

## *“Abraham and The Patriarchs” - Class 5*

### **A Walk Through the Old Testament**

Genesis 12-36

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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**Jeff:** Father in heaven, we are so thankful for the day. And Lord, as we rise to another, we are mindful of the fact that it is You who gives us good rest and so we thank You for that. We thank You for the work to which You've put our hands day by day, for the means by which we care for our families. We thank You for the gatherings that we are able to enjoy, like the Brave Men study. We pray and give you thanks that You call us here and that we can enjoy time together and in Your word. Father, we're most thankful for our time in churches where You gather us. And we pray that Your hand of blessing would be upon those. And we pray, Father, for the strengthening of Your church. We pray that Your kingdom would come through their ministries. Father, we also ask that Your hand would be upon us for good day by day as we take Your gospel to the workplace and to our homes, and to wherever we roam.

Father, we are thankful now that we have this opportunity to walk through the Scriptures. We pray that You'll help us to have a large overview, an overall map of what Your word says. Father, we pray this not only that we might understand the applications that You provide along the way, for indeed we are to learn from the saints of old. But we also pray that we would have an understanding of the redemptive history by which You unfold the work of Jesus Christ. Father, commit that to our minds and our hearts, that we might love the gospel more and more, that we might find our strength in it day by day.

Father, we come before You with hearts that are heavy for folks that we care about and love. We think about Sig and Nancy. And as they enter into this second round of chemotherapy we certainly pray for Nancy, that You'll provide her with the strength she needs to make it through this treatment. We also pray for Sig and Nancy in terms of their marriage. We pray, Lord, that this would have a way of strengthening and binding them together in love and in peace with one another. Father, we know that troubles sometimes provide difficulties. But they also provide the garden for which good things can grow. And we pray that for them in their marriage and their personal lives.

We pray for Sandy and her asthma. We pray for our brother Bruce and for his Parkinson's, for that to be overcome through all that he does. And yet, Lord, we know that the aging process goes on. And so even though we age, we have this eschatological outlook as we look toward better things. And we certainly pray that Bruce would look toward better things as we look with him.

Father, we ask and pray that Your hand would be upon not only us as we lead our families, but our families as well. And we pray specifically for our children this morning and for our grandchildren. Father, we know that they are good gifts. We know that a quiver full of them is a joy. And yet, Father, sometimes with the day-to-day working with those children we find ourselves frustrated and sometimes not knowing what to do, what to say next. And so we pray that we might turn to Your word for wisdom. And we pray that in our interactions with our children, with our sons and our daughters, with our

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grandchildren, that You would provide that wisdom. We pray, Father, as Mike teaches the church tomorrow on that very topic. We pray that You'll give him wisdom and strengthen him and those who hear him.

But Father, we do pray that most of all You would help us to tie ourselves off to those children with the gospel, but not only the gospel. We know that when that particular thread grows tense that we need some other threads by which we are tied off to our children. And so we pray that we would become interested in their interests, that we would enjoy their enjoyments. We pray that we would become less and less of an authority figure in their lives as they grow, and more and more of a coach in many ways. And we pray, Father, that the transition would not only be easy for them but easy for us. And so, Father, we pray that You will bless us with the words of the gospel and with the life of the gospel, that it might impact those children in our lives whom we love so much. And Father, we pray and ask these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, let me talk to you today about our purpose statement. Today we're going to be thinking together about a prominent figure in the Old Testament. Obviously that prominent figure is Abraham. Abraham is one of those figures that you can't get away from; he is that prominent. In fact, he's referred to as "Father Abraham." And we'll talk about why that's the case. But he is also our father. If we are believers in Christ, then father Abraham is our father.

In fact, he's one of those figures that as you're reading a Biblical argument, for instance, Paul will pull the Abraham card out of his sleeve and throw it down on the table, as if that trumps all other arguments. Abraham is that prominent of a figure. And so we're going to think about Abraham, and not just his life. We're also going to think about him as an example or a model for faith. Now we're only going to be able to touch on some of these things as we go because we're looking at so much material. But if you have any questions along the way you can certainly ask.

Next week's reading is Exodus 1-14. That's chapter 1 through chapter 14. The next reading after that will involve reading some of Exodus. And after this reading is when we'll get a little more fragmentary in our reading. I'm trying to give you that historical story of the Old Testament so that you can be reading that along with hearing these lectures. So 1-14, and next week again it will become a little more fragmentary. But we'll at least finish out the Exodus story up through chapter 20, and then pick and choose a little after that.

