

SERMON

**IS ANYTHING TOO HARD
FOR THE LORD?**

June 14, 2020



SCRIPTURE READING

**Genesis 18:1-15 and
21:1-7**



“1 ¶ And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.

2 He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth

3 and said, “O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.”

Genesis 18:1-15 (ESV)



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“4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree,

5 while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.”

6 And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.””

Genesis 18:1-15 (ESV)



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“7 And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly.

8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9 ¶ They said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “She is in the tent.””

Genesis 18:1-15 (ESV)



“10 The LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.

Genesis 18:1-15 (ESV)



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12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?””

“13 The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’”

14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Genesis 18:1-15 (ESV)



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“But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”” (Ge 18:15 ESV)

Genesis 18:1-15 (ESV)



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SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 21:1-7



“1 ¶ The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised.

2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.

3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.”

Genesis 21:1-7 (ESV)



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“4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

6 And Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.””

Genesis 21:1-7 (ESV)



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“And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”” (Ge 21:7 ESV)

Genesis 21:1-7 (ESV)



THESE ARE THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

**WE PRAISE YOU BECAUSE NOTHING IS TOO HARD
FOR YOU!**

AMEN



People searching for their ancestry from way back is now a big moneymaker. In fact, we see it advertised often in prime time on television.

On the computer @ancestry.ca we read the following:

“Get to know the missing details of your family’s story—and get to know you.”

(from <https://www.ancestry.ca/>)



Knowing where we come from helps us to know our physical identity. What is most important is knowing our spiritual identity rooted in God.

Today, we are going to consider the life of Abraham. Abraham’s life was rooted in God just as ours is. We are going to consider how God worked with him. It will give us some understanding also about how he is working with his people now!

As disciples of Jesus, it has been revealed to God's word that when we come to faith in Jesus that we are "the adopted children of God".

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”” (Ro 8:15 ESV)



We are children now but the experience of the full reality will be in the future. (Next slide)

“And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Ro 8:23 ESV)



We are presently the adopted children of God in the ascended perfect, resurrected man Jesus, who is both God and Man in his one person.

We are also descendents of Abraham through faith as Abraham is the father of the faithful. **“He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,” (Ro 4:11 ESV)**

So how did God begin to work with Abraham.

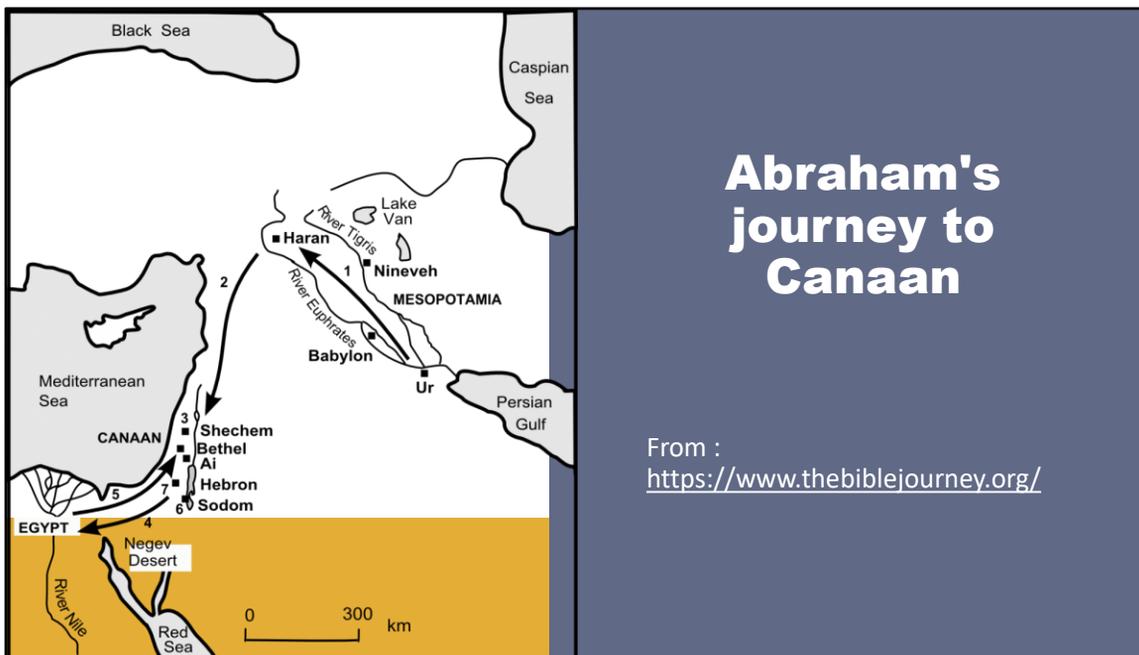
Abraham did not seek God, God chose Abraham.

