

Romans 4

Sunday 8/24/2008

If you are a visitor here today, let me just tell you what we have been doing here and try to put it in a context so you can grasp what we have been talking about and what we have been doing. We started the book of Romans a while back, and I have been building, coming through the book of Romans, showing our people how that book of Romans is the number one book in your life as a Christian that you have to get down. That really is the Christian's handbook for Bible doctrine. Everything that we need to know about the church, the way God deals with the church, is found in the book of Romans.

I have been systematically walking you through the chapters; we are up to chapter 4 now. We saw a couple of weeks ago how that the book of Romans is basically built around one doctrine, and then everything else adds in on top of that, though there are many doctrines in the book of Romans. The doctrine that it is dealing with is the doctrine of God imputing His righteousness to us when we did not deserve it and giving it to us by grace, nothing we could do to earn it.

We have seen that the book of Romans in that aspect is built around two men. We studied those two men, and we are in the process of studying the second one. We looked first of all at the life of David. We saw how that David was a picture of how God gave David His righteousness, did not take it from him, in the fact that David had committed two sins that under the Old Testament law demanded death, and there was nothing that could be done to take that away. God just intervened and gave him, as we saw in the Bible, what the Bible calls the sure mercies of David.

Then we began to talk about Abraham. I showed you how that Abraham represents the other side of the coin, where Abraham gets God's righteousness imputed to him, and it shows us the relationship. The Bible says if you want to find out how to get God's heart, study David. The Bible says that he was a man after God's own heart. If you want to study how to have a relationship with God, study Abraham. He is only one of two men in the Bible that are called the friend of God. If you want to wind up at the end of your life being God's friend and understanding what all that means, then listen carefully as we study Abraham and spend some time in it yourself, and you will really see how this thing works out.

I. God's Will, Plan, and Work

We had kind of like an introduction to Abraham last week, and I told you that a study of his life is absolutely necessary for you fulfilling God's plan in your life. Last week, you remember that we talked about the difference between God's plan and God's will for your life. We talked about how that many people do not understand the difference. They think they are one and the same, and of course, they are not.

We defined from the Bible last week God's will for your life as becoming more like Jesus Christ in everything that you do. Your job and my job as a Christian is every day to look at things a little bit different in life, look at them today more like God sees them than I see them. Tomorrow, I hope that your life and my life is changed a little bit, maybe by being here this morning, or maybe by just God in your own personal relationship, that when you wake up tomorrow

morning, you think a little bit differently. You do not look at circumstances, people, situations in life and think the way that you are thinking today. You begin to put into your life and see the circumstances as God sees it. That is really the key.

Then we talked about the fact that God's will for your life is spiritual. It is what you do inwardly with God that produces God's plan for your life. We talked about God's plan is something that you do, and in a general sense, that is true. But I am going to add a third part to that today, and we are going to talk about it, and that is:

1. The will of God: We know that that is spiritual. We all have the same concept.
2. The plan of God: That is in an overall sense what God wants you to do with your life.
3. The work of God: Let me explain the difference between the plan of God and the work of God.

When I talk about the plan of God, and I know I said it is something that you do, and it is, but it is more than just something, a particular thing you do. It is understanding the time element that you live in right now. I do not know if you know it or not, but we are living today in 2008. We are living in a time that is unprecedented in almost the history of man. I do not know if you understand the gravity of how close we are to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you would go back in history, and the Bible breaks down the history of the church into seven different time periods, you would find that in every period of church history, the church, much like you and I, were up against a set of issues. There was a predominating spirit or a predominating force that was in that particular period that those Christians had to deal with. The Christians getting the victory in their life as far as a church is concerned, as far as doing what God wants this church to do, was understanding where you fit into God's plan.

Do you ever stop and ask yourself why God allowed you to be born when He was born? I was born June 14, 1950. I have asked myself many, many times, why did He have me born in 1950? In God's plan and scheme of things, why did He allow me to be born in 1950? What purpose did He have for me in His overall scheme of things or His overall plan? What did He want to accomplish in my life that in the sovereignty of God, if we use that term, in God's all-knowing and God's overall plan of everything, why did He pick and allow me to be born?

I guarantee you it was just no biological accident that God, Sid, Frank, and Ruth Alexander decided to get married and have some kids. They were going to just say, "Well, you are just going to have Bob in June 14, 1950." No, no, God's plan is more specific than that. God exactly knew, like He saw Abraham. He knew exactly who I was. He knew exactly what He wanted me to do in my life. The only question was, would I do it?

When you understand God's plan for your life, that it is more about what you do, it is about, do you understand where you are living at today? You know what the biggest problem with some of your lives are today? You do not understand the urgency of the hour we live in. Some of God's people today are living their lives like you have got 50, 60, 70, 80 years. God's people are living their lives like the Lord is not ever coming back. They are living their lives like the main goal of our lives as a church is to get everything we can and hold on to it as long as we can get our

fingers around it. Of course, that is totally a breakdown of what God's plan is. We do not understand the urgency. We do not understand the urgency because we do not understand the time element that we are living in compared to God's overall plan. That is what I mean when it talks about the plan of God.

Now let me define for you the work of God. Let me give you a great verse.

Philippians 1:6

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

That verse says the day you got saved, God began a good work in you. That good work has to do with exactly what God wants you to do. You look at this church. This church is, you know, we say, "Well, it is Old Paths Baptist Church," or we say, "Yeah, we go into church," or we talk about the church and its concept. But this church in its theological definition, this church in its Bible format, this church is God's work. This is what He has chosen to do in this city right here. I cannot speak for anybody else; I can only speak for us. This is what He has decided and called us to do. It is more than just a group of people. It is more than just the concept of the word church. This church is God's work, and it is within this church, this local New Testament assembly. That is the way God does it. God's program during the church age is the local New Testament church. This is the work of God.

Your work for God separates itself from the plan of God because the plan of God is you understanding the whole thing by which you work in. But your specific work will be in this church if this is where God has called you to serve. This is your work right here. This church is your conduit pipe for your work and fulfilling your work for God, much as it is fulfilling God's will for your life and God's plan for your life.

That is why when we teach the Bible, we teach it in three aspects:

4. I teach you spiritually how you are to prepare your inner man or your inner being to be God's friend and build into your life the relationship spiritually that fulfills God's will.
5. Once you do that, then I have the ability through Thursday night Bible study, our one-on-one times together, and I show you the plan of God. I show you the whole layout of what God's plan is. Why? Because I want you in this work of God to understand the big picture. I want you to realize that not only does God want you to have a relationship with Him, but He wants you to understand from Genesis to Revelation what He is doing and then where you fit into what He is doing.
6. Then I teach you how to be part of this work. I will take young men and young ladies that want to serve the Lord and want to do what is right with God, and I will bring them and put them into the different aspects of this ministry. Start you out slow and let you find your own way. God will show you. God will work with you. God will magnify and illuminate through what you do, and He will bring it to the point in your life.

