

The Death of Abraham

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in the book of Genesis, chapter 25.

Genesis chapter 25. Reading at verse 7. These are the days of the years of Abram's life, 175 years.

Abram breathed his last and died in a good old age. An old man and full of years and was gathered to his people. As I said, it's been very much a stop start as we've been looking at the life of Abram.

But I feel we couldn't just leave it without coming to the actual death and burial of Abram. We saw in the previous chapter of how Abram had sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac.

And as we saw, it wasn't a random journey that the servant went on. The one aspect that governed it all was prayer.

[1 : 0 6] And we saw that Abraham was convinced that God would lead the servant to find a wife. And the reason we know that Abraham was so insistent on finding a wife for Isaac is that the promise, the great promise that God had given Abraham regarding his descendants.

And that it was through all his descendants that the whole world was going to be blessed. So, Abraham knew that Isaac had to have a wife and it had to be someone that the Lord would provide.

And so, we saw the servant. And the great thing about the servant is that his whole journey was clothed with prayer. That we find that so often. He's stopping to ask the Lord.

And we're finding that step by step of the way that the Lord is with him and the Lord is prospering his journey. And then there is this beautiful coming together where we find that Abraham, who had begun the whole thing, and we believe by prayer, and the servant who had prayed every step of the way, and then Rebecca had come at the particular time.

And I believe that Rebecca also prayed about the choice that she was making. Because it was a big thing when the question was asked, Will you go with this man? And she said, I will go.

[2 : 3 6] Because it was a huge step she was taking. She was going out into a country she didn't know to live with a man she had never met. When you think about it, the whole thing is a huge, we would say from a human point of view, it was a massive gamble she was taking.

But it wasn't. Because it was ordered by the Lord. A prudent wife is from the Lord. And God was guiding every step of the way. And we believe Rebecca prayed over that.

And the reason I say that is if we go to chapter 25, after Rebecca marries Isaac, we find that after quite a while, Rebecca is pregnant.

And there is an awful struggle going on. She's very, very conscious of a struggle within her. And what does she do? Well, we read in verse 22.

It tells us there of how the children struggled together with her. And it says, she's wondering, why is this happening to me? So she went to inquire of the Lord.

[3 : 46] And the Lord said to her, two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided. One shall be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger, and so on. But we see that Rebecca was a woman of prayer.

Because that's what she did. She goes straight to the Lord to ask, what is happening? So that's why I believe that before Rebecca made the decision that she made to go with the servant, she would have prayed over that.

But the wonderful thing is that now as we come to the meeting of Isaac and Rebecca, we also find that Isaac is praying.

He's meditating. He's gone out into the field that night. Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. In other words, he was meditating.

He was reflecting upon God. And so you see that every step of this journey was a journey that was clothed with prayer.

[4 : 47] And it's a beautiful, beautiful story. And we see that the very first person, Isaac meditates, the very first person that he meets is his future wife.

Meditation should be a part of our Christian life. It's absolutely essential. The word meditate simply means to chew over. And it's very important for us, not just to read out.

I say this so often, but I cannot emphasize it enough. Take a little bit of God's word every day. Stop. Reflect upon it.

Prayerfully. And say, Lord, what is this actually saying? Don't just skim over it. But stop and think about it. And say, Lord, make this become part of my life.

Help me to understand this. And you know, the Lord loves to teach us. You cannot have a greater teacher than the Holy Spirit. Opening your mind to the truth.

[5 : 49] It becomes personal. It's God speaking personally to you. So that his word becomes real. And it becomes a foundation for your life. It gives you strength. Spiritually speaking, it strengthens your bones.

It nourishes you. It gives you that which enables you to go forward. And so meditation is a key to our spiritual life. We've highlighted it before when Israel were about to cross the River Jordan.

Remember how the Lord said to Joshua, This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night.

That's what they were to do. They were to meditate upon it all day and night. And that they were to do all that is written in it. Then you shall make your way prosperous, and you shall have good success.

The future success of Israel in their crossing of Jordan and inhabiting the land depended upon their meditating upon the word and following what the word says.

[6 : 59] And nothing has changed. If we want to develop in our Christian life, if we want to make progress in our Christian life, then we have to feed upon the word, we have to be nourished upon the word, and understand what is it saying?

What is God saying to me today? Even just take one verse. Think upon it. Say, you know, I really want to think, what is this saying?

