

Bring it to the Lord in Prayer

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Genesis, chapter 24. We've been looking at the life of Abram for quite some time. We're coming very close to the end of that.

It's a large chapter, so next time we come to it we'll conclude this chapter. I want us today to focus at verse 12 of chapter 24.

And he said, that's Abram's servant, he said, O Lord, God of my master Abram, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abram.

Now the last time we saw, we were looking at the death of Sarah and of Abraham's grief, Sarah's death, and of how wisely and well Abraham conducted himself amongst the Canaanites where he purchased, remember he bought a field there for burial.

But time had marched on when Isaac was born, say Abraham was a hundred. We're told that in different parts in chapter 25, verse 20, and again in Genesis 21, verse 5, we're given ideas of the different time scales.

[1 : 24] So when Abraham was a hundred when Isaac was born, so that Abraham is now 140, because Isaac is 40 years of age at this particular time.

And like any parent, you always want the very best for your children. And that is true of Abraham as well, because Abraham was so conscious that not only was he as a parent, as a father to Isaac, but that he was representing God in a very special way.

And so there's this huge concern in the heart of Abraham to get a wife for Isaac. Now as we know, in the Near East, it was the custom of the day that it was generally down to the parents to make, to provide, or to look for a wife for a son.

And as we know, that's still the culture, the way in certain parts of the world. And I'm sure we in the West would throw up our hands in horror if our parents were to have arranged the marriages.

And I'm sure everybody in here today who's married, you're probably glad that your parents weren't, that they didn't arrange the marriage. Maybe they did, I don't know. But it's not very likely that's not the way here.

[2 : 49] But anyway, that was the culture. But you know, in a sense, in a sense, every marriage should be an arranged marriage. And the reason I say that is that God is the one who should do the arranging.

Because we're told in the word of God that a prudent wife is from the Lord. We're told again in the word of God that whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor from the Lord.

So that at one level, while it's not of a human arrangement, it should be of a heavenly arrangement. So that there should be an awareness of the Lord's leading in these things.

And so we find that this time has come now. As we know, not everybody is going to get married.

And in the providence of God, that can, for some people, can be a very difficult thing. Some people choose to remain single. And some people struggle with being single.

[3 : 47] And it's an area that requires a lot of prayer and often a lot of grace. And the word of God will show us these things. So it's always something in the whole area of relationships that we bring before the Lord.

It's one of the great areas. And as I say, some people, it will be the Lord's will for them that they remain single. And that might be very difficult for some people.

It might be what some people are comfortable with. And again, there's just so many areas that one could look at. But always we're conscious that God is the God of providence.

Always. And this particular chapter is a wonderful chapter that shows us God's leading, God's directing. And also shows us the trust of Abraham and the trust of his servant in seeking a wife for Isaac.

It's just so full of instruction. And so Abraham wants God's guidance and God's leading for the servant. And so he calls the servant and he tells the servant, The Lord God of heaven, he will send his angel before you and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

[5 : 06] And so it's a wonderful thing that Abraham is so convinced that the Lord will overrule everything here. And it's also very interesting, I think, when you just, I suppose this is by the way, that the two areas probably that are so under attack are two of the great institutions that the Lord gave to us from the very beginning, the Lord's Day in marriage.

In the Lord's Day, or the Sabbath, we know that after the six days of creation, it tells us that the Lord rested on the seventh day.

He set that day apart. He sanctified it. He blessed it. And it was a day that he gave, as it were, to himself, and he gave to us as a day in order that we would have a day of rest physically and a day of rest spiritually as well.

And he has placed that in amongst the Ten Commandments, just as powerfully as not stealing or not killing. But we know that in the New Testament and with the New Covenant, that the Lord Jesus Christ, that when he rose from the dead, he rose from the dead on the first day, which spoke again of the completion.

Just as the seventh day spoke of the completion of the work of creation, the first day of the week speaks to us of the completion of the work of redemption, where Jesus rose from the dead and he triumphed over death and over the grave.

[6 : 44] And that is why the New Testament church have always worshipped the early church. It was on the first day of the week. And that's why we have continued to do that on the first day of the week. So God has given us this one day, and it's for our good.

And it's to the detriment of society when we try and bin God's day. Because we weren't made to work seven days a week. And people will suffer physically and mentally and spiritually in every way.

And it's one of the wisest things where we have this day of rest. And it's the same with marriage. Because today marriage has been turned on its head, but the Lord has given us marriage for the well-being and the very structure of society.