Here is the great concept in Matthew. He says, "If you be faithful over the little things, I will make you ruler over the many things." It starts out in this church, your work of just doing what you can do, just taking the two hands that God has given you, and it may be as simple as going over there and putting up some walls. Maybe that is all you can do right now, but that is where you start. It may be just as simple as sitting down with discipling somebody. Maybe you could not preach like some of the guys going down at the Bible conference, but you can one-on-one sit down with somebody and disciple them. Everybody doing what they can do as far as recognizing their work as they understand the plan, as they fulfill God's will for their lives. When you got saved, God began a good work in you. You need to prepare yourself for that work. That is part of what we do around here, building into your life those three things: how to fulfill God's will, how to fulfill God's plan, and then ultimately to fulfill God's work for your life that He started in you.

II. Abraham's Life as a Model

We have been talking about Abram, and I told you that just as we study David in three aspects, we are going to study Abram in three aspects. The three aspects we are going to study him are:

7. We are going to look at him today as Abram.
8. Then we are going to look at him next week as Abraham. His name got changed. We are going to see why it got changed, what it represents in the Bible.
9. Then we are going to study him lastly as Abraham, the friend of God.

I told you that his life is a study of the progress. Everybody in this room, if you are saved this morning, every man and every woman, your life is pictured in the life of Abraham through the progress that he made or he did not make, through the struggles that he has to fulfill God's will and in time God's work and in time fulfill God's plan. What we see in his life is the obstacle that the devil throws in his path to stop him. You need to be realistic about your own life this morning. You need to understand some things, and I think that these messages will help you grasp some great truth here and help some of you that really want to do this and be everything that God wants you to be will help you get there.

You know the model in the Bible for your life and my life? It is very simple. I saw this a number of years ago. When you want to really get a model to get this thing down of getting God's will and getting God's plan and then fulfilling God's work down, you know what the model is in the Bible? The model in the Bible is the 12 apostles. Do you ever see this? This is one of the most amazing things you are ever going to see in your life.

You realize, and this may be a revelation to you, you realize when Jesus Christ came to this earth in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that His plan was not to live forever and to fulfill all the things that He wanted to do. When He wanted to reach the world with the gospel, you realize that it was not like that He came down here and He said, "Well, I have got these 12, and these 12 will get 12 more, and they will get 12 more, and I will just hang around here forever. I am just going to come back here, and I am going to lead this thing, and I am going to stay here and make sure the gospel gets to everybody in the world." That was not His plan.

Sometimes we think that it went that way for a while, and then the Lord said, "Well, you know what, there is trouble down in Jerusalem, and they are going to crucify you. Now they have got to do this. So tell your apostles that you are not going to be around anymore. So they are going to have to pick up the load and keep on going." That was never the plan. God never intended His Son to stay down here and to fulfill everything. Do you ever notice where Jesus said to the apostles, He says, "Greater things you will do than I do"? What did He mean by that?

I will tell you what He meant. God knew that He was going to allow His Son to be down here for three and a half years, and then He was going to take Him back to heaven because God knew that in that three and a half years He had trained 12 men, and those 12 men and the other ones around correspondingly that we do not know about, but those 12 men were ready now to fulfill what God's plan was and God's work was because they had fulfilled God's will in their life and they understood in a personal relationship where He was.

You do not have all of them that go on down through the Bible, and you do not know what happened to many of them, but Peter and Paul and James and John and a few of the other ones, you can follow them right through. It is very obvious. They understood the job that they had to do, and they understood how to fulfill it, and they understood what their work was. Let me tell you something. The model is three and a half years. You give me a young man or a young gal, and you give me your undivided attention for three and a half years, you get the world out of your life, and you do your part and make your decisions you have got to make, allow me to do in my life what my job is with you, and I guarantee you in three and a half years I will have you eating nails. I will have you ready to deal with anything, anybody, any place, any time, anywhere.

But you see, it does not depend on me having a great plan. As far as I am concerned, I have got one of the greatest form-outs to teach you the Bible that you will find anywhere in the world. I tweaked it and put it together for over 35 years of my life. I know it works. I will tell you something now. You look hard around to find a better style of ministry that you can learn what you need to learn and get the hands-on teaching that you have got. The problem is not me. The problem is not the program. The problem is finding people that will put out of their lives the things they have got to do and say, "Here I am, brother. You get me ready. For the next three and a half years, you tell me to stand on my head in the corner over there or stand upside here or hang by my armpits from the top of the ceiling or upside down or run up and down the street 100 times a day. If that is what I have to do to learn God and to get God in my life, then that is what I will do."

After three and a half years, you know what the Lord said? He said, "Boys, you are ready. I am going back to heaven. We have built my relationship. You have got God's will. You have been with me now for three and a half years. You understand my plan. Now boys, I am going back to heaven, and the work is up to you." That is the way it works. The reality is, and of course you see, you probably begin to see the problem already. The problem is, and the reality is that some of God's people, not just here, but all around Christianity, 5, 10, 15, 20 years they have been in churches. Nothing has ever changed. They struggle with the same thing today that they did five years ago, two years ago, 20 years ago. Of course, the reality is that is where the problem comes

in. We can have the best program in the world, but you know what? Those apostles, and you ought to go through some time and study their lives. You ought to go through some time and look what Jesus told them. They are going to have to give up. This is where you get some of those weird statements where He says, "If you do not hate your father and your mother, you have no part with me."

One place He said, "You are to honor your father and your mother," and the next place He said, "If you do not hate your father and mother, you cannot have anything to do with me." What is He talking about? Does He mean actually that you are supposed to hate your father and your mother? Of course not. You know what He said one other time? He said, "Hey, you want to follow me? You want to be part of my crowd? Let me tell you something. The foxes and all of the animals have holes to live in. I do not have any place to sleep tonight. You still want to go with me?" In other words, what He is saying, you may have to give up some things. The life of following Christ looks glamorous, like preaching. It looks nice to be up here, and everybody says, "Oh, I want to preach, and I want to get up there and preach." It is not this point that you have got to focus on. It is all the crap you have got to deal with throughout the rest of the week. That is where it is at.

