

15. A Pagan's first strides of Faith (2007)

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[0 : 00] Well then, do turn, if you would, to Genesis chapter 12. And welcome to the Bible class downstairs.

Our title this morning is A Patriarch's First Steps of Faith. That is, Real Christian Faith. Now, that's important because the story of Abraham begins not the Jewish faith, but the Christian faith.

Abraham, as the New Testament tells us very clearly, is the father of all the faithful, that is, of all true believers in Jesus Christ. The great epistles of the New Testament couldn't be clearer about that, could they?

Just read Romans or Galatians or Hebrews. So, Paul in Romans 4, 16, for example, says that the promise of God to us rests on grace and is guaranteed not just to ethnic Jews, but to all who share the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, he says.

Or as we read in Galatians 3, 19, those who are of faith in Christ are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. And of course, Hebrews chapter 11 is dominated, isn't it, by one figure amongst all of those great names, but it's dominated by Abraham.

[1 : 29] And he's held up, isn't he, as the great figure, the great example of faith to follow for all believers. But do you notice what these New Testament scriptures are saying to us?

We're to find salvation, they're saying to us, like Abraham, through faith alone, because Abraham is a great example. We find our faith and our salvation through Abraham as well.

You see, Abraham is our ancestor in the faith. We share the same gospel faith as he did. In that sense, he's an example to us. But in a very real sense, Abraham is also the author of our faith, isn't he?

Because it really was through Abraham that salvation came to all the nations. In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. And that's very important, because it reminds us that what we're studying here in the story of Abraham is not just the story of Abraham as Abraham, as a man just like us, with all his struggles of faith and obedience.

There is a lot of that, of course, and there's a very great deal for us to learn from him by way of example. And I trust we will do that this morning and in the weeks to come. But there's more than that too. Here we are.

[2 : 51] I've just knocked my glass of water over. Sorry, Billy. There's more to that too. We must remember that we're dealing with Abraham also as a pivotal figure of the faith.

Somebody who is playing an immensely important part in God's bigger story, the relentless purpose of his grace to bring redemption to that fallen and chaotic world of sin that Genesis 1-11 has shown us.

Abraham is a vital figure in God's plan and purpose of salvation for the world. The story that's fulfillment would only come when it reaches its climax in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham.

So we must always, when we're studying this story, keep both of these things in mind as we look at these chapters. It's a story, yes, of the personal faith and the testing of a true believer, indeed the great believer, the Bible calls him, Abraham.

But it's also, and above all, part of a far bigger story. A story that's in fact still in progress today of God's saving plan for the whole universe in Jesus Christ our Lord.

[4 : 07] And that's why these stories about Abraham are preserved in our Bibles today. It's for us. It's to teach us about our God and his unchanging ways and his unchanging purpose to bless all of those that he's called out of darkness and into the light of the kingdom of the Son that he loves.

That's why in Romans 15 Paul says that these things are for our instruction so that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. Now there's no hope or

encouragement for us really in Abraham, is there?

Or in any other great hero of the faith for that matter. He's just a man. But there is wonderful encouragement and hope and comfort for all of us in Abraham's God.

It's seeing what God can do in and through the life of a man who was just flesh and blood just like us that we too receive such wonderful encouragement. So as we read of these chapters speaking about Abraham we must always remember that the focus above all is not just on Abraham but it's as we sang in the hymn on Abraham's God and ours.

And if we look there we will indeed always find great and abundant encouragement. So without my way of introduction let's look then at this first half of Genesis chapter 12.

[5 : 35] The whole of Genesis 12 is really about the patriarch's first strides of faith and also as we'll see next time his stumblings of faith. We've only got time for the first half this morning otherwise I would be biting off more than you can chew.

But the structure of the paragraph is important and we must notice that. I want you to see that this morning. You see how the whole of chapter 12 falls into four easy paragraphs. That's the way it is in our Bibles anyway and it's quite helpful.

Notice the first and the last paragraph begin with God's initiative. Verse 1 Now the Lord said and verse 17 But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh.

And then notice that the two paragraphs in between begin with Abraham's initiative. Verse 4 So Abraham went and the second half of verse 10 So Abraham went.

And in fact verse 10 the first half of verse 10 is the pivot point the central point of this whole business the famine which was the challenge to Abraham's faith and we'll see that next time.

[6 : 42] It's God Abraham Abraham and God. Now just seeing that helps us I think to get clear doesn't it? The message about why Moses is writing this and why he writes it the way he does.

