set this one to the actual compass itself, so you'd be flying in the right

direction. And it's actually terribly sad that some people, some pilots mistakenly didn't set their compass right.

Instead of flying 270, they set it to 27, or the other way around. But anyhow, they were flying west over the jungle, and 12 people lost their lives because they had to land in the jungle.

Small things. So my point is, beginning of the new year, set your compass to an eternal compass. We're living for eternity, not for time. And we have to set our compass that way.

[12:51] Sometimes, you know, you've often stopped at an airport, but you haven't stayed long. You're in transit. You may never visit that airport again the rest of your life. And that's true, in a sense, about this world. We're here temporarily, like Abraham.

We're dwelling in tents. We're not putting deep roots down because the Lord is coming back for us. This world is not our home. We're bound for that beautiful city. My Lord has prepared for his own, where all the redeemed of all ages sing glory around the white throne.

You know, it's interesting about Abraham. If you walk down the street sometimes, he could run into a guy called Shem. Because Shem, Noah's son, actually lived around the same time as Abraham. So there wasn't a whole lot of time difference between these because they lived long lives.

And as I say, he lived near Iraq. But he was challenged to go and follow the Lord. And it says he obeyed. No doubt he faced challenges to his fate.

He didn't actually go because he felt like going. You know, sometimes we might think I'll do something if it feels right. We shouldn't choose our actions based on how you feel. And you know what?

[13:55] He probably wouldn't have got a whole lot of confirmation, as we might say, from people around him. If he said, I'm thinking of going to Mesopotamia or to Canaan. I'm from leaving here. I've never been there before. And I don't think people, people might have raised their eyebrows and said, you know, Abraham's going out somewhere.

He doesn't know where he's going. He wouldn't have got much information from that. You know, when I discovered that I was a lost sinner, that my righteousness, I was raised as a Roman Catholic.

And for 20 years, I did all that I felt was right to get right with God. I attended Mass, novenas, climbed mountains, fasted on the islands for weekends and whatnot. I did all I thought until a guy showed me all our righteousness.

There was filthy rags and we're all as an unclean thing. Wow. Out the window. All my efforts. Well, I don't feel like I need to be saved. It's interesting that you got saved and I really think you've got something wonderful.

You've got a great joy and I just would like to have it, but I just don't feel. And then he said, you know, the Bible says your heart's deceitful. Oh, so that's why I don't feel lost or believe I'm lost.

[14:57] Yes, because your heart's deceiving you. What does the Bible say? It says you're lost. I believe the Bible. From that point on, I knew I was a lost sinner and I needed to be saved. And I got a call from God to come to Christ.

I wasn't coming because you might say I thought it would feel good or because other people in my family or other friends were telling me to do it. I was trying to escape the wrath of God. The judgment of God was upon me.

I was a guilty sinner. If my heart stopped, I'd wake up in hell. That's what I seriously believed. When I did trust in the Lord, I remember one time I would always love to visit an uncle I used to know in Dublin.

He was a very nice fellow. But my family were saying to him, did you hear what happened to Peter? He's left the church and he's joined these Christians and it's terrible. He said, wow.

He said, well, he comes to visit me and we get on great and he lives a good life. I think it's good. So God was gracious in that instance. But he went out not knowing.

[15:56] Again, trusting God, walking by faith, not by sight. There was no app or GPS to get to where he had to go. It says the evidence was not visible to him. You know, there's a time when I did fly a plane and we intentionally flew in clouds because the objective was to get you to understand how to fly your plane based on all these instruments that are in front of you.

Because you'll have this little plane, you see, and you'll know exactly. You won't be able to feel that in the plane. I could think I'm flying like this and I could be flying like this if I'm looking for a horizon when there isn't any. So you have to trust in these instruments.

Absolutely. Or you'll spin out of the clouds into the ground and crash. Sometimes it feels like that. I'm trusting God. I'm trusting his word. My senses don't actually maybe tell me this is the way to go, but I'm trusting God and I'm trusting in his word.

There was one time to become a pilot. You had to fly to a destination 100 miles away. You've never been there before. Find the airport and land. Well, I got to the airport, but it was kind of like I got the GPS, got me right there.