A young man or young lady do not realize that. They just think, "Wow, you know what? Boy, I will tell you what. I want to go to the disciple." Yeah, but when you begin to get into somebody's life, it is like opening up a coffin of somebody that was in a coffin for four or five weeks in a hot sun. Everything that is dirty comes out. Sometimes it is not pleasant to look at. Sometimes it is not pleasant to smell, and sometimes it is not pleasant to deal with. But you know what? Welcome to the ministry. In three and a half years, He got those young men, those 12 young men. In three and a half years, He got them, and somebody said, "Well, Judas, what about him?" Well, here is what I say. If Judas can do it, anybody can do it. That is what I say. He got 12 guys down there that at the end of three and a half years, He says, "You have got my will. We have a relationship spiritually. You know the plan. You have seen me lay this thing out all times. You are through here. Now it is time for you to do the work." That is how I approach it. But the reality is you have to do your part. You have to change what you have got to change about you, and sometimes that is really hard to do.

Now, I need to say this to you. Some of you are doing really well. Some of you are younger ones. I am amazed at the way some of you younger ones have come on. I think that, and I know because we talk, when you come over and you think you are not moving fast enough. I understand that. That is normal. You think you are not where you should be, you know, when you get down on yourself, so you should be farther. You think you should be farther. Hey, you know what? I appreciate that, but let me be the judge of that. If you want to know where you are at, you just come and ask me. I will tell you where you are at, and I will be honest with you because I love you. Some of you would come to me this very day and you say, "Bob, I do not think I am fast enough. I do not think I am doing enough. I do not think that I should know more." And I am going to say to you, "You know what? You are right where you are at. In fact, you are probably ahead of schedule, and I am absolutely pleased with the progress you are making, and you just stay with it right like that." Somebody else would come up and say, "Bob, I do not think I am

doing very well. I do not think I am moving. I do not think I am growing the way I should," and I just look at it like this, "And what else? You are right. You are right. You are right."

Bottom line is this. For you that are doing well, I have got one word for you. I know that when you are young, you do not understand these things. I will never forget the night I went forward to surrender to preach. I had just 19 years of my life I had not been around God, done what God wanted me to do. I just got out of the army. I was 20 years old. I just got out of the army. I started going back to church, and my father had passed away, and God began to work in my heart. I remember going to church that night, and a man preached. I did not know anything. The only Bible I had was the Bible that my dad had won in a Sunday school campaign back in 1954. I still have that Bible. It is an old Scofield Reference Bible, red Bible. Of course, every Bible should be red. But anyway, it was one of those things where, and I still have that Bible today. I walked in there that night, and that night that man preached, God spoke to my heart. I walked down there that night, and I did not know what in the world I was doing. I said, "What did you come forward for?" And I said, "God has called me to preach." I did not know what else to say. I knew I was saved at that point. I knew I wanted to get back with God. I knew I was out of fellowship. But I just felt like the burden that it had on me that God wanted me to preach. The guy said, "Well, praise the Lord, brother. Let me pray with you." When we got down there, and he prayed for me, and I prayed for myself, and asked God to give me this. When I stood up that night, people came down afterwards, shaking my hand and slapped me on the back and saying, "Praise the Lord," and hugging me, and all these things. I thought I was in the presence of holy angels. If you had told me that night that some of those people shaking my hands were trying to cut the pastor's legs out from behind his back and starting a problem over here and doing this, some of them were not tithing. Some of them were lying over here. Some of them were doing this and doing that. Some of them were the biggest rascals in the world. If you had told me that that night, I would have looked at you in the face and I said, "You are nuts." But you know what? After 35, 36 years in the ministry, I understand those things now.

I am telling you this. I no longer made that decision, boy, the opposition started to come. I went home and told my mother. I thought she was all upset with me because I was not going to church. Now I started going to church, and she quit going. You know how that works? I went in and I said, "Mom, I had a great time tonight in the service tonight." She said, "That is good. I am glad." I did not know this. Two days later, the church sent me a letter congratulating me on surrendering to preach and wanted to help. My mom got the letter. She comes in to me, she said, "What is this?" I said, "Oh, that is what I was trying to tell you the night. I said, I surrendered to preach." She looked at me and she said, "You?" She said, "You are nuts. You are going to preach." And I said, "Well, yeah, me, I am going to preach." You know what? The devil did that, that was not because she did not love me. She loved me to death. He will use every opportunity to try to discourage you.

You know what my word is for you this morning? Beware if you are doing well. If you are getting along and you are learning the Bible, beware. The devil is going to come. I know you are young yet. You do not think it. You think you can trust the person sitting next to you. Well, you will learn down the line. You cannot. You can really trust his God. You all flesh is grass. I mean,

you learn that. You learn that. You learn that. What you will do is you will get to a point where you are not really feeling good. You start feeling good about yourself. That is exactly because you have no experience. You see, you have no understanding how this thing works. You get yourself up there and start feeling good. Then the devil comes in and just knocks your legs right out behind you. Why? He wants to discourage you. He wants to shake you to the foundation core to see if you really have the marble legs it takes to stand in the ministry. That is what he wants to do. Happens all the time.

I have seen the devil come in, and sometimes it is not a bad thing. We always think when the devil tempts us that it is something that is bad. Like, "Come on out and get drunk. Come on out and smoke this. Come on out and steal this. Come on out and do that." No, no. Many of the times it is normal things in life that we do not even think it is wrong. I have seen young men and young ladies get to a point in their life where they were really doing well, and they got everything out, and just like clockwork, God brings an old boyfriend back in, Mr. 100% wonderful, Mr. 10 plus six, Mr. dreamboat, and then bang, boy, the devil puts him right in. I have been in situations where I saw a guy get to the place where he was really doing well, and he was really growing, and then here she comes, Miss Universe, right back into his life. Some girlfriend he had not seen for 40 years, and he is only 20. I mean, it is a situation where, where do they come from?

I will tell you where they are coming from. The devil has got a big bomber, a big old bomber plane, and he is flying around up there about 90,000 feet looking through his bomb sight. When you just get to the place in your life where you start building a relationship with God, getting what God has for you, getting everything in your life and saying to yourself, "Wow, I am really excited." About that time it is bombs away, and down he or she or it comes.