The outline for today. *Abraham is a pivotal figure.* We need to look at *the covenant with Abraham*, because the covenant with Abraham is foundational. It's crucial. It's one of those things, as I said, where Abraham is often pulled out, thrown down on the table. But it's often a bit subtler, and we'll see that as it comes out of Scripture.

I've modified this point a little bit. And when we get there I'll talk to you a little bit about it. But it's *the fruit of failure and the triumph of faith.* We're going to look at *the family of Abraham*, which is very brief. We're just going to look at the genealogical chart. And then I want us to think beyond Abraham up through Jacob.

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Now next time we're together we'll look through the Joseph story in the main. And I'll tell you why we're going to do that in a few minutes. But that will take us up through today's outline. Okay, any questions?

All right, so let's get started. Let's look at *Abraham as a pivotal figure*. And I say that Abraham is first of all *a man chosen by God*.

Now this is true. If you look in chapter 11, you notice that he is from the family of Terah. And if you look at chapter 11 you'll notice that they lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. Now I want you to think about that for just a minute. What just happened in Ur? Remember? What happened in Ur?

**Don Maurer:** Babel.

**Jeff:** Babel. The Chaldeans are the Babylonians. And so what just happens in Ur is important because we understand that basically Nimrod the hunter gathers all of the people together and says, “Hey, let's not be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth as God has told us to do. But let us gather together and make a name for ourselves.” And God comes down and destroys their work, and then scatters them over the face of the earth and confuses their language. And what happens? God's purposes are accomplished. He spreads them over the face of the earth, with men unwillingly so, but God's purposes are accomplished.

Now here's the striking thing about it. The striking thing about it is that *Abraham is called*. Now we're going to see this. Hold on to that thought about Babel for just a minute. We're going to get to it. But I'm going to say one more thing about Abraham being chosen by God. And that's from Joshua 24.

Actually, I have Joshua 24 here. “*And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates-Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor. They served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the river and led him through all the land of Canaan.’”*”

The point is that God chose Abraham out of paganism, out of idolatry. And I think that's a significant thing because sometimes we think of Abraham as a ready-made believer. And we have to realize that God chose this man out of a pagan lifestyle, out of an idolatrous life. And we see that from Joshua.

We notice that he's commended for his faith. We see that in Hebrews 11:8. It says, “*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place where he was to receive an inheritance.*”

Now let me just say this to you. I can't think of the name of the commentary right now. But the author of the commentary talks about how he went into the office of a pastor, a senior minister, a friend of his. And he said that he saw on the wall four pictures—one in the north, one in the south, one in the west and one in the east. And he said that it was just desert, nothing. And he said, “What is that? I mean, why do you have these four pictures of absolutely nothing on your wall?”

And the pastor told him. He said, “Well, I was standing where the excavation site of Ur is.” And he said, “I took a picture that looked to the north. I took a picture that looked to the south, one that looked to the west and one that looked to the east.” And he said, “It reminds me that Abraham was called into at least, according to what he could see,

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nothing. And by faith he left all that he had and all that was familiar to him, and he followed God.”

And he said, “It’s a reminder to me, because just as we’re supposed to learn from the examples of the past, (so says 1 Corinthians chapter 10), so I’m learning from this example.”

And I think that’s a great, great lesson for each one of us. God may call us to do something. He may call us to do it explicitly in His word. We may not like it. We may know that it’s good and wise to do as we deduce that thing that we’re supposed to do from principles taught in His word. And we may not want to go in that direction. We may have every reason to be hesitant about going in that direction. But if we’re compelled to go in that direction by the Word, or by good and necessary logic from the Word, then we go. And that’s the lesson. I think it’s the one that Abraham is commended for.

Abraham is not only chosen by God out of an idolatrous past, and commended for his faith. He is what we call the first patriarch.

Now what’s a patriarch? Well, *patia* means *descendant* or *family* or *generation*. And *Arche in the Greek* either means *ruler* or *beginning*. In this case it likely means *ruler*. And so a patriarchy is *a ruling family*. And we think of this ruling family as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And Abraham is the lead patriarch. He is the lead patriarch.

Now you remember, if you can sort of keep this in your mind from what I told you before. Here we have God coming to Adam in the garden, cutting a covenant with Him, providing clothing for him through the shedding of blood of these animals, and promising him a covenant of grace. And you’ll remember that I said to you that the next five covenants are exfoliations of one covenant of grace, culminating and climaxing in the New Covenant with Christ. But remember what that very first exfoliation is. It’s the Noahic covenant, where God promises to retain, to establish creation. In other words, the stage upon which redemption will unfold is secure. And remember that God provides a rainbow, saying, “I’ll never flood this earth again. I’ll never destroy it by water.” The stage of redemption will be secure.