He wants us to see the contrast between the first half and the second half of this chapter. The first half is about God's gracious word of command to Abraham and Abraham's obedient walk of faith. And we could say by contrast the second half of the chapter is about Abraham's disobedient wobble of fear and yet God's gracious work of correction. So it all hangs together like that but this morning let's look then at the first half at God's gracious word of command and of Abraham's obedient walk of faith.

First then God's word of command. Look at verse 1. Clearly begins with a command doesn't it? God said go. And yet this word according to Paul is the gospel of God.

Galatians 3.8 God preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham. Immediately that ought to make us sit up and take note wouldn't it? The gospel of God is not just an offer to be pondered to be equivocated on.

[8 : 02] Not at all. The gospel of God is a sovereign command to be obeyed without question. I wonder if you realize that if you're not a Christian here this morning.

I remember Dick Lucas once telling me about a man who brought one of his friends to see him and he was in despair because he said this chap I've told him the whole gospel he understands it, he believes it, he accepts it but he just doesn't know whether he should become a Christian or not.

And he put all that to Dick Lucas and Dick said well there's no question in your mind you don't have any option God commands you to repent. And so he did that very day.

And that's right because you see the gospel is a sovereign command of God that must be obeyed. God said go.

No questions asked. And yet you see it is a command that promises wonderful blessings for those who do obey. In fact it's a command in order that you will be blessed.

[9 : 06] You'll notice I read verse two like that. Look at it again. Literally it says the Lord said to Abraham go and verse two so that I will make of you a great nation and bless you and so on.

You see all the initiative is God's. It's a sovereign command that you might be blessed. That's exceptionally clear when you consider who it is that God gives this command to because Abraham when he is called is a total pagan.

He came from Ur of the Chaldees. All of Moses' first readers would know about that. It was a great center of moon worship, of paganism. The very names of Abraham's father, Terah, and his wife, Sarai, are very probably derived from pagan gods, moon gods, and his consorts.

God's. If you doubt that, then just read Joshua 24, verse 2. It tells us plainly that Abraham and his family in the past served other gods.

Abraham was no proto-Christian. He was a pagan. And it does seem as though there was a bit of a struggle for Abraham to get free of that paganism. You'll see that the footnote to verse 1 says, perhaps we should read it, God had said to Abraham, leave his country.

[10:25] And that may very well be best in the sense that elsewhere in scripture, in particular, if you read Acts chapter 7 verses 1 to 4, you'll find very clearly that we're told that God's call came to Abraham long before he left Haran.

God's call came to him clearly when he was still in Ur of the Chaldees. But then we read here in these verses that his whole family went off and yet they got stuck in Haran.

They didn't get to Canaan. Haran, incidentally, was another great center of moon worship, of paganism. It's clear, you see, in verse 1 where you see that God says to Abraham, go from your country, your native land.

It's exactly the same word that's used in chapter 11 verse 28, the land of his kindred. So he was still there when God first called him. Now the focus here in Genesis 12, of course, is on Abraham's obedience.

But it does seem that from these last verses of chapter 11, they speak about the obstacles and the entanglements of family and culture that for whatever reason took time for Abraham to throw off.

[11:36] Until at last, as Stephen very clearly says in Acts chapter 7, God removed him from Haran into the promised land of Canaan.

See, this is not the initiative of man at work here. It's a sovereign intervention of God himself to transform a helpless pagan into a heroic patriarch of the family of God.

And that is the mark of the genuine gospel, isn't it? It's the call of God from death to life, from darkness to light. It's the command of a sovereign authority and power.

Many of you here this morning who are Christians can testify to exactly that, can't you? God reached into your life and commanded you to change. And he pulled you into a new life altogether. But I'm sure also you can testify this, that yes it is a command, but it's a command full of grace and promise. See, these verses 1 to 3 chapter 12, they're wonderful, wonderful verses, aren't they?

[12:52] A wonderful description of the gospel that was promised beforehand to Abraham. It's very, very important to get these verses clear in our mind, because the whole of the rest of the book of Genesis stands on them.

In fact, the whole of the rest of the Bible stands on these words. There are different ways to analyse it, but I rather like Ralph Davis' phrase. He calls it the quad promise, because of the four elements that it has in it.

And I think that's helpful. Here's my version then, of how we should look at this quad promise. I think it shows how the command and the promise of God is all bound together right the way through.

Just look at these verses. First of all, a place of blessing for Abraham is commanded and promised. Verse 1, Abraham's commanded to go to the land that will be his home.

And if you notice, verse 7, it's the home also of his true seed. Not any others, not the Canaanites, but your offspring. A place of blessing for Abraham.

[13:52] Second, he's promised a people of blessing from Abraham and commanded that too. Verse 2, a great nation. Verse 7, a great seed and offspring will be his.