Before God began to work with him, like the others in his generation, he did not know who God was. God had to reveal himself to him. Only God can reveal God.

He was born east of Mediterranean Sea in a place called Ur of the Chaldees. The name of his father was Terah. He had two brothers who are named in the Bible, Nahor and Haran. His name at that time was Abram. He married the daughter of

Haran, his half-sister Sarah.

God began to work with him when he was 75 years old. God asked him to leave his place of origin to move to Canaan travelling through Shechem and Bethel. (next slide - map)



Abraham's journey to Canaan

From : <https://www.thebiblejourney.org/>

It was quite a long way from Ur and Haran to Canaan.

Abraham did not exactly know where he was going when he left Haran. He trusted God to guide him.

It is important to remember that God knows the end from the beginning. As human beings, we see through a mirror darkly. We do not know for sure what is going to happen tomorrow. Consequently, we do our best to plan and to make right decisions given our circumstances. Our vision of tomorrow being hopeful but blurred, with the best of intentions, we all make mistakes just like Abraham did.

Abraham's journey was fraught with some difficulties. When he arrived at Bethel, because of a famine, he descended into Egypt.

Sarai's beauty became a problem for Abram. In fact, she was so beautiful that he feared that when the Pharaoh of Egypt would see her, his life would be in danger. He feared being killed so that Pharaoh could have her as his wife. To save his life, Abraham told the Egyptians that Sarai was not his wife but his sister. Sarai agreed with the plan.

God in his gracefulness allowed Abram to become physically rich. Pharaoh faced all kinds of problems not knowing the truth of Sarai's marital status. The Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his household with great plagues because of Sarai, Abraham's wife.

When Pharaoh kicked Abraham out of Egypt with Sarai his wife, he let Abraham take with him all the riches the Pharaoh had given him, sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys and camels. Abraham left Egypt a physically rich man. The unseen hand of God was present.

When Abraham left his father's house to go where God would guide him, he promised that he would make Abraham a great nation and that he would bless him and make his name great. Abraham would be a blessing. He would be a blessing to those who blessed him and to those who would dishonor Abraham, God would curse (Gen 12).

The promise was enormous because God said that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham.

As the event in Abram's and Sarai's life unfolded, God changed their names to Abraham (meaning "father of a multitude" or "chief of multitude" —Strong's Concordance) and Sarah (meaning "noblewoman" —idem).

God also promised Abraham an offspring, a descendent who would be born to him and Sarah, a son who would receive the land that God showed him. This promise was both physical and spiritual. Of course, we know this descendent was pointing to Jesus. **"Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring', who is Christ".** (Ga 3:16 ESV)

There were a number of times when Abraham took things into his hands. Just like all of us, he suffered from spiritual myopia or shortsightedness. As a result, it got him into trouble in hot water.

Did God abandon him? Of course not!

Very patiently and mercifully, God continued to work with him and through him to accomplish his divine purpose.

Abraham lived in a certain culture. Just as we are influenced by our culture, Abraham was also influenced by his.

Since he was still childless and Sarah was getting older, he thought that he would make his servant Eliezer his heir.

We read about this conversation between God and Abraham in Genesis 15.

God reassures Abraham by telling him not to fear, that he God would be his protector and that he would be the recipients of a great reward. Abraham had questions.

“And Abram said, ‘Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.’” (Ge 15:3 ESV)

Again God reassured Abraham that his offspring would be the ancestor of multitudes of people (verse 5)

God again made the point that it would be his own biological son who would be his inheritor, his heir (vs. 4).