And so it is important for us, again, when you remember how Paul, when he was writing to Timothy about meditating, he was saying, he was highlighting the importance of meditating for spiritual development and growth.

And he actually said to him, people will see. People will see your growth. It will become evident to people. If you really meditate upon the truth, people will see your spiritual development and growth.

Again, meditation brings peace. We find that, it says, in Isaiah, you will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you.

[8 : 06] That is somebody whose mind is reflecting upon God, thinking upon God. And the right way to think upon God is in his word.

Because if we just allow our minds to think upon God, not based upon the word, it can become very fanciful. We can get very fancy ideas.

And there are loads of people who have fancy ideas about God because they don't base their thoughts upon God, on the word. But if we base our thoughts on the word, of what the word of God tells us about God, and ask the Holy Spirit to open our minds to understand more, he will open our minds to understand more.

And the more we see of God, the more we see his control, his authority, his love to us, the greater the peace we have. To know that your life is in the hand of God.

To know that God is working out a particular purpose for you personally, individually. That takes so much pressure off.

[9 : 17] Even although you cannot understand it at the moment, God has a plan. And it's a good plan. That's what he says to his people. And so, the more we see who God is, the more we believe who God is, and the more we rest upon God, and feed upon him, the greater our journey will be through this world.

And of course, meditation brings us sweetness into our life. My meditation of him shall be sweet, and I shall be glad in the Lord. Anyway, here we have Isaac and Rebecca coming together.

And it's beautiful because straight away, Isaac sees this beautiful bride. We saw that, that she was a beautiful woman. She was beautiful in character, in her personality, but she was also beautiful in her appearance.

And straight away, he loved her. That's what it tells us. Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother, and took Rebecca, and she became his wife, and he loved her.

You know, this is a picture, we saw that before, of Jesus Christ, who is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride.

[10 : 33] But there's a difference. Isaac saw his beautiful bride, and he just, he was smitten, and he fell in love with her. Jesus Christ, the bridegroom, looks on his bride.

And how does he find us? How did he find us? He found us when we were rebels, when we were dirty, when we were ugly, when we were filthy, and he loved us.

That's a big difference. And that's what we're told in the book of Revelation. Revelation, who loved us, and washed us, from our sins. You would think that, first of all, he would wash us, and then he would love us.

And you'd say, I cannot love that. Is he that person who's such a rebel against me? Is he that person who hates me? Is he that person who has no time for me? Poor, what am I going to do with this person?

No. He loves us, even when we're like that. And he loves us in order, to make us beautiful. And that's what he does. That's what he did. He died for us.

[11 : 42] He loved us, set his love upon us, and he washed us, and made us clean in his blood. So that, of course, is a great difference between Isaac and Rebecca, and between Jesus and ourselves.

But then we come to chapter 25, and here we read of the death of the great man, Abraham. But the first thing to notice is, and really, I suppose, quite amazing, is that Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.

And you remember how in old age, the Lord empowered, reinvigorated, the life of Abraham and Sarah. So because both of them were at a stage where it was past time for children, but God was showing how he, it was going to be an absolutely his work in producing and bringing forth the promised seed.

But when God begins a work, when God does a work, he really does a work. And it wasn't just for a moment that Abraham was reinvigorated and re-empowered.

It was for the rest of his life. And so we find that Abraham, because you've got to remember that Sarah was 127 when she died, and Abraham was 10 years older, so he was 137 when Sarah died.

[13:08] But he lived for close, not quite close on 40 years afterwards. And so Abraham takes another wife. Now that doesn't mean that he stopped loving the memory of Sarah.

Sarah was his first love, and Sarah would always be his first love. They went through so much together, the highs and the lows of life.

There was no doubt there were days they cried together, and there were days they laughed together. Isaac, remember, that means laughter, brought great joy into their lives.

But there were ups and downs, and there were times when Abraham was prepared to push his wife under the bus to save his own skin, so to speak. But through it all, they had a wonderful life together.

But here Abraham, he's now, he's got another near 40 years ahead of him. Of course, he doesn't know how long he's got ahead, but he remarries.

[14:09] And that's what happens sometimes with people. Many people, as widows and widowers, don't, but some do. That doesn't mean in any way that their love for their wife, the wife or the husband that died, diminishes in any way.