I couldn't actually see it visibly. So we are experienced at becoming humble when you're a pilot and you ask the pilot in the tower, the guy in the tower, can you help me?

[17:11] And he'll give you a direction and you follow that direction and you get there. You know, sometimes you have to be in contact with God because he sees the overall picture, the overall picture, like the guy in the tower.

He sees all the other planes. He sees the whole thing. We only see this and we have to trust in his voice. I don't know if you ever read a book called Lessons from a Sheepdog by Philip Keller, but a very nice story.

And he had a very devoted sheepdog that he would send to get the sheep when they would be lost or stuck somewhere. And sometimes he had to send that sheep through hedges and thorns and thistles and whatever.

The dog had no understanding. He didn't understand exactly, but he was obedient to the utmost. And I'm sure it hurts sometimes for that dog. But devotion to the master, he pursued and he got that sheep out.

Abraham, it says, sojourned in a land of promise in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob in the ears. And we are also journeying and we will someday be forever with the Lord.

[18:13] There's a hymn that says, forever with the Lord, amen, so let it be. Life from the dead is in that word, tis immortality. Here in this body, pent absent from him I roam.

Yet nightly pitched my moving tent, a day's march nearer home. We are here temporarily. Someday we will soon be with our Lord. Again, circumstances probably wouldn't have encouraged Abraham to leave.

I mean, Ur of the Caldades, that's like Dublin, Ireland. That's like London in England. And he would have had prime real estate. You're going to sell that at this price in the market right now? And again, he was faithful.

You know, Peter, when the Lord told him to cast his nets out, he was a little hesitant, you know. He's a carpenter. I'm a fisherman. But I put one out.

Out of respect, he put one net out and the net broke. That's why the net broke, because he limited what Christ could do. Sometimes we limit what we think God can do. And blessing to Peter came at that point in time, and the boats actually began to sink.

[19:15] They were overflowing. And Peter could have said, now you want me to leave the business? When the Lord, if I could have you, I could really make a lot of money on it. No, but the Lord says, come follow me. So sometimes circumstances didn't tell Abraham or even Peter, this is what you should do.

You have to trust in the Lord. It says that Abraham, his father's name was Terah, and his father had three sons, and one of them, Haran, died. And it seems like Abraham got the call, but we don't hear that Terah got the call, or Lot, his nephew, that he brought with him.

And when they get to his place called Haran, or Haran, which is actually similar to the place, to the name of Abraham's father, or his brother, his father's other son who died, Terah didn't move on from there.

And he passed away there. Maybe he couldn't get over the loss of that son. But also, he's a picture of the flesh that holds us back. I mean, Abraham made progress, and in those days, respecting your father was very important.

But Terah just didn't seem to, you know, they've traveled 800 miles already. Let's settle down here. Now, things are doing good, so maybe we should stay here. Prosperity isn't exactly the answer either.

[20:26] Should I stay here because things are going well? If God wants me to move, no, I should obey him. When I was a first believer in Christ, and I decided I should attend Sunday morning in Mallow Street Hall in Limerick, and that meant, of course, leaving the Catholic Church, it was difficult because I would come home for lunch, and, did you go to Mass?

No. And war. You know, why didn't you? So, for a while there, I decided, you know, I just don't like these battles. So, I decided, on the way home from Christian Church, I stopped outside the Catholic Church, walked in, picked up the brochure, and came home, slapped it down on the table.

The war was over. For a while. And, of course, in my heart, I'm thinking, you know, that's not really being genuinely honest. I'm not going to Mass, but I'm giving the impression that I'm going just to stop them fighting with me.

So, I finally said, you know, I'm going to the Christian Church, and I'm not going to Mass, and, oh, you ruined Christmas, and whatever else. But then, you know, amazingly, it backed off.

It's like, when I took a stand, and I said, this is what I'm doing, I'm following the Lord, it seems like things got a little easier. It's almost like I had to go through the obedience, and then the Lord blessed us.

[21 : 36] In the book of Acts, it says that Stephen, in chapter 7, he tells us that God called Abraham. Now, you know, if you read your Genesis Bible, it says God called Abraham and Haran.