But marriage is also a sign. When we look at, it's one of the, it's probably the illustration that God uses in the Bible of his relationship with us, of his work towards us.

Because he says, for instance, husbands, love your wives. How? Just as Christ loved the church. As a bridegroom, this is in the Old Testament, as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

[8 : 10] So there is a real picture. It is one of the great illustrations. In fact, if you follow through, it would be worth doing a sermon on that alone, where we see the espousals in the Old Testament, which were equivalent but more powerful than our engagement, and then into the actual marriage ceremony, and then into the marriage supper, and then into the couple going home and setting up everything.

That's exactly what happens spiritually between the Lord Jesus Christ and his church. And that's why it talks about in Revelation, as we are just now, we are bride and groom.

Jesus is the groom. The church is his bride. But when we get to glory, when you go to the book of Revelation, you read there about the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And then for the first time, the bride becomes the Lamb's wife. So that there is a full completion.

And this is it in the home forevermore. So you see, marriage is a powerful picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ, and what God the Father is doing with his Son, and with his people.

[9 : 30] And that is one of the reasons why Satan has chosen to attack marriage, because this great picture that is given to us in the Bible of what God is doing with us is what is so under attack.

But anyway, the time has come for Isaac to get married. And there's no doubt but that Isaac was incredibly close to his mother. He was a special child.

Remember how he had been promised for years and years and years, and his father and mother had waited and waited. And remember the whole incident that took place with regard to Hagar and then the birth of Ishmael and so on.

But eventually, Isaac is born. And so there was obviously a very special bond between mother and child. Because it tells us at the end of the chapter that when Isaac eventually gets married, it tells us at the end of the chapter that he was comforted over his mother.

So that he obviously had this incredibly close bond for all these years with his mother. And that there was obviously a great loneliness, an emptiness in his heart.

[10 : 42] But here we come, as we say, just to the time of the choosing or the finding of a wife for Isaac.

But there's one other thing they'll just say here. Just as Abraham wanted a bride for his son, and we're coming back to what we just said a moment ago, so God the Father wanted a bride for his son.

And that bride, as we just said, is a church. And every single believer is the bride of Christ. Now, it's not that the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the God, it's not that he was lacking in anything.

God the Father didn't say to himself, you know what's missing? My son needs a bride. Because the Son of God is fully self-sufficient, self-reliant.

He's complete in all his being. But it was the Father's love gift to the Son. This is what it was. It was a love gift.

[11 : 53] The bride, the church, is a love gift from the Father to the Son. And equally, the Father's love gift to the church, to us, is the Son.

And we must never lose sight of that. It's an amazing thought that we are the bride of Christ.

And that means that Jesus loves us. You know, there's the song, Jesus loves me, this I know. How do we know? Because the Bible tells me so. Well, it does. And it's something that we really should home in on.

Just how deep the commitment and the love of God in Christ is to us. And if you ever question how much Jesus loves you, just go back and look at the cross of Calvary.

And see and hear the woes and the agonies and the cries of Jesus. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Well, the answer to that is his love to you.

[12 : 56] God's love to you. Christ's love to you. It's so incredible. But anyway, here the servant heads off to do exactly what Abraham wanted him to do.

And one of the things when you look through the life of this servant is how incredibly loyal he is. He has this tremendous commitment to his master Abraham.

And he's always my master. And again, we have to ask ourselves, do we have that kind of commitment to our master, our heavenly master? Because it's something we often have to question ourselves with.

Am I committed to the Lord? Am I, it's not just am I committed to the Lord, but am I obedient to the Lord? Do I have this willingness to serve him?

Because, you see, life is full of challenges and life is full of difficulties and often life is full of problems. Do we, whenever we face the challenges and the difficulties and the problems, do we say, right, I'm doing my own thing here?

[13 : 59] Or are all the times, do we have every day that we get up and go through our day, are we saying, Lord, help me to remember that I belong to you.

That you are my master. That you are the one who has set out for me a particular way to live. Help me every day by your grace so to live.

To live in an upright way. We are called to live in an upright way. We are called towards righteousness. Righteousness should characterize our life. Because, you see, it's so easy to shelve and to say, well, I'll be very righteous on the Lord's day.

But I'm not going to be Monday to Saturday. I'm going to do my own thing. We can't. And that's what we see in this servant here. Was his unwavering commitment to his master.

Whatever his master said, that's what he was going to do. And he had put his master above all his own requirements or his own needs or whatever. There was this amazing focus on everything.

