

Abram Went Out

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Genesis chapter 12. Verse 4, it says, So Abram went, as the Lord told him, and Lot went with him.

Then in verse 7, the Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring I will give this land. So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him.

And we see in verse 10, there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, and so on. Just a brief overview of this chapter.

Now last week we began to look at this man who is termed the father of the faithful. And there is no doubt that he stands as one of the giants of faith in the Bible.

As it's very obvious, we read this chapter, he wasn't perfect. And there's nobody in this world as perfect. Because we find that he moves away, we'll look at that in a minute, from trusting the Lord to sort of trying to trust himself and work things out on his own accord.

[1 : 1 5] But Abram experienced incredible changes within his life, because back in Aru the Chaldees, he had been an idol worshipper. We read about that in the book of Joshua, that way back, that he had been one who worshipped idols.

Until the glory of God was revealed to him. God, we looked at that last week, God revealed, the God of glory revealed himself to Abram. It must have been an amazing, absolutely amazing experience.

But that's what happened, and it changed Abram's life forever. And Abram was never, ever, ever in a moment's doubt as to the fact that it was a living and true God who had come.

It was the moon God, was the main God that was worshipped in Abram's time. And as we saw that if we were trying to modernize where Abram lived and journeyed, that he would have been back in Iraq and in Turkey, and moving on, of course, to the land of Canaan.

And we saw that God gave great promises to Abram. One of them was, he said, I'll make your name great. And that's true. We sang in Salmenden 12, The righteous man's memorial shall everlasting prove.

[2 : 3 6] And that was so true in Abram's life. Because Abram is as well known today, probably better known today than he was even in his own lifetime, but he became really well known, and the inhabitants of the land termed him a prince, termed him a great man.

And so Abram became this great man. But we highlighted again that last week. It's very interesting that in chapter 11, the people of the earth wanted to make a name for themselves, and they began to build the Tower of Babel.

They were going to build this tower all the way to heaven, and God brought confusion upon them, and we don't know their names. This is often what happens when a person says to themselves, I'm going to make a name for myself.

But here's Abram, and God says, I'm going to give you a great name. But not only a great name, he said, he gave many promises. He said to him, the land you're going to, I'm going to give to you, and to your offspring, to your descendants.

And through you, all the nations of the world are going to be blessed. It was quite an extraordinary promise. There was, first of all, there was an individual, personal blessing.

[3 : 5 1] But then it moved out into a family blessing, and all his descendants. But then it moved out into a global blessing. And, of course, we know that the fulfillment of that is in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Anyway, we find that Abraham responded to God's call and God's command, and Abraham, off he went. And it kind of throws in there that Lot went with him.

Lot was Abraham's nephew. And it's worth highlighting Lot, because Lot features of Anon in the next few chapters. And Lot, unfortunately, was a man, he was a man of faith, but his faith in Genesis doesn't come through very clearly at all.

In fact, he doesn't come out in the best light by any shape or form. But this is the great thing about the Bible, is that the New Testament so often sheds light on the Old.

Because when we look at Lot's life, it's not a great life. And Lot was governed, not by faith, really, though he was a man of faith, he was governed by himself and his own decisions and what he thought was best for himself.

[5 : 05] But we're told in the New Testament he's termed righteous Lot. That's God's verdict of him. Irrespective of how sordid and how messed up his life became.

Yet, that's God's verdict. So that's what we have to accept. And that's one of the wonderful things that the Bible shows us, how it sheds light on one part upon another.

Now, as we follow Abraham's journey, it's very interesting, because really, we find that Abraham is moving out from our other Chaldees and out of Aaron. He's moving in to the land of Canaan.

And he's moving on and on by faith. So there's this three-fold movement in the life of Abraham that is in the life of every single believer.

I'm moving out from where you were. I'm moving in to the kingdom. And I'm moving on by faith, from faith to faith.

[6 : 08] That is true of every single believer. And when you look back, if you're here today as a believer and you look back over your own life, you will know that you moved out from where you were in response to God's call.

God may have called you loads and loads of times. He may have called you for years. And you played, as it were, as they say, hard to get. And what's amazed you is that God kept persevering with you, that he didn't abandon you, that he didn't give up.

But he kept calling you and calling you and eventually you responded. And I know a lot of people, and it was maybe the same in your own life, that part of what held you back, because there were times maybe you were in church and you were moved by a sermon and you were saying to yourself, you know, I really need to become a Christian.

I know that things are not right. I know that my life is not right with God. I really got to get everything sorted out. But, I know my life's a wee bit, I'm quite miserable in the life I'm in.

But, I don't know what it really means to be a Christian, because I know where I'm at. And I don't know if I can make that step into the beyond of where I don't really know what happens.