Third, a personal blessing to Abraham is commanded and promised. Look at verse 3, there will be blessing for those who bless him and curse for his enemies.

In other words, God's presence and his protection will be personally with him always. And then fourth, of course, if you look at the second half of verse 3, a plan of blessing through Abraham is commanded and promised.

In you, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. A place, a people, a personal blessing of protection and a plan for the world.

You see, Abraham is called, isn't he, to leave behind his whole old life. He leaves behind his household, but he receives God's family, a progeny of his own.

[14:57] He's to leave behind his homeland, but he receives God's place of blessing to be his own home. He leaves behind the protection, the security of his own kindred, but he receives the protection of the personal God who's present with him.

And all of this, so that also, he's not only to be a receiver of God's blessing, but he's to be a conduit, a passage of God's blessing for multitudes of others, for all the peoples of the world to be blessed

through him.

And that is the unchanging call of the gospel, isn't it? To leave behind all of the old world, and yet to receive abundantly the life and the blessing of God for ourselves, and also through ourselves to others.

That's the gospel, isn't it? The call of God. That's exactly what Jesus called his disciples to. Read Matthew chapter 4, for example. God calls them, leave behind your fishing nets, leave behind your father's boats, your father's house, and come and follow me.

Blessings. And I will make you blessers of others, fishers of men. A command and a promise. And the gospel never ever separates those things, because it's the command and the call of a sovereign Lord who promises his grace, and therefore who demands response.

[16:21] The only response of absolute loyalty and obedience. And verses 4 to 9 show us the only true response to this gracious command of God.

They show us Abraham's obedient walk of faith, don't they? Look at verse 4. So Abraham went as the Lord had told him.

Do you want to know what it means in the Bible to have faith? Well, there it is, right there. Abraham went as God told him. That's faith. The faith in the Bible is not at all, not at all what people like Richard Dawkins want us to believe.

Believing the impossible. Believing the irrational. A leap into the dark. Of course not. It's exactly the opposite. Faith, according to the Bible, is a step into the light.

It's a walk. Literally, verse 4 says Abraham walked as the Lord had told him. It's a walk into the light and the truth of God's clear revelation. It's a walk in obedience to his word of command.

[17:31] That's real faith. Listen to Hebrews 11, the great faith chapter sums it up in verse 8. By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

See, real faith means a new walk in obedience to the God of all the earth. We could summarize, if you like, these verses by saying they portray a new walk and a new worship.

Abraham displays, doesn't he, a changed way of life and a changed focus of worship. His walk is new. It's a walk away from his old life.

He left behind all the entanglements of paganism. And with that, no doubt, there were many very painful wrenches that he had to make. Many precious things, precious people and relationships that had to be left behind.

Well, any converted believer can tell you that that is true, isn't it? There's cost in walking away from an old life, to walk away from the past, from the old.

[18:38] But that's what Abraham did. He walked away and he walked into something new, much of which was unseen and as yet unknown. Wednesday night, I tried to quote this from Derek Kidner, but I couldn't read my own writing, so I'll try again just now.

He says, Abraham must exchange the known for the unknown and find his reward in what he could not live to see, a great nation, in what was intangible, a name, and in what he would impart, a blessing.

And that's hard, isn't it? That's very hard. But that is what the Bible means by repentance and faith. It's a walk away from the old life, a decisive turning of direction, and it's a walk into and on in the new life forever at the command of God.

And of course, all of that is because of a new focus in worship. You notice what Abraham was doing all the way along. Well, he's building, isn't he?

But not building like the men of Babel, not building a city and a monument to himself, no, building altars to the Lord. Look at verse 6 and 7. There he is, right at the very heart of this pagan land at Shechem, at the tree of Moriah.

[20:02] The name means teaching. It was very probably a site of pagan worship. And right there in the heart of a pagan land, in the place of pagan worship, this man, Abraham, will teach the way of the one true Lord.

And he will publicly acknowledge him in his life of worship. And there again, verse 8, you see the same thing at Bethel. He calls on the name of the Lord.

And that is the great mark of genuine spiritual life, isn't it? The great mark of the life of God in the soul of man. Prayer. True prayer. Speaking, conversing with the living God.

Remember Saul of Tarsus? After his encounter with the command of God through the risen Christ? Ananias went to see him. He's told, behold, he's praying. Real prayer for the first time ever in his life.

Not the endless roots of prayer heaped up with phrases all the way through his pious religious life. But real prayer. Calling on the name of the Lord whom he knew, whom he'd encountered, whom he'd met.