[15 : 04] And so, we find that he goes off looking for a wife, for Isaac. And I'm sure Isaac himself would have been praying over this matter. Because Isaac knew, too, it was a time for him to get married.

And, you know, again, a very biblical, I believe, a biblical sign. And I'm taking it back to what we were saying about the relationship between a believer and Jesus.

A biblical sign of thinking about marriage is having this awareness within yourself. That you're not the complete person that you once thought you were.

And the wonderful thing is when you meet somebody that seems to bring or to correspond in a way that gives you a sense of fulfillment.

And a sense of togetherness, a sense of unity that maybe you haven't had with anybody else. And the reason, again, we come back to the picture of Jesus and the church is this.

[16 : 13] That's exactly how a person becomes a Christian. Because, you know, when a person, before Jesus comes into a person's life, a person feels satisfied and fulfilled in themselves.

And they say, oh, I'm in charge of this. I'm boss of my life. And that's the way you want. Everybody wants to be boss of their own lives. There comes a point where something changes.

And it might be an event. It might be just, but it's always God's spirit. Opens your heart and your mind to realize you're not the person you thought you were.

And that you need someone in your life. You need somebody far greater than yourself. Because you realize you do not have in yourself what will take you through this world.

You realize you do not have within yourself what can deal with the sin, with the guilt, with the failings. You realize that you cannot make your own way to heaven.

[17 : 13] Because you know heaven is the aim. Heaven is where you want to go. And you say, well, how do I get to heaven? Well, Jesus has said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

So there are all these things come into your life, into your thinking, into your mind. And that's where a person begins to seek the Lord. And it's then, of course, that this union takes place where a person comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the moment we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we become the lamb's bride or the groom's bride. And so, obviously, this time had come for Isaac.

Now, again, marriage, as we say, speaking about the great relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and his church. One of the wonderful things, if you're here today as a believer, and you're really struggling, and you're saying to yourself, you know this, I don't know, maybe the Lord has fallen out of love with me.

Because sometimes that's the way you feel. We know all too well, and I'm not going to hurt anybody, but we know that sometimes marriages collapse things, but there's a lot of pain in these things.

[18 : 31] In this world, these things happen. But the bride and the groom, spiritually, will never separate. That is the most wonderful, wonderful thing to know.

Even if today you feel downcast and you're saying to yourself, you know, I really, I'm beginning to struggle here. I don't know if the Lord can still love me. Does he still love me?

Can he put up with me? See the way I've been treating him. See the way I've been ignoring him. See the way my life has been. Maybe he's going to say enough is enough.

No, he won't. He can't. He cannot turn his back. The bridegroom will never turn his back upon the bride. I am persuaded, the apostle said. He went through all, remember how he went through all the different possibilities of life and death and things present and things to come.

He said nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And so we find Abraham here and he's setting out the servant to find a wife for his son Isaac.

[19 : 40] Not amongst the Canaanite idolatrous people that were there. And again we see the God-centeredness of Abraham. Because you see, we've been looking at the life of Abraham and we see how Abraham, he didn't own, although God had promised him all the land that it would belong to, all his seed.

He didn't own one plot of ground bar the little bit that he had bought to bury his wife. That was the only bit he had purchased that. God said it's all use, but he didn't own any of it.

This was the perfect opportunity to strengthen his hand, to strengthen his arm. It was again the custom of the day for somebody who was rich or somebody who had a lot of power to marry the son or the daughter to another king so that you would strengthen your grip upon the land by doing that.

So Abraham could have said to himself, you know, if I marry Isaac to the princess of that city over there, then I am strengthening my hand, my grip upon this place.

God has said, it would be very easy to start using this, God had said this is good to be mine, well this is one way I'm going to get it. But Abraham said, no, they're all idolatrous people there.

[21 : 12] I don't want my son mingling with them. And I'm going to trust the Lord, that the Lord is the one who will overrule and he will provide his chosen bride for my son.

And that's exactly what he did. And you know, you look again at the life of Abraham and it's just a life that really is so magnificent. He, as I said, he could have really gone out to strengthen his arm and to make a lot of money out of it, to get a lot of land out of it.

Now Abraham, as we know, was not against wealth because he was a very wealthy man. But he was going to get his wealth in an honest way and he was going to get his wealth in the God-honored way.

Because remember when he delivered Lot and the king of Sodom and all the Sodomites from when they had been taken captive, the king of Sodom said to him, listen, all that belongs to us is yours.

Abraham said, no, I won't even take a thread from you. Because he knew the kind of person he was, the king of Sodom. He said, I'm not going to take anything. He simply trusted that God would provide.