[7 : 27] Will I be all different? Will people forget all about me? Who will I become? And you know, there's an awful lot of people like that. And there's this huge degree of uncertainty and they say, even although they're being so drawn by the gospel, they keep holding back and say, oh, I'm just not too sure about this.

But thankfully, so often the Spirit of God perceives. It doesn't always, the Bible warns us, my spirit shall not always strive with man.

So it's a very solemn thing and a very foolish thing to play with our salvation if the Lord is speaking to us and then pushing him away. Anyway, we find that there's this a going out from where we were.

It's, we're leaving the world, but we don't leave the world. We're in the world, but we're not of the world. Things change. There's a going out from where we were. And it's quite hard to define it, but you know that there's a change.

And you've come in, you've come from out and you've come into the kingdom. Now, if you've been a Christian for a long time, it might, you might have become so accustomed to being a Christian or you might have drifted or whatever that you maybe are forgetting just what it was like when you became a believer, how everything was so new and so vibrant and so thrilling.

[8 : 53] And prayer, oh my word, you couldn't get over prayer. What a wonderful, wow, this is amazing. God's word was real, it was challenging. It was building you up. There were loads of new Christians.

I mean, your heart was being drawn to them. You had a new identity, a new purpose in life. You kind of knew who you were and where you were going. Sometimes, as I say, when we go on and on, we tend to forget just what it was like when it happened.

But this is what happens out of the old into the new. But it's also a going on. It's a progression. It's a development. You notice this in Abraham's life.

Verse 4, Abraham went. Verse 5, they set out. Verse 6, Abraham passed through the land. Verse 8, he moved.

Verse 9, Abraham journeyed. You see, he's a pilgrim. He's a stranger. He's moving. He's going from place to place. It's all this movement. And that's how it is in the Christian faith.

[9 : 57] That's how it describes to us that we're always pressing or striving or wrestling or running or walking. Christian faith is always described by way of activity.

And so, this is how it was for Abraham. And so, we find that Abraham, he's arrived in the land of Canaan and the Lord is reassuring him, this is the place.

This is your destiny. And we find in verse 7, the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, to your offspring, I will give this land. And I would imagine that that night, that as Abraham and Sarah lay in their tent, their hearts would be fooled because, although he was a very wealthy man, the one thing they both craved was a child.

And the thing was, Sarah, although we read was a very beautiful woman, was past the age of childbearing. So, this was a huge issue for them, a huge problem.

But God has given them the promise, your descendants, this land is going to belong to your descendants. God had, as we say, given them personal blessing, personal promises, family promises, global promises.

[11 : 13] So, I would imagine that that night as they lay in the tent, their hearts were full. Oh, isn't this wonderful? God has reassured us. We have done what God has asked us to do.

And you know, there is no better place in the whole wide world than to be where God wants you to be and doing what God wants you to do.

Remember that. No way better in the whole world. That doesn't mean that it's always going to be easy. But there's no way better in the whole world than to be where God wants you to be and to be doing what God wants you to do.

And that's exactly where Abraham was. And we find in verse 7 that Abraham built an altar and he called upon the name of the Lord. And I love that because this was a feature of Abraham's life and Abraham's wandering tent and altar.

Everywhere he went, he built a new altar. And it would be very different to all the other altars for worship because there were all the pagan shrines would have all the sort of relics and different things associated with their form of worship.

[12 : 24] As far as Abraham was concerned, there was an altar. That's it. And he worshipped God. There was the tent and there was the altar. And that summarized Abraham's life.

Tent, altar. You could in fact follow Abraham and say, right, I want to track where Abraham went. Easy. All you did was follow the altar.

And you would say, oh, he camped here. He camped there. He camped here. Because always he was building an altar and calling upon the name of the Lord. But the thing is that we find that Abraham, although he's in the land of promise, that something happens.

Now, initially, one of the things that we read about Abraham's life, and I think it's one of the things I love about Abraham's life, is it was a life of commitment. Today, loyalty is often very sort of, we live in a disposable age.

There was something about Abraham. He was a giant in the faith. And there was this rock-solid dependability about him. And you know, I don't think we lay hold upon the importance of Christians who rock-solid.

[13 : 44] They encourage other Christians. You know Christians, and you know, one of the things about them, they're always dependable. They seem to be rock-solid Christians.

They encourage you. And you know, the other thing is that, although the world may often mock the Christian, and may mock these deep-rooted Christians, further, deeper down, there is a respect. There's something about that life that does affect and touch other lives. And there's no doubt about it, that although Abraham made his mistakes, that the overriding drive of his life was one of commitment to the Lord.

Now, so far, everything is going well. But we find that after that great night when the Lord had appeared to Abraham, to your offspring, I'll give the land. Verse 10 tells us, now there was a famine in the land, so Abraham went down to Egypt.