But he actually, Stephen says, he called him before he left Haran. So, he was reaffirming his call to him this time. It's almost like Abraham didn't get any more light until he followed the light that God had given him.

So, he reaffirmed his call. And that's good, too, because we'll discover another part of the Bible. Abraham went down to Egypt when there was a famine. And that wasn't the right thing to do. This is a new year.

God is a God of new beginnings. And God comes back to Abraham and says, look, you made an effort. You stopped here. Come, I want you to obey me and to follow me. And as I said, his father, Terah, is a picture of the flesh.

And that may have been an issue that sidetracked him. But, you know, it's easy to get bogged down. Have you been bogged down? Is there something that's bogged you down from following and from serving your Lord and Savior?

[22 : 34] And again, we find out that we are reminded in Romans that when you're baptized, you actually are saying something in that. You're going to die to self and you're going to live to newness of life to Christ.

And you are dead. You are dead to the flesh. You are dead to the world. If you're a soccer fan of Man United and you pass away and your coffin is going by the stadium and they score a goal, it doesn't matter.

You are dead to that. There is no response. And that's what Paul says. Reckon yourselves dead to this world and alive to Christ. It says, Abraham saw the promises of far off.

And, you know, he really is a man of faith with what he knew. And yet he trusted God. He didn't see all that we saw. He built altars. And, you know, one of the places that he stayed in Bethel and A, or I think it's Shechem, was the place where Jesus stopped to speak with a woman of Samaria.

He saw them afar off indeed. And, you know, when he arrived in the land, he was a little discouraged because it says the Canaanite was in the land. And, you know, I visited some towns around us.

[23 : 42] And sadly, you know, we love to share the gospel. And one time I got to this place and there was people there and they were peddling false doctrine. And I'm like, oh, looking back, the Canaanite was in the land.

And I said, what am I going to do? Am I going to engage these people? But they're always twisting scripture and you never get anywhere with them. So I'm going to pray. And I prayed and I walked up and there was a new believer challenging this person at the same time.

And so I met a new believer and we had joy and her husband was singing musically Amazing Grace on the other side of the street. But he was discouraged. And you know what? Despite that discouragement, it says God came to him and repeated his promises to him.

Fear not. There are things that will discourage us in this life, in this year. There are things that sometimes we will come up against that are difficult. But God says, fear not. He has given us his promises.

He cherishes us. And whatever physical objectives that were in front of Abraham, he couldn't get around or couldn't see through. God says, fear not. There is nothing impossible with God.

[24 : 44] Do we need to be reminded of his promises? He will never leave us, nor forsake us. Nothing will separate us from his love. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And when he comes, he will take us to be with him.

And wherever he is, we will be also. God was going to give him the land. And he was going to be there by faith, trusting in God. You see, those people, there are many people who might look like they're going to heaven.

They might be in the right place even. They might be in a church. The Canaanite was in the land, but he wasn't there by call of God. And he wasn't there by faith. And when the children of Israel would get to the land, they would first of all have the Passover.

They would recognize the Redeemer, the Lamb of God. And they would go through the Red Sea, dead to the world and alive to Christ. And that's how they got to the land. And that's a picture for you and I. How do we get to salvation?

We come to the Lamb of God. We recognize that God has taken our sin and placed it on his own son. Are you listening? And if we take that gift of eternal life, he takes that perfect righteousness of Christ and imputes it unto us.

[25 : 49] And we have eternal life. And so the Canaanite was in the land, but he wasn't there by God's plan. Jesus said, I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep by the gate but climbs up some other way is a thief and a robber.

There was a man who came to a wedding one time and he didn't have the right garment on and he was thrown out. You might say, what's that all about? Well, you know what? He could have got the right garment from the owner. If we don't have the perfect righteousness of Christ, we cannot enter into heaven because it's a holy place.

Why didn't he go get the right garment? Pride. There's two things someone said keep you out of heaven. Pride and unbelief. And pride is such a serious sin that it takes eternity, eternity of judgment for God to deal with it.