I love to tell this story. I tell it all the time because it is such a great example. Years ago I had a guy I was working with, and he was coming along very well. He came into my office one day and he said, "Bob, I just wanted to come in and tell you. I am moving to St. Louis." He says, "I just wanted you to know that, you know, I really hate to leave the church, but they gave me a great job over there, gave me a raise, and it is a great opportunity for me." He said, "I am moving to St. Louis," and I did not know anything about it. Now in my mind, I know what is going on here because I am in this business. It is like when you are a used car salesman and a guy drives a car and he wants to sell, and it is blowing big blue smoke out the back, and he tries to tell you it is not burning oil. I have been around this business. I see the smoke. I know what is happening, and I said, "You know," he did not say anything to me. My rule of thumb is this, when in doubt, find out. I mean, get, find out what you are doing. He had already done the thing, and he said, "Well, he says, you know what, I was going to talk to you about it, but he says, God just made it so clear." And I said, "Oh, I have got to hear that. How did God make it clear?" He said, "Well, they offered me the job last week, and he said, I was going to call you. And he said, and then I said, you know what, God, I will tell you what, if you do not want me to go, give me a sign." He said, "So I figured out what I would do is if I put my house up for sale, and if God sold my house, then it was a sign that I would go. If God did not sell my house within a certain amount of time, then it is a sign that I am not to go." He said that to me with a straight face. I almost had busted out laughing. He said that to me like he thought the devil flunked his realtor's test. You

think the devil cannot step in and sell your house? Well, I know God will either step in and step in or not step in, because you know what, this may be a reality. That is not the way He works. He gave you everything in here to make that kind of decision. Every principle in here, He gave you enough principles and enough concepts that when you are faced with something like that, you do not have to roll the dice and let God come through. The principles have already been written down. He never checked out if he had a church down there. He never checked out that if he had a, you know, he was looking at the job, looking at the money, looking at the raise. When he got down there, he found out there was no church. Nobody believed the Bible. Now he is right back out into the world six months later again. You know why? Because it was going good, and it was going good. Then the big black bomber dropped the egg on him. Beware. That is my word to you. Beware. I am telling you, it happens. It is just part of it. You better learn it.

III. The Church Under Attack

Let me tell you something. This church is right now under a satanic attack. Right now as we speak. Oh, I got your attention on that, did I not? Well, your eyes lit up. I could see people opening up their thing, pulling out their swords. Right now as we speak, there is a plan in design to destroy this church. As we speak, as we are having our service here this morning, there is a plan in the design to stop this church from ever going forward again. You know what? When you go into the new building and God puts everything up and everything gets right where it is at and everything is just kicking it. To you, that is a shock, is it not? You have got to see in your eyes when I said that. Somebody already now, grabbing on and inside you are praying, "Oh God, oh God." But the bottom line is this. My point is this. I cannot ever remember a time when the ministry was not under attack. It always is. Do you actually think that this work is going to go on and stand for this book? That this work is not going to incur some kind of problem after problem with somebody because it is not about the person necessarily. It is about the bottom line is that the devil wants to drop the bomb on this church just like he wants to drop the bomb on you. My point is this. It just is not about you. It is about the ministry too. There will never be a time that this church does not do what is right as best it can, teach this book, and the world does not believe it anymore and try to invest in people's lives. You know why? Because the devil does not want you to fulfill his will for your life. The devil does not want you to get God's plan for your life, and he sure does not want you to get involved in a work in his life. So he will just try to rattle all the foundational things that he can do. You know what? Just business. You know what you need to do? It happens, and you need to learn. It is part of your growing process. It is part of really what Abraham went through. It is part of understanding there will never be a time when this church will not be under attack by somebody. So what is the point? I mean, I do not ever know the time in my life in the ministry, in the work, and it will never be. If you come again, you better get ready for a battle. That is all there is to it.

Now you can do two things. You can sniffle around and worry about it and cry about it, or you can take the position that I take. I have been in hot water so long I am hard-boiled, pal, it is okay with me. It is just part of the process. You cannot ever get focused on it in your own life. I bring it back to you now because you are going to get hammered. I guarantee you. You are going to come to a point, and somebody is going to step into your life, and you are going to say

something that is going to try to knock you down. Stop the work in your life. Stop the growth in your life. You have to realize that the devil is going to try to throw you a bone and take you out of the Bible, take you out of the church, and it is going to come to the point where it is going to be the end of the road. You say, "Well, how do you," that is why the Bible says that this whole life is in darkness. Out there for you and for this church, you know what you have got? You have got snares. You have got traps. You have got pitfalls. You have got obstacles. It is dark. Absolutely in darkness out there. You are walking through life, and you step on a landmine, blow a leg off. You step on this landmine, blow your leg off or leg off. You walk down here, and you fall into a pit, big old sharpened stakes, impale you, and your stock cannot get off. You walk over here, and you trip over something, and you fall. It is in darkness. The devil knows that you have got to walk through the darkness of this whole world. He knows that this life is in darkness in this world. He has got traps. Sometimes he is a pretty trap, but she is a trap. Sometimes he is a handsome trap, but he is a trap. Sometimes it is a good-looking deal, but it is still a trap.

Boy, thank God you do not have to depend on a realtor to get God's will for your life. You know what He gave you? He gave you this book. Now I suggest that you do not ever get a Bible smaller than this. Because then if you ever steal my message, you cannot use this illustration. You know what they have in the middle, I was telling you Thursday night about the 82nd Airborne mobile rapid deployment. You know what their motto is? Their motto is, "We own the night." You know why they say that? Because they can see in the dark. They have got the technology now through the night vision that they all, you see them over in Iraq all the time, those little connectors under their helmets, sometimes they have them up, and they are flipped up. They can go out there at night, pitch black, and then snap that thing down, and whoever is sneaking up on them now is like, "Hello," it is like daylight. Now that is a great advantage in warfare. Now the night is no longer a threat because you just flip a little button, and now the night infrared illuminates the night, and you now can be able to see in total darkness that you can see who is coming up on you. Now that just came out in the last 30, 40 years. There has been one around a lot longer than that, just this book right here. Now this is why you should not have your Bible any smaller than this because if you cannot, you cannot get it into a starlight scope configuration. Smaller than this, you let too much light in. This world is darkness, pitfalls to be out there. What am I doing? I am a child of God. I have got a plan of God. I have got the will of God. I have got a work of God. But man, that is a landmine out there.

Psalms 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalms 119:130

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

You see, the book is your starlight scope. The book is your light in a dark world. As you walk down this light with all this pitfall, you just take this old black back 66 starlight. "Oh, wow. Aliens on the ceiling. Oh, that is an ugly one. Oh, over there, yeah. Whoa, look at that. Oh, okay. I got it now. Oh, just walk this way. We are off to see the wizard. Oh, I got it. Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Look at that. Look at that. Here I go. I am walking through. Oh, it is not going to bother me. I

have got the light, light playing under my feet, light under my path. I am going. Oh, look at that. Look at those things. Wow. You would be scary."