You notice that Egypt is always going down. You come up out of Egypt in the Bible. In the Bible, it's always going down because Egypt always stood for the world order, for the society of the world, for all that the world stood for.

[15:01] And that's why it's talking about Abraham going down into Egypt. And Abraham goes down into Egypt because there is a famine.

Now, as often in biblical situations, I try and put myself in the situation and I say to myself, I probably would have, very likely, may have acted just the same.

Because it's very easy to, on hindsight, and see the way things are and say, oh Abraham, you got it so wrong. And he did get it wrong. Because, as I said, we often quote there that the Lord, God, the will of God will never take us where the grace of God will never keep us.

There is no word at this particular point when Abraham goes down to Egypt of the altar. It doesn't tell us that he prayed or that he asked the Lord's guidance.

Is this what I should do? He just goes. And, you know, it's a funny thing, but very often, and what happened to Abraham is so true in Christian experience, that it's often after a time of blessing that trial comes.

[16:10] I'm sure you've found that often. God has blessed you. It might be temporally or it might be spiritually in some way. And your heart is foolish. Oh, you know that the Lord has blessed you. Following on from that blessing often comes a wallop.

And you say, why? Why? Well, I can't always say, but there are differing reasons. Because of the nature of our heart, we so often will take credit to ourselves when we have no business to take credit.

We're taking credit to ourselves for that which we should be giving glory to God. And so often, when blessing comes, whether it is, as I say, temporal or spiritual, we begin far too often a subtle, we might not realize it, but a subtle form of pride is beginning to grow.

And the Lord says, I'm not going to allow this. And so trial comes. The trial doesn't come so that God will discover what's in you and me. Because God knows already.

The trial is there so that we will discover what's there. And quite often we get a shock. It's not for God to learn. He knows. But it's for us to learn.

[17:23] And so it was for Abraham. And we find that Abraham runs away. And you know, when we try and run away from problems, we often make it worse.

And that's exactly what happened in Abraham's experience. And we find that Abraham, he really, I would say, was safer in a famine in God's will than in a land worth plenty when he was out of God's will.

And we find that there's a streak in Abraham that tended to follow him. Because what he does when he goes into Egypt is not the last time he does exactly the same thing.

Abraham was very aware of how beautiful his wife was. And he said to himself, this was his thinking, right, when I go into Egypt, the people are going to see how beautiful Sarah is.

And they're going to kill me and they'll take her. So he says to Sarah, look, here's the deal. If people ask, who are you?

[18:33] You tell them that I am Abraham's sister. That way, my life will be spared. You know, somebody said, Abraham, father of the faithful, is prepared to push his wife under the bus to save his own skin.

Because basically that's what he's doing. He has no thought or concern at this moment for Sarah, only himself. He doesn't think what the repercussions could be. He doesn't think for one moment where Sarah might end up.

It's only about me. What about my life? I must save my life. I must, right, here's the deal Sarah. Now to a certain extent there was an element of truth in what he was saying because Abraham and Sarah were quite close related.

But here he was basically, he was being dishonest. And because he was in the wrong place and because he was prayerless, then things were going totally wrong for Abraham.

And we might ask ourselves, how on earth did Abraham arrive in this situation? And of course the inevitable happened.

[19:45] Pharaoh took Sarah. to be his own wife. Now we mentioned a little ago, I think it would have been a wonderful moment back in the land of Canaan when they had just got into the land of Canaan and God had reappeared, reassuring them of his commitment, of his promise to them that

your offspring will have this land that Sarah and Abraham, their hearts would be full.

Wow, wonderful. Now, here's Abraham and tonight he's all on his own. There's no sign of Sarah. What has Abraham done?

He has not only left himself in a very, very vulnerable position and a very lonely position and a very sad position, but he's playing with the very promise of God.

Sarah is going to be the one who is going to bring, going to be the mother of descendants into this world so that God's promise will be fulfilled globally.

And Abraham is prepared to sacrifice all that for his own skin so that everything will go well with me. This is kind of a bleak moment in Abraham's experience.

[21 : 13] But it teaches us a few things. One of the things it teaches us is that we've all got glaring faults within our lives. And you know this, Abraham, this was a weakness in his life.

Everybody has weaknesses. What might be your weakness or weaknesses might not be the person beside you. We've all got different areas and Satan will attack us in these things.

Well this was one of Abraham's real weaknesses because when you go to chapter 20, Abraham repeats after all this, he repeats the very same sin down when he goes down to Abimelech.

And the same thing happens. And you'd think you would have learned. But it's obviously this is the big weakness in the father of the faithful. And so we find that God intervenes.

And we find it's quite amazing. The Lord afflicted. But first of all, verse 16, this is the good part. And Abraham must have initially thought, oh this is actually working really well.

[22 : 19] I could almost imagine Abraham rubbing his hands. Because initially, because of Sarah, Pharaoh gave, see verse 16, sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys and camels.