Now all of a sudden God calls out the first actors, if you will, on the stage of redemption. Not the first people, but the first significant family in this covenant of redemption. And it’s Abraham and his family. He is a patriarch. His family is the ruling family or the lead family in this whole endeavor. And he’s also our father.

I said this to you before, but I think this is important for us to understand. When we think about Abraham as the patriarch, as father Abraham, he’s not simply the father to the Jew. He is the father to the Gentile. Why? Because Galatians 3:7 says, “*Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.*”

So the point is that the Jew and Gentile who have been brought together and reconciled in the one body, who is Christ, have Abraham as their father if they are in Christ by faith. And so he is our father as well.

So just some introductory things about Abraham. Do you have any questions about him in terms of preliminaries that you want to talk about before we tackle anything else? Yes?

**Brave Man:** Was he alive when Noah was alive?

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**Jeff:** Well you know, that’s the interesting thing. You know, was he a kid at the tail end of Noah’s life? I don’t know. And that’s the difficulty about Genesis 1-11. I said that Genesis 1-11 is history, and it’s dateable history. But we’re just not able to date it with any sort of certainty. Dateable history really begins, or at least with some certainty, begins with Abraham. And Abraham comes about the year 2000 B.C. So I don’t know the answer to that question. It could have been; I just don’t know.

**Jim Hamilton:** He survived the flood.

**Jeff:** Yes, but I think he means the generations after the Flood. Was he a boy when Noah was just sort of reaching the end of his life?

**Bishop Rodgers:** I want to know how he convinced his wife to come along. I guess she didn’t hear God speak.

**Jeff:** You know, Bishop, I wasn’t going to bring that up. *(Laughter)* But now that you put yourself on the spot, you can tell us. *(Laughter)*

**Bishop:** I had to convince my wife when we moved, and it was not an easy thing. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Yeah, yeah. I will say this, though. The first time I moved my wife into a significant move, I don’t think I handled it all that well. *(Laughter)* You know, I think I said, “We’re gonna go.” *(Laughter)*

And you know, she as gracious to me. She said, “Okay.” She wasn’t real happy about it, but she said okay.

But then I moved in next door to this guy. And he told me that he was going to talk to his wife about going on a mission trip to Ireland for three months. And he was going to take his entire family and go. And I watched him do it.

And here’s what I learned from him. I learned that he was basically exegeting his wife. He knew his wife so well that he knew what was coming. And so he would say to his wife, “I’m thinking about this,” and she would say, “Absolutely not.” And he’d say “Okay.” *(Laughter)*

And then he’d put a brochure on the table. *(Laughter)* And she would look at it. And just to satisfy him, she would come up with objections as to why that was not a good idea.

And he would say, “Oh, that’s fine, honey.” And then he would leave some answers on the table. And she, in order to satisfy him, would show him why the contrary objections she made were not good. And the next thing I knew, they were going to Ireland for three months! *(Laughter)* And I thought to myself, *Now that’s really good.*

So the next time I had to make a significant move, here’s what I did. I came home and I said to my wife, “They want me to move to plant another church.”

And she said, “You told them no, right?” *(Laughter)*

And I said, “No. I told them I’d pray.”

And she said, “Then you’ll tell them no.” *(Laughter)*

And then the funny thing about it was, a week later she said, “I did not like this, but I’m starting to become disposed to the idea of moving.” *(Laughter)* And so about two weeks later she was ready. *(Laughter)* I said, “Lord, this is good.” *(Laughter)* So now the

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joke in our house is that any time I want her to do anything I tell her, “I’m going to start praying for you.” *(Laughter)*

Anyway, all right. So he’s called out of Ur. What just happened? You know what just happened? *“Let us make a name for ourselves.”*

And God says this. This is what I wanted you to remember. God says to Abram,-- remember, his name is still Abram, Exalted Father at that time,-- *“I will make you a great nation.”*

Isn’t that significant! This just happens in Babel, where Nimrod says, “Hey, let’s all gather together and make a name for ourselves.” And God says, “That’s not the way I’m planning it.” And He comes down, confuses the language and scatters them. And then He calls Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans. And He says to him, *“I will make you a great nation.”*

But here’s the difference. The difference between Nimrod and Abram, at least in God’s plan, is this. Nimrod was not planning to spread over the face of the whole earth and bring exaltation to God. But God through Abraham was planning to make a great nation in order to spread the gospel that had so recently been introduced in Genesis 3:15. Abram was going to spread that gospel through the nation that God would build in him.