There's an eternal judgment for pride. But there's also a wonderful reminder. What the blood of Jesus Christ has done on the cross can save us and cleanse us from all our sin. The power of the blood of Christ.

I also think that it's interesting we often think about a land of Canaan as the place in heaven. But there's a sense in which it's for us today. We have many blessings.

[26 : 54] Paul speaks of in Ephesians chapter 1. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings. If you're in Christ, you're justified. You're made righteous. You're chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

You're predestined to be with him before him to the praise of his glory. We are seen as glorified in him through Christ. We have many things to enjoy. It says, Abraham pitched between Bethel and Hay.

One means the house of God and the other means a heap of ruins. We're in the world, but we're not out of the world. And we're heading to the city of Zion. And again, faith comes by hearing his word.

I mentioned that there was a famine. And he decided to help the situation by going down to Egypt. So there was some scarcity. But he thought of a solution. And he goes down to Egypt.

And if you know the story there, he does one good thing, right? He compliments his wife. You know, you're a fair woman. But then he kind of shouldn't have said any more after that.

[27 : 52] But say, you're my sister. Which technically he was, but she wasn't. But, you know. And sometimes we try to help God along with our plans. And of course, as that guy, that counselor says, how's that been working for you?

But, you know, it's not plain sailing always. Jesus said we will suffer persecution. There will be divisions amongst families. It won't always be comfortable. And he doesn't say that to discourage you, but so that you won't be blindsided in your obedience in following him.

Because we must trust and obey, as the hymn says, for there is no other way. Maybe you felt like you're not part of a group sometimes. You're isolated because you're a Christian. It says Jesus had nowhere to lay his head.

Noah preached for a hundred years. That's a long time to be scoffed and to be mocked at and to stand still for God. But I'm glad that I did because he does strengthen us and he does come with us. And he does actually promise us strength for the way. You might say, I'm not going to be sure how I can get over that mountain that's ahead of me. Or I get through that valley. But Isaiah, in chapter 40, says he will bring the mountains down and he will bring the valleys up.

[28 : 58] It says, Behold, the Lord will come with a strong hand in his arms. He'll rule for him. Behold, his reward is with him and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd and

he shall carry the lambs in his arms.

There's times when we need to know his comfort and his presence and he will be there for us. What God asks you to do, he provides the strength for you. What God asks you to do, he provides the strength for.

And you're not responsible to fix all the negative attitudes of people around you before you obey God. Because some people may object to it and you're not responsible to straighten them out. God wants obedience.

And that's something we can learn from Abraham. What decides your obedience? Is it others' approval? If I had been deciding to obey God based on my feelings or the approval of others or circumstances, it wouldn't have happened.

So that's one thing. I was certain of the call of God to escape the wrath and his judgment. What can you learn from the lessons? Abraham was ready to obey God. Abraham obeyed God when it didn't make sense.

[29 : 59] He eventually did not delay in obeying God. And he would soon grow to not let anyone interfere with him obeying. And he understood that obeying God was an act of worship.

We give honor and glory to him when we serve him. And Abraham also trusted in God. There was also comfort promised to him. I enjoy the verse in Isaiah chapter 65 verse 17.

The Lord says, Behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind. That tells me that the glory of heaven, the glory of the presence of God, will be so glorious that my mind won't even be able to have room in it to comprehend all the things that are here, that were here, that caused me such anxiety or whatever, that are all going to be burnt up anyhow.

Because of the glory of the new heavens and the new earth, we won't even remember the former things. Whether it's the cliffs of Moor or Yellowstone Park or whatever, the beauty of the glory of God will surpass them all, and we will not remember these things.

Hebrews tells us that there are better things. Like Abraham, our obedience should be swift, and it should rely on God. You know, God is a counselor. My wife's a counselor, I mentioned, and she does some counseling.

[31 : 12] But God is also, was Abraham's friend and counselor. You know, if you have a friend, you can be open with that person and tell them all the challenges you might have. And Abraham was like saying, Oh, I don't have an heir.