[22 : 26] And God provided over an abundance. So that's the kind of man that Abraham was. And we see that applied right through his life. And that's why he's wanting the very, very best for his son.

And so we come to this point. And it's at this point we're just going to really come into the conclusion of because I want to finish it next week. We find the servant. And he's reached this place.

He's reached the place. And he says, you can just picture him and say, wow, I've been sent here. And I have to find a wife for Isaac.

Where do I start? What do I do? If you put yourself in that position, you'd say, how do I start going around the doors, knocking at the doors? Do I say, hey, my master Abraham's a really wealthy man back at home.

He's got a son. And he will inherit everything that his father wants. Do you want to be his bride? And he would say no. But he did the right thing.

[23 : 25] And that's what we read in verse 12. He said, oh, Lord God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.

Very simply, he took the whole matter to the Lord in prayer. He said, Lord, I'm putting it all to you. Because I don't know what to do.

But I know, Lord, that you do. And not only whether it's we're looking for a partner in life, but in all the areas and issues of life, that's what God wants us to do.

He wants us to bring everything to him in prayer. But, you know, I love what the man does. This is, he set before us a wonderful example.

First of all, he took to the Lord in prayer. And then he said, I'm going to stop and watch and see what happens. And again, that's a very biblical principle. Because you find that, for instance, that's Abraham himself.

[24 : 28] When he was praying and praying and praying about Lot and Sodom, after he prayed, he went out onto the plains to watch what would happen. It was the same with Elijah and the servant.

Remember when Elijah was praying and praying for rain. Again, there was a sending out to look to see, waiting for the answer. And that's exactly what the servant does here.

He brings the whole matter to the Lord in prayer. And he says, now, I'm going to stand by. And I'm going to watch. Because far too often we can pray and just rush in.

Instead of praying and waiting. Prayer and waiting go side by side. And that is probably one of the hardest lessons to learn in a day that we're living in. It was always difficult to learn to wait for God.

Because impatience is part of our makeup. But particularly, there was never a day, I don't believe, when it was harder for us to learn to wait than today. Because waiting is something we're not geared to.

[25 : 34] Everything is immediate today. It has to be now, now, now, now. There's just this instant. That's not the way God works. When God works, sometimes he works so quickly that he's answered before we even ask.

But very often he makes us wait in order to develop patience. And through that experience, and that we come to know him more and more. There's so much in it.

Let us make it the habit of our life. That we will bring everything to the Lord in prayer. And watch and wait. That we'll be given the grace so to do.

And we'll follow this on next time we come to it. And seeing just how wonderfully the Lord did work. May we then seek to have this day by day trust and faith in the Lord.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for the lessons that you teach us from your word. Lord, we pray that we will have an appetite for your word. That we will have a willingness to listen to what you're saying to us.

[26 : 40] We give thanks, O Lord, for your great servant Abraham that we've been reading about in his life. Which has been a real testimony to your grace. And even although Abraham had his faults and his flaws, as we all do.

We give thanks for the way that you led him and guided him. And through these things are setting out examples to us. We pray then that you will bless us. Take us all home safely.

Although the conditions are quite dangerous underfoot. We pray that you will keep our feet from falling. So that we will get home safely. We pray to bless a cup of tea, coffee in the hall afterwards.

And take us to our home safely. In Jesus' name we ask God. Amen. We'll conclude singing in Psalm 130 from the Scottish Psalter.

We're going to sing the whole Psalm. Psalm 130. The tune is Martyrdom. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.

[27 : 42] My voice, Lord, do thou hear. Unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity? But yet with thee forgiveness is that feared thou mayest be.

I wait for God. My soul doth wait. My hope is in his word. More than they that for mourning watch, my soul waits for the Lord. Page 421, Psalm 130.

And the tune is Martyrdom. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. Amen. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.

My voice, Lord, do thou hear. Unto my supplication voice give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity?

[29 : 02] But yet with thee forgive, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity? But yet with thee forgive, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity? Forgivenesses that fear thou mayest be.

I wait for God. My soul doth wait. My hope is in his word.

My hope is in his word. Moranilat for mourning watch.

My soul doth wait. My soul doth wait. For the Lord. I say, Moran, may that to watch.

The morning light to see. Let Israel open the Lord.

[30 : 16] God bless. For death, his mercy be. And plenteous redemption.

is ever found within and from all his iniquities he Israel shall redeem.

Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you, no one forevermore. Amen.