

Grace Bible Church
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.

The Tree of Life from the week ending 03/09/08

The Abrahamic Covenant. Part 3.

God must remove from our reach the things that hinder our spiritual growth.

We are now ready to study the promises made to Abraham which has to do with the Abrahamic Covenant. Gen 11:29-32, *Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. Sarai was barren; she had no child. Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.* So Terah, Abraham's father is dead. This was a great adversity for Abram or Abraham, however, under the plan of grace, great adversities can become great blessings. Abraham is about to receive one the greatest blessings of his life, the Abrahamic Covenant. The death of Terah was a shock which brought about the recovery from reversionism for Abram, and removed Abram from Haran (the dried up place). The principle is that God must remove the things that hinder our spiritual growth. Often what seems to be a demotion in the eyes of the world is actually a promotion in the eyes of God. Heb 12:27 *This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.* Many times the Lord will take people or things away from us so that we will learn the value of the eternal things which we possess. Heb 12:28 *Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; We have an unshakable kingdom! We should not only be thankful, but also overflowing with worship, and deep reverence before God, for God is not an indifferent bystander.* Heb 12:29 *for our God is a consuming fire.* He's actively cleaning house, and He won't quit until it's all cleansed. Rom 8:29 tells us, *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;"* This message is designed for the soul and the human spirit to feed on Christ, not just on His teachings, He is the One to be truly worshipped. Phi 2:9 *"Therefore also the God has highly exalted Him to the maximum, and bestowed on Him the name or rank which is above every name, and that every tongue should acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, resulting in the glory of God the Father."* When you think in this manner, then passages like Psa 45:11 become a reality; *"Then the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him."* Accept your thoughts of despair and of faith, your doubts and their solutions, your moments of madness and their passing away. Become a part of the solution not the problem. Remember that the only opportunity you have to glorify Him and live His plan for your life is in time. Like Job, be determined only to cling to God, even if He slays you, even if He challenges your faith (Job 13:15). If you lose your faith, then remain faithfully His. Paul said in 2Ti 3:1 *"But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come."* As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, self-promoting, slanderers, addicted to lust, and allergic to God. The Bible says stay clear of these people. Peter said in 1Pe 4:12 *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;"* When life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Be glad that you have the opportunity to taste a little bit of what the Lord Jesus Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner (1Pe 4:14-17). Remember, people are watching how you handle sacrificing your life, death or eternity. Mat 5:16 *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* Be generous with your lives. Open up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, the generous Father in heaven. The point is that we all need to go through situations when we are alone with God and get down into solitary confinement with Him. Mat 11:28-30, *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your*

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souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.” He brings gifts into our lives, things like affection for others, exuberance about life, and serenity. Life has its share of trials and adversities, but as Joh 16:33 says, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

So, we now go back and review the Divine command given to Abram when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, and this is the Abrahamic covenant. Gen 12:1-3, *Now the Lord had said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

Abram not only needs to be separated from certain people, but he also must be in the environment of freedom for spiritual growth to occur. That's why the doctrine of privacy is so important, we are to let others grow at their own pace not ours. So in Gen 12:1 *the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;”* This is the breaking up of a family, always remember that God has the right to make up and break up families. God broke up Abram's family, but a new family will be made from which will come a great race and a great nation, the Jewish race or the nation of Israel. After salvation the believer has two obligations to God: The first of these obligations is a negative, responsibility to separate from the distractions to the intake of Bible doctrine. This is the only way you will ever remain faithful to doctrine and acquire spiritual growth. The second of these obligations is positive, the responsibility of executing God's will under the principle of Divine guidance. This always calls for maximum doctrine resident in the soul.

In Gen 12:1 the term *“to the land”* which in the Hebrew phrase *el-ha'arets* means literally *the land of God*. There is only one land and simply leaving Ur is not getting into the land. That's the story of a lot of believers, they leave the world and the bad habits that they have developed, but they never go forward to the promise land, the land of doctrine and glorification of God. Not only is Abraham going to see the land, but he is going to enjoy the land. So the whole verse says Gen 12:1 *Now the Lord had said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will cause you to see and to enjoy;”*