Now I just want you to think about this. Do you ever say to yourself, “God works so slowly!” *(Laughter)* “You know, it kind of irritates me. I’d like Him to work a little faster than he does.”

Can you imagine God coming to this man who at this moment in time is in his 70s, and saying, “Now I’ve got a plan. We’re going to turn you into a nation, brother!” *(Laughter)* “And we’re going to wait a little while to do it, till you’re about a hundred.” *(Laughter)* “And then we’re going to start growing this nation.”

I mean, in my mind I laugh at that, until it comes to my own life. And then I say, “Could You hurry this up?” *(Laughter)* You know? “I have how many years left, right? C’mon!”

And yet this is the amazing thing. God is going to bring about the gospel to the entire world through His plan. And that plan begins with Abram and his family. *“I will make you a great nation, and make you a blessing.”*

Now there are three promises that God gives in Genesis chapter 12 that are significant for the Abrahamic covenant. He promises him a land. He promises to fill that land with people for a nation. And then that land and people will become a blessing to all the earth, to all the peoples of the earth. In other words, the ruling family will be a blessing to all families. That’s the idea, okay? So those three promises are very significant.

And if you read the rest of your Bible, one of the things that you’ll notice is that this Abrahamic promise comes up over and over and over again. In fact, I’m going to point out to you that when we get to Jacob, when we get to the wrestling match with Jacob in Genesis 32, what does the man plead? He pleads the Abrahamic promise. I’ll show you that when we get there. But these three promises are part of that Abrahamic covenant. Yes?

**Matt Reichert:** Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes?

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**Matt:** For our Muslim brothers and sisters, they love Abraham. You mentioned that Abraham had already accepted the covenant of grace in Genesis 3. How would you address or approach a Muslim from that?

**Jeff:** Yes. I'll tell you what. I'm going to say something about that. But let me do it in just a little bit, okay? Because I have that in mind.

So three promises. Let's talk about *the covenant* for a minute. Now you have heard me talk about this covenant before. This covenant in Genesis 15 is a Hittite treaty covenant.

Now let me just say this to you. The interesting thing about God is that when He does something He doesn't do something absolutely, totally new. So for instance, when He sets the rainbow in the sky, He says to Noah, not “Watch as I make the rainbow.” No. He says, “Do you see that rainbow that just came after the rain? Well, that's going to be a sign to you and Me. It's going to be a sign to you that I'll not flood this earth again to destroy it by water.”

And when God cuts a covenant with Abraham, He doesn't say, “Now let Me reconstruct the wheel for you and cut a covenant for you. And let me explain what that covenant is.” No. This would have been a treaty covenant that would have been very familiar to Abram. In other words, he would have understood exactly what God was doing.

For instance, did you ever read that story where Abram—Abraham now!—is trying to buy a burial plot for his wife Sarah? It's Mach-Pelah. And he says to the guy, “Hey, I want to buy your land.”

And the guy says, “Oh no, just take it.”

And Abraham says, “No no, I want to buy it.”

And he says, “Well, what is that to me? You take it. It's only worth x amount of dollars.”

And Abraham says, “No no no! I want to buy it.” And there's this exchange.

What's happening there? This is the way that Middle Easterners negotiate the price. I had a friend of mine who was from the Middle East. And he was an intern of mine for two years.

I felt so inferior in the pulpit because whenever he would get up, he would explain the Middle Eastern traditions behind all of the things that happened in the Bible. You know, I always felt like I had to be a Middle Easterner to know this. (*Laughter*) But you know, these things are brought to life, right? And so maybe just like we don't understand what's happening with this burial plot, Abraham did. And anybody from the Middle East would.

And so it is the case with this treaty covenant. When God says this to Abram, He says, “Now here's what I want you to do. I want you to find all these animals and I want you to kill them. And then I want you to cut them down the middle, at least the big ones. And you don't have to cut the birds in half. And then what I want you to do is that I want you to arrange them so that they're in rows. I want you to arrange the animals so that each half is on this side and this side and this side and this side. And then I want you to arrange it so that the blood flows down into a path. And then what I want you to do is that I want you to walk through that path.”