But this is, it's a perfectly right and legitimate thing to do. Sometimes families take a wee bit of wild readjusting with that.

And maybe Isaac himself took a wee wild readjusting with the fact that his father took another wife. We don't know. But anyway, we see that Abraham went on to father six children.

But there's something very interesting here. And it is that Abraham makes a clear distinction between Isaac and all the other children. He gave the other children, when they grew up, he gave them presents.

In other words, remember, Abraham was a very wealthy man. And he would have given them a substantial gift which would have set them up for life. And he sent them on their way.

[15:15] Why? Because he didn't want any outside influence to derail Isaac. Isaac was the child of promise.

God's great promise for this world was going to come through Isaac. And Abraham had such a zeal for the glory of God, for the honor of God, that he didn't want any interference from outside.

And so Isaac is to be kept, as it were, separate. And so Abraham is so protective of God's covenantal blessings. But now we come to the time when the great man dies.

And it tells us here in verse 7, these are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. And Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years.

And I love that expression, full of years. Because while it says he lived a long life, that suggests far more than simply living a long life.

[16 : 22] Full of years suggests that Abraham lived a full life right to the very end. We might use the expression as a bother.

There's no doubt there was a period in Abraham's life when he did become a bother. But whether he still had energy to get around and about, I don't know. But the one thing was this, he was a happy man.

And whatever he did, he still had an enthusiasm, and he was still able to enjoy life. You know, it's something wonderful when you see really elderly people really entering into life.

Still able to enjoy life. Get a fulfillment and a satisfaction out of their life. Where they're engaged with all the different age groups in life.

Because life is still meaningful and thrilling and exciting for them. Well, that's exactly how it was with Abraham. Abraham enjoyed life, and he lived life to the full all his days.

[17 : 24] That's what that means. And the key to that, living life in that way, was Abraham's walk with God. You know, people say, the life of a Christian is a dull, a boring life.

If you sat down with Abraham and said, see, Abraham, when you started following the Lord, and you've lived all these years, probably a hundred years following the Lord, which life was better?

The life before, the first 70 years of your life, or the years after? Abraham would say, can't even compare them. See, since I started following the Lord, oh, it was an adventure. I was taking down some strange roots.

Sometimes I thought it was dead end street, but it wasn't. It was just the Lord was turning it this way, and then he would turn it that way. But he brought me to the place he promised, and he will, and he will for you as well.

And following the Lord is an exciting life. It's a fulfilling life. It is a satisfying life. And that's the kind of life God wants us to have. even though there were difficulties in Abraham's life.

[18 : 31] But that didn't stop him enjoying the satisfaction of living and serving the Lord. And we must seek as well as we go through life and as we get older in life that we might also walk with the Lord and enjoy and have the satisfaction of living life to the full.

You see, when you, Abraham, God had promised Abraham, ask for yourself, this is back in chapter 15, ask for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace, and you shall be buried in a good old age.

And now, here's Abraham at the age of 175. And because Abraham had been saved by faith, he had peace with God.

And because Abraham walked with God, he had the peace of God. And these are important. You see, when we're saved, that's what happens.

We immediately come into a place of peace with God. The enmity, the rebellion, all that separated us from God is taken away.

[19 : 45] We're at one with God and straight away there is a peace. But the peace of God is something that God's Spirit brings within our heart. And the more that we live in obedience to the Lord, the more we will know of that peace, even when everything else around us is in turmoil.

That's how it was for Abraham. And so, here's this old man, and it's Wiersbe, who puts in his commentary, and I think it's very well put, how few people, this is what he says, how few people really experience joy and satisfaction when they reach old age.

When people look back, it is often with regret. When they look ahead, it is often with fear. And when they look around, it is often with complaint.

That was not true of Abraham. Because Abraham was a very reverse. When Abraham looked back, he could look back with thankfulness on all that God had done for him.

When he looked ahead, as he was always looking ahead, he was filled with joy because Abraham knew that although God had promised this land to his descendants, he was going to a city whose builder and maker was God.

[21 : 04] All the time, there was this hunger in his heart for getting to heaven. I know where I'm going. Do you know, it's a wonderful thing when you see people as they're coming near the end of their life and they're full of where they're going.

Those who only have the world, they're trying to hang on to it. Hang on to all. Gotta keep, gotta hang on to this world. You can't. And there's nobody more miserable than those who've, that all they have is this world and they're trying to hang on to it and it's going from them.