Abraham believed God that he would have an offspring. God then declared him a righteous.

Would being declared righteous by God cause Abraham to make no more mistakes?

Of course not. He had faith in God but he still had a very myopic and shortsighted view.

Abraham still had some questions. God very gently reassured him that what he told him would come to pass.

Abraham asked for proof that what God was saying would be so. Abraham still had some questions. **“But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”” (Ge 15:8 ESV)**

God very gently reassured him that what he told him would come to pass. God gave him proof by telling him to bring a heifer, three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove and a young pigeon (verse 9).

Then Abraham fell into a deep sleep and behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. And God told him, **“Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years.” (Ge 15:13 ESV) (verse 13) ... as the sun went down a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch to passed**

between these pieces and burn them all (verse 17) .

Then God restated his promise.

This certainly shows God's grace and mercy towards Abraham.

Three times in the Bible, Abraham is called God's friend!

Abraham was still childless 10 years after entering Canaan. Since Sarah was childless, she thought and she convinced Abraham that to have his own offspring, he would have to go with another woman. Sarah thought she had the solution and obviously Abraham agreed!

Sarah gave him her servant, Hagar whom Abraham took as his second wife. She bore him a son named Ishmael. By this time, Abraham was in his mid-80s. He thought Ishmael was his promise inheritor. Ishmael was not the son of promise. As Galatians 4 tells us, he was born of the flesh. He was not the son of the promise.

Again God in his graciousness promise Hagar that her son Ishmael would have so many descendents then they could not be numbered. **"The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." (Ge 16:10 ESV)**

Being shortsighted and impatient, Abraham and Sarah took things into their own hands. At first, Abraham thought that Eliezer would be his heir. Now they both thought it would be Ishmael. Abraham was wrong on both occasions.

Did God condemn Abraham? He did not.

However, as we read the story, Abraham's family became very fractured and troubled because of his shortsighted decision. He had to make the painful decision of sending Hagar and Ishmael away, away from him and Sarah. This must have been heart-wrenching for Abraham. Ishmael was his flesh and blood.

God continued to work with Abraham. He repeated the covenant promise to him on four occasions. (Genesis 12:1-4, Genesis 15, Genesis 17 and Genesis 18).

Again we see God's great patience with Abraham. He had a close relationship with him. In spite of Abraham's lack of vision, God continued to work with Abraham in a very gentle way.

At the age of 99, God told Abraham that in one year, at the age of 99, he would have

a son with Sarah. He laughed. (next slide)

“Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, ‘Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’” (Ge 17:17 ESV)



How did God respond to Abraham? With anger? With disgust? With condescension?

No!

This is what God gently said:

“19 God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation.

21 But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.”” (Ge 17:19-21 ESV)



God answered Abraham as a friend hearing his concerns while confirming his promise.

Sarah also laughed to herself when she heard the news that she would have a child, a humanly impossible. She was 90 years old!

God is the God of the humanly impossible!

“13 The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’

14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”” (Ge 18:13-14 ESV)



We can take great comfort by the way God worked with Abraham and Sarah!

I personally realize that I do not deserve the great promises that we find in the New Testament! None of us do.

How many of us have made bad judgment and sinned because of our myopic view and shortsightedness?

All of us!

How many of us do not have broken families?

All of us.

How many of us do not fight with the pull of the flesh and temptation to sin? How many of us do sometimes fall?

All of us

How many of us lack perfect wisdom?

All of us

How many of us think about the fact that being saints we will judge the world and angels one day? (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)

When we are so imperfect, do we find it hard to believe that one day we will be perfect, as we read in 1 John 3:1-3. "1 ¶ See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." (1 Jo 3:1-3 ESV)

When we look at the condition of the world, the wars, the bickering, the pride, the crimes, the violence and the abuses of all kinds, do we have a hard time to believe what we read in 2 Corinthians 5:19? and that millions will come to faith in Jesus accepting God's reconciliation.

"that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Co 5:19 ESV)?

Let us be encouraged and remember the words of Jesus. When we become discouraged and downhearted, let us remember how God worked with Abraham. Let us remember the words of Jesus. (next slide)

“24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”

26 But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”” (Mt 19:24-26 ESV)



Let us pray!