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Now my point is that Abram would have understood exactly what God was telling him, because this is a treaty covenant that you find in the Middle East. And so why does God do it? God is saying to him, “I am the Suzerain. I am the King. And you are the vassal, you are the servant. And here’s what we’re going to do. I’m going to announce who I am. I’m going to give you the preamble. I’m going to talk to you about what I’ve done in the prologue. I’m going to give you the stipulations of what you’re supposed to do. I’m going to talk to you about the provisions for this treaty to be remembered from one generation to the next, and so on. I’m going to talk to you about how I can’t swear by anybody greater than Myself. So I shall swear by Myself that I will keep this covenant with you,” and so on. All of these things are involved.

Now what was supposed to happen is this. The suzerain, the king, was supposed to say all these things. And then the vassal was supposed to walk between the halves. And in walking between the halves he would get blood on his robes and everything. And in effect he was saying, “If I do not keep all of the stipulations of this covenant, may I be like those dead animals. May I be ripped asunder like those dead animals. And if I do keep the stipulations of this covenant, may I reap all of the blessings of my relationship with you, oh king.” That’s the idea.

Now here is the thing that you have to remember. *Abram does not walk through the halves*. God appears in a smoking firepot, places Abram in a deep sleep, and the Theophany, the appearance of God, passes through those halves! In other words, God is saying to this servant of His, “I will secure for you the blessedness of this covenant.”

**Don Nemit:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Had Abram been allowed to walk through those halves, God would have had to strike him dead from the moment he emerged. Why? What happens right after this? Abram sins! Abram would not have been able to keep the stipulations of this covenant. So God appears and says, “I am going to keep the stipulations of this covenant on your behalf.” This, brothers, is the gospel!

**Don Nemit:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Now I want to tell you something. I want to show you something just so you can see it. Go with me to Hebrews chapter 10. Now I remember walking through this with you at that time. But maybe now it will become a little bit more clear to you.

It’s in Hebrews chapter 10 verse 19. And it says this. “*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Holy Places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh.*”

Now I want you to think about this for a second: a new way and a living way. That word *new* means *freshly killed, or not yet decomposed*. And *living* means obviously *living*.

Now Jesus is a newly killed and living way. That’s a way for the author of Hebrews to speak about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Look at it. This new and living way, this new and living path, (because *way* could be translated *path*), this newly killed and living path that He opened through what? We think about the curtain of the temple being rent. But that’s not what the text says. The text says that it’s the curtain of His body that was rent. In other words, what is he doing? He’s bringing up this imagery of the



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Abrahamic covenant, where God assumes the penalty that should have been assumed by Abram. And because He assumes it, it's as if He has broken the covenant. And remember what the consequence of breaking the covenant was. It was that His flesh would be rent like the animals. And now you have this imagery of Christ's flesh rent like the temple curtain.

And so what he's doing is that he's drawing us back to the Abrahamic covenant, reminding us that it was God who shouldered the responsibility to keep obedience and bear the penalty. And we see that in the life of Jesus Christ.

Then you notice that he fails right after that. (*Laughter*) He comes out. His wife says, “Look. Maybe God would have it that we have a son through my maidservant. So let me give you Hagar. Sleep with her. Have a child. That child can be the child of the promise. See, every body's happy.” And everybody wasn't happy. God doesn't speak to Abram for thirteen years after that incident.

But notice this. This is really the kicker. This is Genesis 3 and the Fall, and Genesis 16. Notice the verbal parallels. “*The woman said.*” And so “she—Sarah—said.” Verse 17: “*You listened to your wife,*” right? And Abram listened to Sarai. “She took some.” Sarah took. She took some fruit; Sarah took her maidservant. “*She also gave some fruit to her husband.*” “*She gave Hagar to her husband.*”

The verbal parallels between Genesis 3 and Genesis 16 are striking. And what God's inspired writer Moses is doing is that he's reminding us that this is the fruit of the Fall.

Now here's the deal. This is the thing that I want you to catch. So Genesis 15 is the covenant. God says, “I'll secure your blessedness.” It's a good thing, because Genesis 16 is failure.

In Genesis 17 God comes along and says, “*I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless.*” Thirteen years later God appears to him after he's had this failure and says, “Now walk before Me and be blameless.”

What does that mean? That means that God has changed the whole program, and now it's fully on the basis of obedience. No! (*Laughter*) No! No, it's not! What He's saying is this. He's saying that it's always, always, always on the basis of promise. And law does not nullify promise!

