

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 12:1-3

Abraham is the most illustrious personage in ancient history and one of the colossal characters of all time. There are other names that have come down to us from those early days, but his name stands out from among them as the moon stands out in a star-filled sky. The record of Abraham's life is perhaps second only in beautiful simplicity to that of Christ.

As the progenitor of the nation of Israel and "the friend of God," Abraham is venerated by the Jews, the Christians and the Mohammedans. Of all the men whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament, Abraham is the only one who had the high privilege of being called "the friend of God." "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isaiah 41:8). The study of Abraham's life is one of deepest interest because he is one of the noblest and most heroic figures in history and because he was God's chosen instrument for the realization of the divine purposes of redemption.

In some mysterious way there came to him a call from God to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and go out into a strange land. We do not know the exact form in which this summons came from the Lord, but it was very explicit, and the patriarch recognized it as being divine.

The words, "The Lord had said," indicate that in the case of Abraham, as with all others, the initiative came from God, Who moved at this point in sovereign power in pursuance of His purpose of redemption. The call thus came without Abraham having taken a single step towards altering the life that he had lived in heathenism from the beginning. God broke into his life. So it is with every child of God. No one moves toward God until He has first called him.

To Abraham, God said, "Get thee out." This is the pattern of the call that comes to every child of God at the beginning of his Christian life. The call of God is always away from the world, away from sin and away from the old life. There were three things that Abraham was to leave.

1. His country.
For him this meant the literal, physical and geographical severance of ties. He was to take a journey and to become a pilgrim. The call of God involves a break with the old life of thought, outlook and ambition.
2. His kindred.
Abraham was called to leave his nearest and dearest relatives. Likewise with the Christian, nothing is to come between him and the will of God.
3. His father's house.
God called him out from his father's house, but not to take his family along with him. This third severance was too great for Abraham's spiritual strength, so that he never moved out into the fulness of the blessing which God had for him until after his father's death.

Notice that all three of the things which Abraham was to leave were good, and not sinful. Thus Christian discipleship involves the renouncing of

the right and legitimate things of the world, just as the Saviour renounced His Father's eternal home in order to come to redeem us. The call had a positive side as well as a negative one, and this was by far the more important. So it is with the Christian. He is not called to forsake the world simply for the sake of renouncing. The separation is a means to an end, a necessary means. If Abraham had never left Ur, he never could have reached Palestine. In the same way God calls His people to a country, a heavenly one, of which Palestine is the shadow and symbol and gives them great and precious promises as He did to Abraham.

Verses two and three contain a seven-fold promise of God to Abraham:

1. A great inheritance.
"I will make of thee a great nation." One can imagine that it was rather difficult for him to see how he could begin a nation, but this is the Word of God.
2. A great blessing.
"I will bless thee." Here He is referring to a personal blessing such as forgiveness.
3. A great name.
"And make thy name great." In accordance with this promise Abraham became one of the outstanding figures of the world. He has been honored by Jews, Christians and Mohammedans.
4. A great benediction.
"And thou shalt be a blessing." God intended to do something through Abraham, something more than giving a land and a people; He was going to make him a blessing to all the nations in some way.
5. A great alliance.
"And I will bless them that bless thee." Those who bless and honor Christ and His people will be blessed themselves. Whoever honors Christ will be honored by the Father.
6. A great defense.
"And curse him that curseth thee." God's curse is never given arbitrarily. Hitler earned a terrible curse for himself, his government and his nation because of what he did against the Jews. Whether the Jews are lovable or not, God says to the Gentiles: "Keep your hands off my people, I shall do all the punishing." He will certainly take care of the Jews and avenge those who mistreat them.
7. A great influence.
"And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Certainly this applies to the coming of Christ in humiliation to be the Saviour of sinners. It is always a great joy to a devout soul to become a blessing to others.

Why did God raise up the Jewish race and establish the nation of Israel?

1. That Israel might reaffirm and teach that there is but one God.
2. That she might be a repository for His truth on this earth.

The Jews were to be the writers, preservers and transmitters of the Holy Scriptures. To them were committed the "oracles of God."

3. That God through them might give the world a Saviour.
Israel was to be the channel for the coming of the Redeemer.
4. That Israel might be a national witness for God before the other nations.
5. That through Israel He might save the world from moral decay.