You ever want to mess up when you turn the starlight off, and it gives your eyes a minute to adjust. I love going through haunted houses, good ones, in Halloween. My wife does not either. Well, I love going through them. I love when you get into those and you hear the music and you hear bumps down the line and you hear people screaming. I love to be scared. Things like that. You walk in there. I mean, I have not been there for years, but I even went down to the edge of hell. Thankfully, that is the closest to the edge of hell I ever will get. I am down there, and it is scary, and you go in there, and all these guys, and I remember one time they had this guy, looked like a dummy, laying in the chair, was a real person. You walked over to it and told your friend, "Oh, it is not." And he jumps up past you, and scares you and all that stuff. When you walk in there, but last time I went, I thought to myself, "Oh, I am going to take a flashlight." Just a little one. When I get into the real dark rooms, because I do not know about you, but when I am in a dark place, I do not, when I cannot see anything, I do not like this. No, you do not like it with light on. So when I get in a dark place, I just turn my light on. When I got out of there, I thought to myself, "Wow, that was, that was not quite as exciting." You know what? Because the light took all the scariness out of it. I come to the conclusion that I did not have to be scared of the dark because I brought a light with me. My point is this, you do not have to be scared of the dark if you have the light with you. But you have got to get the light. The Bible says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." You have got to be able to understand that that is how God illuminates the path. You do not have to make those decisions on your own. That is how you make bad choices. You get into a book that tells you whatever circumstance, whatever situation you have got in life, you have got to wait to find out the answer. That is how it works.

IV. Abram's Early Life and God's Perspective

Now let us look at the man, Abraham, for a second here. The name Abram, it means High Father. I do not know if you know it or not, but names in the Bible are very significant. It is even more significant when God changes somebody's name in the Bible. But the names in the Bible are very important. I know that you cannot, sometimes it tells you in the Bible what the names are. Sometimes you have to get a Bible concordance or a Bible reference book or something, it will tell you what the names are. Sometimes they have multiple different meanings in the Bible. But every Bible has a name in the Bible, and most of the time it is very important.

In our study of Abraham, before he was called Abraham, and from Genesis chapter, when we get to Genesis chapter 11 and 12, we see some things about him that we need to understand. In Genesis chapter 11 and 12, he is living in the Ur of Chaldees. I do not know if you know what the Ur of Chaldees is, that is modern day Babylon. Babylon is in Iraq. Where Saddam Hussein was there in Baghdad, that is where Babylon was. That is modern day Babylon. I do not know if you know it or not, but Saddam Hussein, he claimed to be the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar, who was the king of Babylon.

Babylon is a very key place in your Bible as well as history. It is important that you know the history of the Bible to tie it up with the history that is going on, or what is going on today in

current events. In Genesis chapter 10, you find the first Gentile kingdom. That first Gentile kingdom is in Babylon with a type of anti-Christ in control. The last Gentile kingdom found in Revelation chapter 18, that is the anti-Christ kingdom, that is also called Babylon. Babylon through your Bible is not a good place. Babylon through your Bible has always been controlled by Satan to wipe out the nation of Israel. It was Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC that came down and took the two southern tribes into captivity, after Sennacherib took the ten northern tribes into captivity, and it has been a bad place.

So Abraham at this particular point, Genesis chapter 11 and 12, he is right there in the middle of Ur, which is modern day Babylon. If you go to Iraq today and go downtown around the outskirts over there, you will find that they have got a museum, believe it or not. In that museum is a huge piece of some kind of wall with writings all over it. They say that that is an original piece of the Tower of Babel that is back in Genesis chapter 10 and 11, and maybe it is, I do not know. But that is where it was. That is where Abram is.

Anyway, he is called out of Ur, Babylon, Ur of Chaldees. He is called out to go to a place called the Land of Canaan. The Land of Canaan is modern day Palestine, in particular Jerusalem. You are going to find that Ur of Chaldees is on the eastern border of Palestine in your Bible. So he is called out to come out of Ur, a picture of God calling me and you out of the world system, and sending them to a place called Canaan's Land.

You know why it is called Canaan's Land? It is called Canaan's Land because for 400 and some years, while this is all going on down here, and while Abraham is down here, the Canaanites have taken up a residency in that land. So now it is called the Land of Canaan. Abraham is going to go in and say, "This land is mine." He is going to in time, through his predecessors, going to kill all the nations and wipe them out, and he is going to take over that land. But right now it is called Canaan's Land. It is also called the Promised Land. Why? Because it is the land that God promised them that they were going to live in peace and safety.

Do you know what the Promised Land in the Old Testament, I know it is a literal thing in the Old Testament, but you know what that means to you and me in the New Testament? In the Old Testament, the Promised Land was a literal piece of ground that God gave them, and He says, "It is yours." In this land is all going to be the blessings of God and everything that you could want. All you have to do to keep that land and keep those blessings is keep my word. That is why it is called the Promised Land. You keep the promises that God gave you, you get to keep the land. Real simple.

Now, for you and for me, it is a little different because God never promised us a literal land. The promises that God has given us is the promised life. He simply says this, if you and I get saved, do what the Word of God says and keep the Word of God close in your heart and in my heart and live by the promises of God, we will have those great blessings in our life that God wants us to have and enjoy all the things that God has for us. It is the same system.

Anyway, he is called out, and he goes to the land of Canaan. His name now is called Abram, which means High Father. It suggests to us and certainly shows us when you study his life that he has done very well. He is very well off, probably highly respected. He has done well down in

Ur. But God, you see, has another plan, just like you and me. We have our way in life before we meet God, and then God knocks on your door and says, "I know you have got everything you want, and I know you are here, and I know you are there. But you know what? I have got a better plan. Do you want to go with me?" Then you, like Abraham, have to say yes or you have to say no. Just that simple.

I told you last week that Abraham is the greatest study in all the Bible and how you get to be God's friend. It shows you the process by which you go through. I want you to see that process. Turn with me to Romans chapter 4. I want to show you a great principle here. This is incredible. These are the things you have to learn about God.

V. God's Perspective on Abraham's Faith

Look at Romans chapter 4, verse 17. Now keep in mind, Abraham is called out. God has got a plan for him. This is a picture of Abraham making bad choices and getting all messed up and all the things that go along with it. But watch how God records the event. I love this. This is one of the greatest lessons you will ever find.

Romans 4:17-22

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Wow, what a great thing. Look at verse 18. "Who against all hope believed even God." Look at verse 19. "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body dead." Look at verse 20. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." Look at verse 21. "And being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able to fulfill."

Now, that is a great thing, but you know what? There is only one reality in that. There is only one problem with that. You know what that problem is? None of that is true. He did stagger. He did not believe. Why, when God taught Abraham down there, and Abraham, He says, "Abraham, I know you are 86 years old, but there is coming a time in your life later that I am going to give you the promise." Abraham just looked at Him. You know what Sarah did? Sarah laughed. She laughed. You know what her firstborn boy that she has, his name is Isaac. You know what Isaac means? It means laughter. She laughed. Then she tried to say to God, "Oh, I did not laugh." And

God said, "Oh, yeah, you did. I have got it right here. You laughed. Want me to play it back? You laughed. You laughed long. You laughed hard. You laughed loud. You laughed."