I want to tell you something. Let me give it to you in a straightforward manner. I'm talking about your kids. Your kids are your kids. Now here's the deal. You tell your kids, “I love you no matter what. But I will punish you.” Right? “But I won't disown you. I'm not going to kick you out.”

And you see, that's the point. The point is that Abram is disobedient. But he is by faith a son of God. And God is saying to him, “As My son you need to have a certain behavior about you. And I'm going to work it into you. You're going to behave. You're going to act in a certain way, not because you can earn anything before me because you can't. But this is part and parcel of the covenant. I save, you act like I save by obedience to Me.” That's the idea.

So that's how we should read Genesis 17. Now God comes along and He says this. He says, “Look, I'm going to change your name from Exalted Father to Father of Many

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Nations—Abraham. And guess what we’re going to do, Abraham? I’m going to give you a sign for the covenant.”

“Really, God? What is it?”

“Circumcision!” (*Laughter*)

**Brave Man:** Wow!

**Jeff:** Yeah. Can you imagine the excitement? (*Laughter*) Man! Can you imagine Abraham telling his 318 men, “Guys, gather round!” (*Laughter*) Oh yes, this is an exciting time. (*Laughter*)

**Ron Baling:** It’s like that salute in baseball. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** All right. So *the fruit of failure and the triumph of faith*. Let’s walk through this. I want you to think about Lot for a minute, Lot in Sodom. We think to ourselves, *Lot in Sodom saved by a thread*. He’s often used by people as the example of the guy who is saved and shouldn’t be saved.

Now here’s the deal. Is that the way we ought to use him? I mean, it’s Lot and Abram. They have to part ways because the land can’t sustain them both. And so Abram says to Lot, “You pick which way you want to go, and I’ll go the other way.” And Lot picks the beautiful valley wherein is Sodom. And he wants to go there. And oftentimes commentators say, “Do you see there? Lot is looking with his eyes. He doesn’t see with faith.”

And I think that’s wrong. I don’t think that’s right. I think Lot chose what he thought was a good place to go. And I think Abraham went in the other direction.

I think that we do ourselves an injustice when we talk about Lot being saved by a thread. Let me give you some evidence for why I say that.

Notice that in the story we find Lot sitting at the gate. Who sits at the gate? The judge. Judges sit at the gate. And remember, even the people, when they come to the house to take the strangers, what do they say to Lot? They say, “You know, you came here as a sojourner, and have made yourself judge over us all.” So they understand that he’s trying to bring some law and order to the city.

But then the clincher for me is in 2 Peter 2:7-8, where he is called “righteous” three times.

**Transcriber’s Note:** 2 Peter 3:7-8, ESV. “*And if He rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over the lawless deeds that he saw and heard.)*”

**Jeff:** Righteous Lot was tormented in his righteous mind. So I don’t think that we can say that Lot was saved by the skin of his teeth. I think Lot was a righteous man who goes to Sodom, sits at the gate as judge trying to bring some law and order to the place.

But you say, “Wait a minute! Hold on just a second! He’s willing to give his daughters to these guys! And what happens next? He has a drunken incest thing with his two daughters! Now do you want to testify to that?”

I sure do. How about Noah’s drunkenness right after the Flood! He creates a vineyard and gets drunk! Guess what, guys? Righteous people sin, too. And they’re not saved by their own righteousness.

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**Don Maurer:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Righteous people who are saved are saved by the righteousness of Someone else, namely Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament that righteousness was believing in the promise of the gospel. For us it's looking back to Jesus as the culmination of all the covenants, the righteousness that God provides. If we are saved, it is on the basis of Christ's righteousness, and not our own.

Our lives are continually trying to catch up with the righteousness of Christ. And we'll spend the rest of our lives trying to catch up. And guess what? We'll sin in the meantime. And so there's no difference between Noah and Lot and even Abraham in this regard. Nor is there any difference between them and us. Yes?

**Tom Hansz:** Isn't the big difference between Lot and Abraham that Lot acted on his senses, what he could see and hear?

**Jeff:** I don't believe so.

**Tom:** And that Abraham acted on his faith in the promise?

**Jeff:** I don't believe so, because the promise was given to Abram, not to Lot.

**Tom:** Right.

**Jeff:** And so Abram says to Lot, “Go wherever you want.” And so Lot takes the best of the land. Who can fault him for that?

**Tom:** Didn't that matter to Abraham?

**Jeff:** It didn't matter to Abraham. God was going to give it all to him. So Abraham is no different. He says in Genesis 12, “Hey, she's my sister.” It gets him into trouble. In Genesis 16 the Ishmael thing happens. In Genesis 20 he again says to Abimelech, “Hey, she's my sister, not really my wife.” It gets him into trouble again. I mean, this guy is not by any stretch of the imagination perfect.