Notice something very interesting about the Divine command. The specifics are all on the part of certain things you have to do, the negatives. For example, Get out of Ur, get away from your family, and your father. Then there are the positives, *“go to the land which the Lord will show you.”* While the land is specified as to direction, there is certainly no detail here that encourages obedience. Abram is not given all of the Divine promises that he will receive if he goes to the promise land, he is just giving the direction to go in, as God does to us at times. There are many commands in the Bible that we are told to obey without God telling us what type of blessings we will receive if we fulfill them. This requires faith in the character and nature of God. Therefore you have to have faith that if you do what God wants you to do, that you will get blessed. However, that is not to be your motivation, your motivation should be Phi 1:21 *“For me, living is Christ, likewise dying is profit.”* Or Phi 3:7-8, *“But whatever quality of things were gains to me, those things.[gains] I have concluded as an expert as loss for the sake of Christ. Not only this but more than this, I conclude as an expert all things [Paul's pre-salvation human achievement] to be loss because of the surpassing greatness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have forfeited all things, also, I keep on concluding as an expert them to be piles of dung in order that I may win for Christ.”*

When someone in authority over you gives you an order, you don't have to know the whys all the time, just do it. Until Abram becomes a good recruit, where he will go ahead and obey an order without questioning it, he's not any good to God. You have to learn to obey God and do it whether you feel like it or not. Once you do, you continue your spiritual growth. For Abram, not much is said about the land he is to go to, but to receive the land, Abraham will have to fulfill: Heb 11:8 *By means of doctrine resident in the soul, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.* This is the way in which faith is tested. What God does not make clear to us through personal revelation of His word to us, He intends for us to operate in by means of faith, trusting in the object of faith, God Almighty.

So, details are not given on the land yet, that will come later. In the spiritual realm there must be a relationship between your personal motivation and your spiritual life, the Bible calls this doing it as unto the Lord (Pro 16:2). So to believe the promises of God before you see the results of those promises is the greatest demonstration of growing up spiritually.

So, what is the Abrahamic Covenant? First of all, let's describe the word covenant. A covenant is an agreement between two parties. There are two types of covenants: conditional and unconditional. A conditional (bilateral) covenant is an agreement that is binding on both parties for its fulfillment. Both parties agree to fulfill certain conditions. If either party fails to meet their responsibilities, the covenant is broken and neither party has to fulfill the expectations of the covenant. An unconditional (unilateral) covenant is an agreement between two parties, but only

one party has to do something. The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional or unilateral covenant. God made promises to Abraham that required nothing of Abraham.

Gen 15:18-21 describes a part of the Abrahamic Covenant, specifically dealing with the dimensions of the land God promised to Abraham and his descendants. *On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."* The actual Abrahamic Covenant is found in Genesis 12:1-3. The ceremony recorded in Genesis 15 indicates the unconditional nature of the covenant, to understand this unilateral covenants, you need to understand the unconditional promises. Gen 15:1-7, *After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." And Abram said, "O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. And He said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."*

Here we see three pictures, all of which serves to illustrate the point that the One who made the covenant or the promises has the ability to keep them. The first one is the stars. You see, God has solved greater problems than Abraham's. There are millions and millions of stars in space all moving at unbelievable rates of speed. They do not collide, but hold their orbit. God has established a traffic pattern in the universe, this requires knowledge, and God has omniscience. It also requires power and God has the omnipotence to accomplish it. Immutability is also required, God cannot change, if He weakens, the universe collides! Col 1:16-17, *"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."* No matter how you look at it, if God has the power to hold the universe together, God has the power to handle any problem you or Abraham, or anyone ever had, or ever will have. So, not only has Abraham been promised an heir from his own loins but also he is told that even as the stars are innumerable, so will his seed be.

Then there is the promise of salvation (verse 6). This points back to a decision that Abraham had already made, he believed in the Lord, in fact Abraham had been saved for over twenty-five years, he had salvation. God is simply saying to Abraham "you trusted Me and at the time you believed, and I credited to your account My righteousness. I provided everything. I did the most for you at the point of salvation, providing eternal life and justification. You did not earn or deserve it, just as with the stars, I do the work." This passage also brings out faithfulness (verse 7). Gen 15:7 *And He said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."* In other words, "I been faithful to you in the past Abram, and I will continue to be faithful to you in the future." Has God been faithful to you in the past? As a part of God's faithfulness, He always provides the doctrine or the opportunity to get the doctrine necessary to pass each test before it comes. Bible doctrine is your way of escape from each test, and that doctrine is provided by the faithfulness of God. God will never give you something for which you do not have the capacity, be it blessing or testing. God is faithful to the Royal Family of God, this is why Heb 10:23 says *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;"* You have the most fantastic escrow blessings on deposit for you protected by the faithfulness of God. The more doctrine you have in your soul, the more you see God's perfect character, and the more you advance to spiritual maturity. This results in the things around you which was formerly distracting to your spiritual growth becoming less and less important. All of these illustrations point to One Person, and that Person is not only God, but also God the Son. God the Son is the One who went to the Cross, and God the Son is the One who provides for us in time. Understanding these illustrations and hearing the promises and the unconditional or unilateral covenants, there is no excuse for Abram, or any other believer, to worry about anything. Another cure for Abram's doubts and fears is the doctrine of the word of God, suggested in verses 8-11. Many believers are often filled with doubts, fears and anxieties because they are ignorant of certain parts of doctrine. Abram expresses ignorance of doctrine in verse 8, *And he said, "O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it?"* He entertained anxieties about the possibility of inheriting the land which God had promised him. Abram saw the land occupied by the Amorites, as well as many giants. Not only that, Chedorlaomer and his forces had been moving back and forth throughout the land, threatening to envelop it. Abram wondered how he could ever hope to inherit this land. Although it was humanly hopeless, it was not hopeless to God. Remember the words of our Lord in Mat 17:20 *"If you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain [a huge obstacle in your life], 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you."*