He did stagger. He did falter. He could not believe God. He did not believe hope against all hope. I am telling you, you already saw how that when he came out of Ur, we talked about this last week, God said, "Come on out of Ur and leave everything you have got." He brought half the town with him. Then when he gets over in Canaan, a famine happens back in Egypt. He loses faith in God and heads right back down into it again. Abraham's life is a picture of exactly what you and my life is. He cannot yet believe and hold on to the promise of the God. Every time he gets a little victory in his life, the devil drops a bomb, and that big old black bomber up there and messes him up. He messes him up.

Now, I want you to see this. Come on back to Genesis here. Come on back to Genesis chapter 16. When you get up here and read Romans chapter 4, verses 17 through 22, you are talking about the time that God told him in Genesis chapter 16 and 17 about the promised seed. Let us go back and look at this story together. I want you to see why it is so important. I told you last week, the Bible says in the book of Corinthians that the things in the Old Testament are written for your examples. Your examples that you might learn not to make the same mistakes that these men made. Let us look at this.

Look at Genesis chapter 16, verse 16. Abraham is 86 years old when God tells him the great thing that He is going to do with him in the future. 86. What happened? Well, I will tell you what happened. He did not believe hope against hope. He failed. He was weak in his faith with God. He did stagger at the promise of God, and he was not fully persuaded. I do not know what else to tell you. Now, I am going to show you in a minute why God said that when it was not true. The bottom line is that when God told him that when he was 86 in Genesis 16:16, he walked in there to his wife and he says, "You know what God just told me?" She said, "Yeah, He told me the same thing. What did you do? I laughed." "Well, I wanted to laugh, but boy, I will tell you what. I am 86 years old." She says, "Yeah, and I am 70 something. How in the world am I going to do this?"

Here is how it comes. So they gather when they just could not believe what God said, here is what they said. "Well, I know what we will do. I know what God meant. Let me reinterpret that promise for you, Abraham. He meant you take Hagar. He was not really talking about me. He was talking about Hagar." And Abraham said, "Yeah, I bet you are right. I bet you are right. To tell you the truth. You are a lot older than she is anyhow. I have got to have a shot at what I have with her in the first place. I think God is right. Yes, I see the hand of God in this. I prayed." Some things you do not have to pray about. When God tells you clearly what the principles are, what do you have to pray about? You do what the Word of God says. You know what happened? Hagar. From Hagar comes Ishmael. That is not all.

Look at Genesis 16:16. He is 86. This is where he takes Hagar. The next time, look at Genesis 17:1. The next time God speaks to him is in Genesis 17:1. Now he is 99 years old. You know what you have got? Well, it does not take a math professor to figure it out or a rocket scientist. You subtract 86 from 99. You have got 13 years. 13 years he lost fellowship with God because of

one bad decision he made. 13 years he had no conversation with God. 13 years in his life the plan of God is on hold. The will of God is on hold. The work of God is not getting done for 13 years because he could not believe what God said.

Now, let me tell you why God says it is true when it is not true. This is a great concept. The reason why God never mentions his sin in Romans chapter 4 and only gives him the good things is the first greatest thing is this. I do not know if you know this or not. After the crucifixion of Christ, after Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you will never find where God ever brings up an Old Testament saint's sins in a negative light again. Do you ever read Hebrews chapter 11? Hebrews chapter 11 is commonly called God's Hall of Fame. It is a walk down memory's lane of the Old Testament patriarchs and the great men. Listed in that Hall of Fame are some of the greatest men that you are going to ever study in the Old Testament. But let me tell you something. You know what it says about Abraham? It talks about basically that he believed God and everything that he said. You know what talks about Samson? How did Samson wind up in God's Hall of Fame? How did some of these guys, how did Jacob, whose name was Schemer, wind up in a Hall of Fame? You know why? Because after the cross, when the blood has been shed, their sins were wiped away. That is why. You know that is one of the greatest promises in the Bible? He never says one bad thing about one of the Old Testament saints after the crucifixion, even though they have done some of the most terrible things in their life. You know why? Because once they get to the cross and the blood was shed, the sins were washed away, and He can never bring them up again. Now that does not give you a bath, the cops do not hold in his fit. I do not know what is wrong with you. Your sins have been forgiven, and they have been washed away. Thank you. See how that just moves you? Well, wow, it moves me. That is what God did.

The other reason is because God imputed His righteousness to him. The moment you got saved, God does not look and focus on the bad things that you do in life. He only sees what is good in your life. That is the good news. Now here is the bad news. God may never impute his sin to him because he had God's imputed righteousness. The cross of Calvary blotted away the transgression that brought, never brought it up again. But oh, my dear friend, look at the consequences. Look at the consequences of Ishmael for the next 4,000 years. The devil uses Ishmael and his descendants to try to wipe out, ruin, break the back, cut out the legs, and to wipe out every Jew of the promised seed on God's green planet. The prophecy about Ishmael is given in Genesis 16:11-12, and it is not good. He is going to be the thorn in Israel's side.

Oh, God gave him his imputed righteousness, never brought up. In fact, stuck up for him. When he did not do what is right, God said, "Yes, he did," just like He does for you and me. But what he did and the consequences on this earth and his life, he paid for, and Israel is paying for today. We look at the Middle East right now. Every problem that is going on in the Middle East, every problem that is going on with Israel, and the Arab nation, and the Muslim nation, everything that is going on from 9/11 to the terrorists and all the things that are going on today, everything that is going on goes back to one man's bad choice. Yes, God, purged by the blood. God took away the sin, never mentioned it again, but on this life, he bears the reproach throughout his generations.

Some decisions you make in life, God may forgive you, and you may get past, but you know what? It alters your life for the rest of your life.

In 570, oh, this is how the devil goes. The devil is just flying around that big old bomber. Boy, he is just waiting to drop an egg on somebody. In 570, he looked down on the bomb site, and in 570, he saw the nation of Israel. He knew what was coming down the line, and you know what he did? He dropped the bomb out of that thing about a 5,000-pound blockbuster. A pin on the side is Mohammed. From Mohammed comes Islam. Islam means submission to Allah. Starts with Mohammed, 570 AD. You know who Mohammed claims to be? He claims to be in a direct line of descendants from Israel, right back to Genesis 12, 16 and 17. They write two books, the Quran and the Holy Hadith, the Hadith being the saints. You know what you find in there? Every prophecy in Genesis, in Isaiah, every prophecy where God wrote in His Bible that it is Isaac that the promised seed, they cross out Isaac and put in Ishmael.