And they're enjoying living, but that's all they have. But for the believer whose future is guaranteed, you know, we can look at this world and yes, we enjoy this world.

Remember this, God has given us every good and perfect, every good and perfect gift is from above. And we do a dishonor to the Lord to say, I mustn't enjoy the good things in life.

We should, and we should thank God for them. When God in his providence gives us good things in this life, let us thank him for them and enjoy it.

[22 : 12] It's a dishonor to the Lord to do otherwise. But at the same time, these things are not ultimately what life is about. Ultimately, it's about the Lord and that's where we're going.

So the Christian isn't despondent as they're nearing the end of their days. They're saying, you know, whatever good times I had here, it's going to pale into significance with what lies ahead.

There's a heart beat of heaven as already, it's beginning to pound within the Christian the closer they get to the borders of heaven. And that's how it was for Abraham.

Abraham was the fulfillment of Psalm 92 which says, and in old age when others fade, they fruit still forth shall bring. But we have to ask ourselves, are we living in the way that Abraham, who was the father of the faithful, lived?

He walked with God. He was the friend of God. Remember, there's really only two highways in life. Two highways lead to two different destinations.

[23 : 19] The Bible tells us that. We can't, we can try and make it any other way we want, but it's not according to the Bible. Heaven or hell. We're on one or other of the highways.

Well, if we walk with Jesus and we follow Jesus, then we will go to live with Jesus forever. And remember, you might say to yourself, how do I become a Christian?

Well, you know, if you look at the words of Peter as he tried to walk on the water towards Jesus, he uttered three words, Lord, save me. That was it.

And the Lord reached out his hand and saved him from drowning and took him into the boat. That is true all the time. That's all a person has to say.

That's it. Lord, save me. If you say that, that's all three words. You don't need to shout them. You can whisper them. You can even say them in the quietness of your own mind.

[24 : 24] And the Lord says, those who seek me will find me. Anybody who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. That's what the Bible says. We don't need to have great theological knowledge in order to be saved.

We don't need to know what all the books of the Bible teach in order to be saved. These things can sort out later. Thief on the cross as he was dying.

Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. That was it. Lord said, today you'll be with me in paradise. Some of the tiniest little prayers are the most profound and have had the greatest answers.

And that's all it takes. Lord, save me. Well, Abraham was saved and he followed. Not many people will have that length of Christian journey in this world.

But he is the father of the faithful. He has held up a great example to us. And may we seek then to follow the Lord and enjoy life. Enjoy God at the center of our life.

[25 : 35] And enjoy all the blessings that he brings into our lives. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks today for your goodness and mercy towards us.

We give thanks, Lord, for all that you give us and all that you do for us. And even in the heartbreaks, even in the sore things, even the times when we feel that our own personal worlds have collapsed, help us to remember that you're still in control and that you have a purpose for us.

Help us to have that faith to see you. Help us, Lord, to have a love for you and a love for one another. Grant us your grace in everything that we do and take away from us our sin, we pray.

Bless a cup of tea and coffee in the hall afterwards and watch over us and forgive us our sin. In Jesus' name. Amen. Our concluding psalm is Psalm 72.

Psalm 72, and it's from the Scottish Psalter, and we sing from the middle of verse 16 to the end, the tune is Effingham. Psalm 72 on page 314.

[26 : 45] Psalm 72. Psalm 72. Psalm 72. Psalm 72. This psalm wasn't penned in the day of Abraham, but I could well imagine if it had been that this would have been one of Abraham's faith.

I could imagine him singing this often. The city shall be flourishing, her citizens abound, and number shall, like to the grass that grows upon the ground. His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.

Men shall be blessed in him, and blessed all nations shall him call. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone doth wondrous works and glory that excel.

And blessed be his glorious name to all eternity, the whole earth. Let his glory fill. Amen. So let it be. Middle of verse 16 to the end, the tune is Effingham.

The city shall be flourishing, her citizens abound, in number shall light to the grass that grows upon the ground.

[28 : 17] His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.

Men shall be blessed in him, and blessed all nations shall him call.

Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel.

For he alone doth wondrous works in glory that excel.

And blessed be his glorious name to all eternity.

[29 : 42] The whole earth let his glory fill.

Amen. So let it be. 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. Amen.