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Abram will learn a little bit later, the truth behind Gen 18:14 *“Is anything too difficult for the Lord?”* Abram was simply ignorant of or had rejected certain doctrines that would have given him assurance. The Lord said in effect, the biggest problem we have to deal with is the sin of worry and fear (Rom 14:23). The first thing Abram needs to do is to get back in fellowship with God under the enabling power of God the Holy Spirit. Therefore in Gen 15:9, *The Lord said to him, “Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”* This was not new or strange to Abram, because he knew how to chart the stars. Remember that before the scriptural record there was the Stellar record, the record or the witness of the stars. Abram knew about the witness of the stars. So, the first thing Abram needed to do was to rebound and confess his fear mentioned in verse 1, he also needed to confess his doubt in verse 2, his arrogance in blaming God in verse 3, and his lack of faith in God in verse 8. Then next, the Lord said *“Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”* The she-goat and the ram both spoke of the work of Christ in salvation. Specifically, the she-goat was the reconciliation offering, while the ram depicted propitiation. The turtle dove and the young pigeon spoke of the Person of Christ and His heavenly origin, the turtle dove portraying His deity and the pigeon His resurrected humanity. Neither bird was divided, because deity cannot be divided or killed. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ is never subject to death again, having risen, and therefore, there will be no dividing or killing of the young pigeon. Now, what was the Lord saying to Abram by bringing these doctrines of Christ before him? Through the heifer, or the rebound offering, He was saying, “Abram, you need have no worries with regard to your sins because by confessing them you are forgiven and your sins are blotted out.” The dumbest thing in the world is to try and cover our sins and conceal them. If you have an ounce of character, integrity or virtue, it bothers you. You're only lying to yourself. Therefore, there is no place for a guilt complex or for anxiety about past failures. If you are going to have any discipline in the future it will be over future sins. But be sure you offer the heifer, for it is absolutely necessary to rebound before you can get rid of your fears, worries, doubts and lack of faith in God. You see, up to now Abram was still worried. God had given him a promise and is about to give him a covenant, but he was still worried. He will keep on worrying, no matter if he has a thousand promises, because he has not used rebound. He has not confessed his sin of worry, and he is therefore out of fellowship. You cannot claim the promises of God and appropriate them when you're out of fellowship. You must first confess your sin of fear, worry, doubts and lack of faith in God.

Thus, Abraham offered the heifer, which is the rebound offering, because it was necessary to get back in fellowship before he could even claim the promises of God. So first of all Abraham had to confess his sins. Now, in Gen 15:10 we read, *Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.* Abram first divided the heifer, then the she-goat. The point is, if Jesus Christ provided reconciliation (the heifer or the rebound offering, the removal of the barrier between God and man), can He not meet our problems in time? He can, therefore, stop worrying. Then he divided the ram, the ram was the propitiation offering. The point is that if God the Son, hanging on the Cross, satisfied God the Father, and all of the Father's claims against us, can He not handle our problems in time? He can - therefore, stop worrying! The turtle dove spoke of the deity of Christ. Jesus Christ is God - deity. He is always faithful (immutable), He always keeps His Word (veracity), He keeps on loving us and He is eternal in nature. Can a Person like that solve my problems? He can, therefore, stop worrying. The young pigeon represented the resurrected humanity of Christ, which is seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us. If the humanity of Christ is thus engaged on our behalf, He can certainly meet our needs in time. Therefore, stop worrying.

As soon as Abraham divided, or cut the heifer in half, we know he had rebounded. When he walked between the pieces of the heifer, he was saying in effect, “I have confessed my sins.” When he killed the other animals, it was analogous to being under the blood of Christ trusting in Him as his Lord and Savior. Doctrine is vitally important in our lives, as believers, and when we are worried, it is because we are not using doctrine.