But here's the deal. The deal is this. You know what? Maybe I need to answer your question (*Matt's question*) about the Muslims. The question was, what about the Muslims?

Look at Genesis 17. Now I'll tell you what verse I'm in. But the Muslims oftentimes will say, well wait a minute! We both have Abraham as father. In fact, so do the Jews. And oftentimes this is where you get the idea amongst people that Muslims, Jews and Christians are all worshiping the one and the same God.

Now there's a different answer for that with regard to Christ. But with regard to the Muslims it is very clear in 17:19. God said, “*No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son.*” This is after he asks for the promise to be brought to fulfillment through Ishmael. “*And you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.*”

And then verse 21. “*I will establish My covenant with Isaac, who Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.*” In other words, the reason why Muslims and Christians are not brothers and sisters through Abraham is because they take their departure for Ishmael. And yet the Bible clearly says that the promise of Christ is through Isaac, and not through Ishmael. So that's the dividing line between the Christians and Islam.

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**Ron:** Isn't it true that many times that the Psalmist talks about Jacob first, because he is the final one out of the two brothers and out of the previous generations as the one who is paramount.

**Jeff:** Yes, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the patriarchal family.

**Ron:** And then Jacob had the twelve who are all part of it.

**Jeff:** That's right.

**Ted Wood:** And also I believe that the Muslims cover that by retelling the story so that Ishmael becomes the son of the promise. I don't know whether that's in the Qur'an or one of the commentaries. But they actually rewrite the story.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don Maurer:** In the Qur'an it talks about Ishmael being sacrificed as opposed to Isaac.

**Jeff:** That's right.

**Ted:** So if you don't like the book, rewrite it.

**Jeff:** Yes. And it was really Muhammad who did that. He went to the Jewish people with different Old Testament stories, and they rejected it as a result of that.

So in Genesis 22, here again we have the gospel. This is the strange story of God telling Abraham to take his son, the son whom he loves, Isaac, to a mountain where he will show him, and sacrifice him there. Abraham does it and God stays his hand, and then reiterates the Abrahamic promise to him, that He will make him a great nation, and so on. And in Hebrews 11 this is where we learn that Abraham had confidence that even if he did have to put Isaac to death that God could resurrect him from the dead. Why? Because God “*swore by no one greater than Himself*”, that He would bring about the Abrahamic covenant. And so “*The LORD will provide*” is this wonderful theme upon which Genesis 22 is built.

Really quickly, *the family of Abraham*. You see Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac marries Rebecca. The line continues through Isaac. He has Esau and Jacob. Jacob marries Leah and Rachel and two concubines. Leah is really the true wife, not only because she's the first wife, but because she is the mother of—

**Ted:** Israel.

**Jeff:** Israel. Thank you. (*Laughter*) And then you have the twelve tribes of Israel. And so we have Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then the twelve tribes. So just real quick there.

And then *the heirs of the covenant*. Let's talk about some of these. If you look at Isaac and Jacob, I'm not going to spend time here. I was going to do this, but if you look at Romans 9:5-13, the first part of that tells you why Isaac is elect. The second part tells you why Jacob is elect.

**Transcriber's Note:** Romans 9:5-13, ESV. “*To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*

*“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. And not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring. But ‘through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ This means that it is not the*

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*children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.*

*“For this is what the promise said: ‘About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.’ And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children through one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born, and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God’s purpose in election might continue, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’”*

**Jeff:** But both of the reasons are so that God’s purpose in election might stand. So Isaac and Jacob are elect of God.

That is not to say—and this is part of the story that really sort of resonates with us, with those of us who have a sense of the reality of sin as we engage in life and as we seek to raise our families--but in the families there is favoritism.

I mean, think about this. Isaac’s favorite was who?

**Brave Man:** Esau.

**Jeff:** Esau. And Rebekah’s favorite was who?

**Don Maurer:** Jacob.

**Jeff:** Jacob. And there is all kinds of deception that takes place as a result of that.

And then look. Jacob’s favorite is Joseph and then Benjamin. So favoritism is rampant in this story, and doesn’t actually get broken until Joseph. It’s in the Joseph story that the sin of favoritism comes to an end. It’s really striking that that’s the besetting sin of the patriarchal family, at least as it’s recorded in Scripture.