Wow. Abraham was already rich. He was now rolling rich. He really was, from a world's point of view, doing really, really well. But his soul was empty.

And as we say, that must have been a lonely night for him, thinking, what have I done? You know, there are times that's where we end up and we think, how is a Christian? Can I be here?

We've all done that. Been places and times and things, I can't believe it. But you know, God, God has a wonderful way of working things. Oh yes, sometimes, sometimes we have to suffer this and that.

But God has a wonderful way of working for his people. And he worked for Abraham. And we find that the Lord afflicted Pharaoh in his house with great plagues.

[23 : 22] It's not going to be the last time God's going to visit Egypt with plagues. Visited his house with great plagues because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. So obviously, Abraham is saying, right, what on earth?

Pharaoh is saying, what on earth happened? And he's aware of the great plagues have happened instantly because of him taking this woman. And of course, there would be very superstitious Egyptians and bound in all the sort of religions.

And he obviously asks Sarah, right, what is the truth? And she has to own up and confess that Abraham actually is her husband. So Pharaoh calls Abraham, what is this that you've done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say she's my sister? So that I took her for my wife. Now, then, here is your wife, take her and go. So it's wonderful how the Lord overruled. But you know, we'll come to this later on. Abraham left Egypt with loads of stuff. He went back up to Canaan. But you know, amongst all the possessions and amongst all the people that he took with him, we read there in verse 16 that Pharaoh gave him male servants and female servants.

[24 : 43] One of these female servants was Hagar. And we read about that later on. Hagar was the woman that Abraham, along with Sarah's idea, that he would father a child because it looked like it was going to become absolutely impossible for the promise to be fulfilled.

And they thought, well, we'll take one of the servants. And if I father a child with a, here the baby will become the baby of the promise.

This baby will be the one that God is going to bless and bless the whole world. He couldn't have got it more wrong. Because Ishmael, who was born to Hagar, of course, is the father of the Arab race. And the whole conflict that has gone on from Jew to Arab with the Jew and the Arabic race to this very day, to this very day, finds its origin in verse 16, where Abraham is completely in the wrong place, receives from Pharaoh this woman.

He thought he was getting on well. But the repercussions have gone on side by side with the blessings. The repercussions have gone on throughout the generations.

[26 : 13] It's a warning to us that, you know, you find, for instance, the likes of Jonah. Jonah thought, oh, well, I'm going to run away from God because I can't face up to what I have to do.

And he thought nobody would be hurt but himself. Well, the Lord sent a fearful storm out onto that sea. And everybody on that sea was terrified of their lives. Jonah didn't realize the storm came. Well, he did eventually. That storm came because of him. And sometimes we can be guilty of causing storms by what we do. But the amazing thing is that God's grace overrules and overrides as we find they did in the life of Abraham.

May we seek then to be able to appreciate and to understand some of the things that are being told us here because they're for our learning, they're for our edification. And they're not things that are way back in the mists of time.

These are things that are absolutely relevant and bang up to date exactly where we are today. all that's happening throughout this world finds itself embedded back in these very chapters.

[27 : 24] So may God grant us the grace to realize just how topical, how relevant, how up to date the word of God is. And it gives us a background to world history that no historian or anybody can give.

Because this is how it all began. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give you thanks for the amazing truths that you revealed to us from your word.

And we ask, O Lord, that we may take these things to heart and seek to understand them, and that we may realize that you are speaking to us through the word. We give thanks, Lord, for the examples that have been set out for us, and we pray that we may heed them and learn from them. We ask you, Lord, to forgive us our sin. We pray to bless a cup of tea and coffee in the hall, and bless all the young folk who gather at all the different levels, the creche and the twinnies and the Sunday school, and all the young folk and all who work and help there.

We pray that you will bless them. Take us all to our home safely, we ask, and forgive us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude singing Psalm 130.

[28 : 36] Psalm 130. We're going to sing the whole psalm. And that's in the Scottish Psalter, the tune is Martyrdom.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice, Lord, do thou hear, and to my supplication's voice give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word. More than they that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord. I say, more than they that do watch, the morning light to see, let Israel hope in the Lord, for with him mercy be.

The whole psalm to the tune martyrdom, Lord, from the depths to the I cried. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice for to hear, unto my supplication voice, give an attempted ear.

Lord, who shall stand with the Lord, truth's power beneath with the suffice that fear hath seen.

[30 : 47] I wait for not my soul laud My hope is in His Word.

For love may not our morning watch. My soul waits for the Lord.

I say, Lord, I may not to watch.

The pouring night to see. Let Israel open the door.

For within mercy's feet. And when Jesus' creation is ever found within.

[32 : 15] And from all His enemies. The 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 now and forevermore. Amen.