We are living in the greatest times in the history of the world, ladies and gentlemen. It is right here, right now. We are living. History is unfolding right in front of us. Stupid Americans, but without a Bible now for 140 years. Hey, you watch, this is going to be the greatest election in the history of the world. Greatest election it is. You know how, and I do not, you know me, I do not get the idea that I am anymore for John McCain and Obama. I am for the Lord. I have got a bumper sticker in the back of my car that says simply this, "Kill them all, let God sort them out." That is where I am at with it. I have no faith in anything in this world except what is in that book.

You know how Barack Obama does not like his middle name, Hussein? He does not like Hussein because it ties him into all the other Husseins. But he knows America is stupid. He does not mind you calling him Barack Obama. Who knows in the world today that Barack was the name of the horse that Muhammad ascended to heaven on when he went up through Jerusalem? Who knows the fact that he has been taught and trained? That he went to school in a Muslim school. You ought to read a book. It is a book called *Behind the Veil* by a converted Muslim, Abad El-Shiraf. Page 22, 23, and 24, and I quote, he says this, "Any Muslim can change and lie about his faith to accomplish his mission and then come back to Islam as a great hero." I am telling you what, my friend, we are living in some incredible times.

Here is another great concept. You see, this is what you have got. Yeah, God imputed his righteousness, never held him accountable as far as after the cross, and God blessed him, and he got through the failures. But look at the consequences of the bad choices. You know what this message is all about? It is one thing. Boil it down. We can all go home right now. It is about, and I have got a lot of good other things to say, and I am not going to let you out. You are going to hear me anyhow, but I am just kind of building you up for it. Here is the bottom line. One message. You wanted to find this message in one line? Here it comes. One sentence, here it comes. One short paragraph, here it comes. Oh, I forgot what it was now. It was really good, too. Make as few bad choices in your life. That is my advice to you. We will make enough on our own. We will make enough because we are stupid. We do not need to add fuel to the fire by just really doing blatantly dumb things. Keep the starlight scope on. Do not step on a landmine.

VI. God's Vision and Our Willingness

Here is another great concept. Not only did he lose the consequences of 13 and a half years out of fellowship with God, but here is another great concept, and this is absolutely incredible. This is the parts that I love about the Bible. If you are ever going to pastor some day, if you are ever going to be in a position where you are working with people, this is absolutely a mandate that you understand what I am saying, and I do not expect you to grasp it today. But let me show you what he says in Romans chapter 4, verse 17.

Romans 4:17

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

You know what that is? The whole world saw an old man, 99 years old, and his wife in the 80s. The whole world saw an old couple. Abraham himself could not see it. The whole world, I guarantee you, when Sarah got pregnant with Isaac after the debacle with Ishmael, when she got pregnant with Isaac and she is not showing yet, and Abraham or her walking down to the babies or us, and they are going in there and everybody says, "Well, look at Abraham and his Sarah eyes coming in here. Good to see you. What do you need? You getting stuff for the grandkids? You getting stuff for..." And I said, "No, Sarah is going to have a baby." "Oh yeah, yeah, well help yourself." You ever been in those situations?

One time I was sick in the army. They put me in the hospital for like two days, had really bad strep throat. You know you are in bed, you have nothing to do. They give you those goofy pajamas, you cannot go anywhere anyhow. So I was feeling pretty good, so I was up walking around. I wandered into the psych ward. I am, you know, there is a big guy, he is about six foot seven. Big guy, man, big guy, tough looking guy. I am standing there looking out the window, just trying to check things out. Bored, man. He is walking around like this. I am thinking, "Oh yeah, man, I am going to say, hey, yeah, right on, man, I am with you. Airboard, you know, boom, boom, boom." But you know I had to get a ladder. You know his hands go high. I walk up there, and he is walking up and down the corridor just like this. I am looking out the window. Finally he comes back up, and I says, "Hey, how you doing?" He says, "Fine." And I thought he heard his arm, maybe he had it in the cast. I said, "Hey, I said, what did you do to your arm?" He looks down at me and he says, "What is the matter? Cannot you see my giraffe?" I said, "Nice giraffe I have ever seen in my life. Nice giraffe. Hey, what is his name? Giraffe." Walked your giraffe. Boom, I am back, man. I will tell you what. That is what it was. They walked into baby R Us. He says, "Oh, yeah, Mary, she is, you know, she is, she is going to have a child. She is 87 years old. You are going to have a child?" But they were laughing behind his back. You know why? Because the whole world, here comes. I am sorry, this one does not snap quite as loud as this one does, but this whole world, everybody only saw an old couple. God saw the nation of Israel.

I am telling you, you know what? My man, the man who mentored me, Mel Shabbat, taught me everything I know, gave me a love for the Bible, gave me my belief in the Bible, taught me to make basic ministry, got me ready, prepared me, as I prepare some of you, and prepared me God's will in my life, God's plan in my life, and so I could find God's job in my life. When he

was 56 years old, in Canton, Ohio, he was part of a church that was just a great church, and he had one of the greatest college and career classes in the country. He was set for life, set for life. He had, he was making good money. He had been there for 20-some years, good security, good ministry. He could fly out and preach anywhere he wanted to preach, anytime during the week, come back in, had everything he wanted. At 56 years old, God called him to go to New York City to build a church in a place where he did not know one person. He quit his job after 20-some years, resigned to ministry, and left with nothing but the clothes on his back. Not one person went with him other than a few short people, but his wife and his family, and they went to New York City to build a church in a place that was, without a doubt, is the hardest, roughest place to go in and build a church from scratch.

Four or five years after he had been there, we went up to visit one time, and I went in there, and he was telling me about his church and the church building that God gave them, and how it was this and how it was that, and how it was everything that he could ever want. He was, God is so, he was so excited about it. He took me down there, and honest to goodness, we get out of the car, and I am thinking, "Where is the building?" All I see is a couple of derelict places at an old broken down derelict Catholic church. He says, "Here it is, what do you think of it? Come on in." I walked in, the door fell off. Six inches of water in the basement, holes in the roof. I said, "Mel," he says, "Yeah," I said, "You have to be a Roman Catholic chapel, but they do not use it anymore." He said, "Yeah, we ripped out the kneeling thing, we did not need them, and threw them out in the backyard, had a bonfire with them." I am looking at this thing, and I am saying, he says, "Yeah, God gave us this building, what do you think of it?" And I said, "Wow," I said, he says, "Yeah, and God was a steal." And I said, "What a catch." He said, "Nine million dollars." I said, "Where do you have nine million dollars?" He said, "I do not, but God does."