The life of Jacob is really a mess in some ways, right? This guy is a deceiver. Esau is dumb. I mean, he really is. You just look at Esau and you go, “Ohhhh!” *(Laughter)* He comes out of the woods, you know what I mean? Here’s the huntsman. He comes out of the woods. He wants some stew. “Oh, those lentils look good!” *(Laughter)*

And Jacob goes, “How ‘bout your birthright!” *(Laughter)*

And he’s like “Okay!” Then Jacob steals the blessing.

This is the interesting thing. Once he steals the blessing, they say, “We gotta get him out of here.” Rebecca is worried about him. Esau is going to kill him. She says, “Send him to my uncle. I hate these Canaanite women that Esau is bringing around here.”

“All right. We’ll send him to your uncle, and there he can find a wife.” Now he goes to Laban.

Now remember, Laban is a swindler too. And it says in that story that Jacob had told him all that had transpired thus far.

And what is Laban’s response right after that? “You are bone of my flesh.” *(Laughter)* He’s not saying, “Ah, my sister’s boy!” No, what he’s saying is, “You and I have the same besetting sin, son.” *(Laughter)* “And I’m gonna show you who is the deceiver among deceivers.”

**Don Nemit:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And he does, doesn’t he? *(Laughter)* He says, “I sure do like your younger daughter!”

And he goes, “Oh, sure, you can marry her.”

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Seven years work. The wedding night comes about after seven years, and guess who he’s married to? The older! And then Jacob comes to him and says, “Hey, this isn’t what I bargained for.”

And Laban puts his arm around him and says, “Bone of my flesh, we don’t do that around here.” (*Laughter*) Isn’t that great? (*Laughter*) I mean, you couldn’t make this up! It’s just great stuff! (*Laughter*) Anyway, this is life! The Bible doesn’t polish anything! This is why we need a Savior, you know? (*Laughter*)

All right. Here is the thing. Here’s the thing I want you to catch. And I’ll try to end here. In Genesis 28, when Jacob sets out, when his mother is worried that Esau is going to kill him, when he sets out, he stops at Peniel, the house of God, Bethel. And God says to him, “I’m going to make you a great nation.” What is that? That’s the Abrahamic covenant.

In Genesis 32 he hears that Esau is coming. And so he wrestles with God in prayer at the Jabbok River. And what does he do? In 9-12 Jacob says, “You said You would make me a great nation.”

**Transcriber’s Note:** Genesis 32:9-12, NKJV. *“Then Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you’: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”*

**Jeff:** In other words, he prays the covenant back to God because he is fearing for his life. And what happens is that he’s a changed man after that point. In fact, what you see him doing is what? Repenting.

Now think about this. He’s changed. He bows to Esau. Why does he do that? Because you have to go back to Genesis 27. What was the blessing that he received as the deceiver that Esau should have received as the firstborn? That kings would bow to him, that everyone would bow to him. And what he’s doing by bowing to Esau is saying, “You should have gotten this covenant.”

And then this is what he says to him. You’ve got to see it. Go to Genesis 33. In 33:11 Jacob says to Esau, *“Please accept my.”* Some prefer to say *“gift,”* but it’s not *gift*. *“Please accept my blessing that is brought to you.”* In other words, “I’m bowing to you because you deserve this as the firstborn. And I’m giving back the blessing of abundance to you.”

We see that Jacob is a changed man after he wrestles with God at the Jabbok in chapter 32.

Why Genesis 34? That’s the whole incident with Dinah. Remember the whole incident where the whole city says, “Hey, we want your women?”

And they say, “Well, you’ve got to get circumcised.” And so they circumcise the city, and two of the brothers go in and slaughter the whole city. Why? Because if you read in Genesis 34, they stop short of Bethel. And that is where Jacob was supposed to return.

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And so in 35:1 isn't it interesting that God says, *“Arise and go to Bethel?”* In other words, chapter 34 is a shortcoming, because Jacob should never have been where he was. He should have gone to Bethel. But he didn't go all the way to Bethel.

And then God comes right before he dies and changes his name, and says, “Your name is no longer Jacob, but Israel.” And so then we'll start next time from there. But any questions? No? Okay, let's pray.

Father in heaven, thank You for this day, for the time You've given. Bless us, Lord, as we continue to walk through Your word. And we pray that we'll not only be blessed in understanding the message of it, but also that we'll learn from the figures, these historical figures who were walking the walk of faith, and not only doing it well, but as they looked to the promised Redeemer they had salvation. Father, let us rejoice in that common Redeemer, for we pray in His name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)