Maybe my servant here in my house can be my heir. No, you will have an heir. Of your own. What about Ishmael? No. And it's times that God has to tell Abraham, Stop this line of thinking. You know, if somebody calls you up, and they're a scam caller, and trust me, if they really want gift cards from you to pay your tax bill, you know that's a scam.

The revenue commissioners don't take credit, gift cards for your taxes. You hang up on that. Now, if there's a line of thinking in your brain that's contrary to what God says, you've got to hang up on that too.

And trust in God and serve him. Obedience, as I mentioned, brings blessing. When Peter obeyed, the ship was sinking. And when Abraham obeyed, what does it say in Romans chapter 4?

He was counted righteous. Righteousness was imputed to him. Maybe I should explain that. Something that's assigned by inference. Well, that's even more challenging perhaps.

[32 : 17] But it's like this. I'm not righteous before a holy God. But Jesus died in my place. And when I discovered, for me, how I was right with God, it was waking up one night thinking, you know, if you wake up in eternity, you wake up in hell.

And I thought to myself, well, that's exactly what I deserve anyway. But I remember that Jesus paid the price. And by accepting that, Jesus, God was able to say, I am accepting this on your behalf. So it's almost like he's looking upon me as being perfectly righteous, even though I'm not. He's imputing it to me because of the righteousness of Christ. He took my sin and imputed it to his own son.

And he takes the perfect righteousness of Christ and imputes it to me. And that's the grace of God. It's available to everybody, but it's only to those who come and accept Christ. I think Abraham's faith peaked when he was asked to offer up his son Isaac.

And he was willing to do that because of his love for God. He didn't know, but he knew, he knew that God was going to somehow still promise, fulfill his promises and raise up a seed.

[33 : 18] How is he going to do that? He's going to have to either erase him from the dead. If you look at the story of him taking Isaac up, it says, he told the men, it was three days journey.

Isn't that interesting? In the heart of Abraham, his son Isaac was dead for three days. Three days and three nights, the Lord was in the grave. Isn't it interesting that he puts the wood on Isaac isn't it the son of God that carried the cross to Calvary?

And he didn't know, but he said to his men, we will return. He must have known somehow that God was going to raise him from the dead or as we saw, he intervened and he stopped them from taking the life of his own son.

You know, that's why I said, I don't set, I don't set resolutions because usually they fail. I set goals. And sometimes, if I want to win the Dublin Marathon but not change my diet or get much exercise, well, that's not happening.

So am I sacrificing something else to get another goal? So sometimes, I might have to give something up to get what I really want. And Abraham wanted to please God even if it meant his own son.

[34 : 23] But of course, God didn't do it because he wanted to have him do that but just to bless him. And in blessing, he did because he could see his heart was for him. If there's, he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep. What this world can give me, I cannot keep anyway. But what Christ can give me is eternal. So in summary, Abraham pushed through not being able to see what was ahead.

He pushed through the desires of the flesh. He pushed through the opinions of others, the desires of the world. And he pushed through physical impossibilities even when the evidence did not make sense.

How was he able to do that? Three things. He was confident as to the call of God. He was certain to the call of God. He was confident in the strength of God in Christ.

But he was also in contact with the person and the presence of God because he built altars and he worshipped God. And that's why I encourage you, if you don't have an altar, a place where you can go and talk to God and have him speak to you, hopefully those things that I mentioned at the beginning will be an encouragement to you.

[35 : 34] And in times of difficulties, we find that the Lord does hold on to us. That's why I picked that song that's been in my heart, He Will Hold Me Fast. Let us pray and then we will go and sing, He Will Hold Me Fast.

Father, we do thank Thee again for Thy Word. We thank Thee for the reminder and for the blessings that we see that happened in the life of Abraham. And from Him truly would come a blessing to the Jew and the Gentile because the one who came was the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee, Father, for His love for us and for His death for us and for the hope that we have in Him. He may come this year, what a joy that would be. Help us, Father, to whatever comes, to trust in Him and His precious Word and to know the wonderful truth of His promises to be with us and that greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world and that He will hold us fast not just now but even unto the end of the ages.

We give thanks for those that were here and pray for them. In Jesus' precious name, Amen. Amen. Amen.