Now, this is the guy who at the end of every year took whatever money he had left in his banking account at the end of the year. Barb knows this is true. Put it in a Christmas missionary offering and started out even with God the next year again. He did that for 40 some years. So you see, when you train yourself that way, you do not have a problem saying, "Well, this building cost nine million dollars. I do not have nine million dollars." In fact, somebody said to him, he said, he signed a loan. He signed a contract for the building. Guy walked out and says, he says, "Where are you getting nine million dollars?" He says, "That is not my problem. I forgot the problem. God just called me to get here. He has got to pay the bills." You know what? He paid for it. You know what else? I went back four years later. Walked into that place. I could not believe it. It was the most beautiful building on the face of this planet. God had brought into his church men who were in construction. He started winning the Christ one at a time. God brought everybody into his church. Everything he needed, God gave him. They went in. When I went back, I stood there and looked at that church. I looked at the basement, the Sunday School space, everything they had. Boy, I will tell you what that verse just came into my mind. You see, when I went there, I saw a broken down old Roman Catholic chapel. Mel saw the First Bible Baptist Church of Staten Island.

The key, my friend, that God had with Abraham is God saw past Abraham's problems. He saw past his struggles. He saw something in Abraham that He said, "You know what? I can get him

through these. I can use him." I am going to talk to you about those in just a second in closing. I have often wondered early on in my life when Mel was working with me, helping me. I did a lot of dumb things. But years later, I looked at my own life as I began to work with young men and young ladies. I began to see in some of the people I worked with what he saw in me. I began to look at that thing, and I said, "You know what? That is why he invested in my life what he did. He saw in me what God saw." That is the whole key. You have got to quit looking. You have got to quit living in a natural and move into the supernatural. You have got to quit seeing things. When you deal with people, you have got to get past their problems. You have got to look at where they are at. You have got to understand that everybody struggles and goes through the issues in time. Oh, there are some bad people out there, but God shows you who they are too and who to avoid. But the bottom line is, the people in general you have got brings into your life. You have got to look past where they are at. You have got to see what God looks for.

You know what God looked for in Abraham?

10. First thing He looked for was his family. Remember we talked about this? He was willing to commend his family.
11. Second thing I looked at is He saw in him. Now I know he did not, when God called him out of Ur of Chaldees, I know he brought half the city with him. He brought all of his people with him and all of his cattle. Now we focus on that many times. But you know what the thing that I see beyond that? Now this is how God sees it. I see that he was willing to go at all. You see the difference? I could stand up here and preach on the fact that he brought all the trash and junk with him to cause him problems, and he did. Or I could stay to take the other side of it, what God saw and said, "You know what, I know he brought all the trash with him. But you ever stop and think he is the only one that was willing to go when nobody else would?"

Some of you claim about the fact, you say, "Well Bob, you know what, I would like to do this and I would like to do that, but I do not know if I am able to do it. I do not know if I am able to do what God wants me to do." I know that is some of your hang up. You have got to get past that. God, nowhere in the Bible ever asked any man or woman to be able. God just asked them to be willing. If you are willing, God is able, man. He is the one that is able. He is.

12. I will tell you this, not only did God see he could handle his family and he was willing to go, but I will tell you something else. He did believe God in what he had enough faith to believe in God in. Maybe he could not get way out here about Isaac, but he believed him enough about the stars that he got saved. You know, we all fit in that category at some time in our lives, especially if you just get plugged in or even all the way down through your life. We all fit into Abraham's life. That is why he is such a great example. We all come to the place where we have got to look past God. We have got to see what God sees. We have got to see how God does not focus on our shortcomings. He takes those in stride as long as we are willing to fulfill the last one.
13. I better give you this one before I get. You know what? The fourth thing God saw in him. This is our downfall, all of our downfall. You know what Abraham was willing to do that most of us are not? Abraham was willing to learn from his mistakes. You know, that is the

biggest problem God's people face today. Multiple mistakes in the same categories. God saw in Abraham not only somebody that was willing to take care of his family, willing to go, who could believe God in what God told him at the level where he was, but he learned also by his mistakes and he grew through them.

I never fault a person for mistakes. We all make mistakes. Sometimes the consequences of those mistakes are greater than others, but we all make mistakes. Everybody does. You find somebody likes to fault somebody about making mistakes, and you will find somebody that thinks they are a perfect person. We all make mistakes. You know what the problem is though? The problem is, do you grow, do you learn from your mistakes? Do you grow through your mistakes? Or do you make the same mistakes over and over and over again?

You know, in training of people, dealing with people, if you ever become a pastor and you want to prepare people for God's will and God's plan of God's will, you have got to look past the human side. You have got to look past the mistakes. You have got to look at these things, and you have got to look at God in their life and what God does. You have got to begin to see them from where God's standpoint. None of us looked too hot the first time God laid eyes on us. But He was willing, if you find these four things in a person's life, if you find a young man or a young lady or a mom or dad that maybe they struggle, but you see in their lives these things, these are the basis by which God looks for. This is the basis by which God dealt with Abraham.

The life of Abraham is a picture of our struggle to build our relationship with God. I told you last week in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 that these things were for an example and in samples and our admonition. There is absolutely no reason. I do not care how bad the times are. I do not care how wicked it is and how rotten it is out there. I am going to tell you something. The Word of God today is the same Word of God, and the Holy Spirit of God, the same Holy Spirit of God as it was in the book of Acts. There is absolutely no reason within this church for you not to fulfill God's will for your life, God's plan for your life, and do God's work for your life other than you just do not want or are not willing to change about you what you have to change.

The man Abraham, his failures, his progress is an example to me and you. It is an example not to get discouraged when you fall down, but you get back up again. It is the process. Understanding is slow and it is hard. It is never fast and it is never easy. It always takes longer to undo something than it does to do it. But the victory, my friend, has already been won. Avoiding the pitfalls, seeing them, the Word of God being that lamp unto your feet and light unto your path, the snares, the traps of Satan, to cancel God's plan, God's work for your life, learning from the men of the Old Testament, the New Testament that struggled like you and I do every day, but obtained the ultimate goal, and that is to become God's friend. You all have that ability. If you are saved this morning, there is not anybody in this room that does not have the ability to get there. It is the question, do you have the want to? It is the question, are you willing to change, to put into your life, to get out of your life? Those things that have to go become God's friend.

Next couple of weeks, we are going to look and rebuild this thing, and next week we are going to see where God changes His name and how this whole thing fits into Abraham coming to the place where the Bible says, "Abraham, my friend." I cannot think of a better, better, better, better

thing that God can say about a person than to look down and see me or see you and say, "You know what? He is my friend." We say that flippantly. God never says it unless the meat is on the bone and backs up what He says. There is a process to becoming God's friend, and that is what we are going to look at as we come through the rest of Abraham. He is the perfect case study in all of the Bible. He shows you and me how to be and become and reach that goal of being God's friend.

Let us pray. Father.