[21 : 05] A genuine change in walk, you see, comes because of a genuine change in worship. And that's real faith. That's what the Bible means by faith anyway.

And by contrast, of course, if that's not really there, then there is no real faith. It doesn't matter what you profess. If there's not a changed walk, there hasn't been a change of worship, has there? By their fruit, you will know them, says Jesus. And the fruit doesn't lie. But don't miss this. It's in the context of obedience to the command of God that this reality of spiritual experience for Abraham comes into being.

Do you see that? It's when Abraham obeys God and goes to the place that God demands that he should find blessing. It's then and there that he finds and knows God.

You see, verse 7, it was there that the Lord appeared to Abraham. Now maybe you're here this morning because you're searching for a true spiritual experience.

[22 : 16] You're searching for an experience of God. Well, the Bible tells you that you must obey God's command to you. To come and seek him through Jesus Christ alone.

To walk with him in his way and worship him alone if you want to find him. Because the true experience of God today can only be found by an obedient walk of faith in Jesus Christ.

I am the way and the truth and the life, said Jesus. And by contrast, no man comes to the Father but by me. So that's important if you're searching for God.

It's also very important for all of us, isn't it, who are already following Jesus because we often find ourselves, don't we, wanting better and fuller spiritual experiences. Jesus. And we seek them in all sorts of ways, all kinds of things, all kinds of blessings.

But alas, very often we seek them with very little thought for our own consecration, our own obedience to God and his command. Listen to something I read this week in William Still's Bible Notes.

[23 : 25] to obey is better than sacrifice. But we often want our religious experience before we obey. Not so. Pure obedience is the only way to authentic religious experience.

I wonder if that's a word for some of us today. I'm sure it's a word to all of us. It certainly was a deliberate word from Moses to his heroes, the Israelites in the desert when he first wrote this to them.

They were very probably standing on the brink of the promised land at last. Remember, you see, when we read this scripture, though it is written for us, of course, first of all, it was written directly to the Israelites and for them, wasn't it?

We mustn't forget that. It was Moses' challenge to the Israelites. Now, don't look now, but if you want to look later at the second half of Deuteronomy chapter 11, you'll see that Moses tells the Israelites that as soon as they enter the promised land, they are to go to exactly the place that he mentions here in verses 6 and 7, to Shechem and to the oak of Moreh.

And there on the mountains on either side, they are to be challenged to obey God and to receive the blessings promised Abraham. Or, if they will not obey, to bring on themselves the curses of those who refuse to obey God and the God of Abraham.

[24 : 53] And that's why Moses wrote this chapter, you see. Moses is saying to his heroes, look at Abraham. See his obedience. See the blessings God showered upon him and don't you falter in your faith.

Imitate his strides of faith into the land and receive God's promised blessings. And what an encouragement Moses is giving to them to do just that.

He's calling them, isn't he, to see God's faithfulness to those promises he first gave to Abraham. And to know that he'll go on being faithful to them as he gives them to his people today.

See they knew, didn't they, that God's word had come true. He'd kept his promise. They were already a great nation, just as God had said. They had known, hadn't they, God's protection, his presence with them all through their wandering in the wilderness.

And now, here they were on the brink of the promised land, on the brink of a great destiny. And here, Moses is reminding them that already in that land, they're going to find altars for the one true God.

[25 : 58] It's God's land. As Derek Kidner puts it again, Abraham's action planted the flag at the heart of the promised land and declared the Lord's writ runs everywhere.

His altars are already there. Paganism has been pushed aside. You see, he's saying there's nothing to fear. Trust the Lord. And look at Abraham, your ancestor, God's servant. He went this way before you. There were Canaanites in the land then, but he trusted God's word. To your offspring I will give this land, not to them. In the very first chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses reminds the new generation of Israelites of the failures of their previous generation, the lost generation.

Remember, they refused to enter the land. They refused to go up into land because their hearts melted at the pagans, the Canaanites and their cities. Moses had said to them, the Lord will go before you.

He'll fight for you. He's the covenant protector, just as he promised to Abraham. But as Moses says in Deuteronomy 1.32, in spite of this word, you did not believe your God.

[27 : 11] And what was the result? Well, you know, don't you? Forty years of wandering in the wilderness, a lost generation. They wouldn't believe God's promise and they wouldn't obey God's commands.

So they couldn't receive God's blessings. And you see, if you won't believe and obey the command of God, you can't find true spiritual blessing.

You can't find true spiritual prosperity. You can't find your true spiritual destiny. Not now and not ever. Not eternally. And that's as true a statement today as it was in the day Abraham first heard God's call.

The day the Israelites heard it through Moses. But you see, Moses is appealing to this people. Be like Abraham. He might have put it like this.

Lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run before us, the race set before us, looking at Abraham, the founder of our faith.

[28 : 18] Stride out in faith like him to inherit the blessings that came to him and that came through him to you today. Of course, just putting it like that makes it so clear, doesn't it?

That though Moses wrote to them and for them, the Spirit of God has preserved all of this for us because we too need to find the same encouragement, the same hope in the promise of Abraham's God.

Those words I read are just words from the New Testament, aren't they? From Hebrews 12. It was a word written to New Testament believers in Jesus Christ, just like us.

Listen again to what the Hebrews writer says in Hebrews 11 and 12. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance and he went out not knowing where he went.

For he was looking to the city that has foundations and whose designer and builder is God.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race set before us.

[29 : 33] Now do you see? It's the same gospel, isn't it? The same command to leave the old behind and to set our hopes on the place that God has promised for his people. And the same promise of blessing, of protection of his presence among his people and of his place and eternal city forever.

And see, Moses' words with all his encouragement, with all his comfort, with all his challenge, they're also words for us. And they're for us because of that bigger picture, the bigger story, which is what this is all about.

It's not just what God was doing for Abraham to bless him and to protect him and to be with him and to give him a great reward and inheritance. No, it wasn't just that. It was what God was doing through Abraham and through him for the whole world.

In you, all the families of the earth will be blessed. And you see, what God began with faithful Abraham, the great character of this book of Genesis, well he completes and he fulfills in the great character of the second book of Genesis.

Did you know there was another book of Genesis in the Bible? Well, it's the first book of the New Testament, isn't it? Do you remember back to our studies in Matthew's Gospel? Do you remember how the very first verse of the New Testament begins?

[30 : 56] Let me remind you. The book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Abraham. And that's why, as we've already said, Jesus' ministry is exactly the same Gospel, the same command and promise that the Lord spoke to Abraham way back then.

Jesus himself spoke when he walked the earth. And that was and still is the call to discipleship. Leave behind the old life.

Your fishing nets, your father's house, whatever that means for you and for me today. Walk away from the old and walk into the new, a new kind of walk because of a new focus of worship on Jesus Christ, the living God.

And walk away from this perishing old world with all its values, with all its treasures. And walk towards what Jesus himself calls the new world, the regeneration, literally, of the whole universe that he accomplished in his first coming and that he will usher in in his return forever.

That's the command of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, what's his promise if that's his command? Well, you remember, don't you, Peter asked him that question in Matthew 19.

[32 : 20] Peter said, see, we've left everything and followed you. What will we have? And Jesus said, truly, I say to you, in the new world, everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or fathers or mother or children or lands for my namesake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

You see? That's the blessing, isn't it? Promised to Abraham. Now come to all the world, all the nations through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and through his gospel.

And that's why Paul says in Galatians chapter 3 that God's plan is now fulfilled. That in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come both to the Gentiles as well as to the natural Jews through faith.

That's why the apostles all the way through Acts are preaching the gospel in exactly those same terms as it was preached in advance to Abraham. Acts 10 says, God shows no partiality, but in every nation men who fear him are acceptable to him because the good news is of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all.

Abraham's gospel, Moses' gospel, Jesus' gospel, the apostles' gospel, it's all the same gospel. The same wonderful promises, yes, blessings in abundance.

[33 : 45] And the same urgent command, leave and go. This is the gospel preached in advance to Abraham.

And this is the gospel, Paul says, at the close of his great epistle, his great exposition of the gospel in Romans. It's the gospel, he says, that is now made known through the message of Jesus Christ to all nations according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith. The gospel is the command of God to be blessed through obedience to one Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ and to his command.

So let me ask you this this morning. Do you want to know the eternal God? The only God. The creator of the heavens and the earth. Do you want to inherit the blessings that he promised to Abraham and to all the nations through his seed, the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, you can. In fact, God wants you to. In fact, God commands you to. But there's only one way to know these blessings.

[35 : 05] It's through obedience to his commands. Obedience to his command, to a new walk because of a new way of worship. He says to you, go, leave your old ways, your old life, your old relationships, all the defining features of your identity in this present world and come to the one place that he has shown you and shows all the world as the one place of blessing in his eternal dwelling, in the person of Jesus Christ, his Son.

Leave behind everything that's known, that's familiar, that's comfortable and find your reward in what is unseen, what's intangible with your earthly eyes in the new world and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Stride out in faith, walking in that new way and build an altar to him in your life to worship him alone. Do that and I promise you and God promises you that all that he has promised to Abraham will be yours forever on the day that Jesus returns to bring in his new world.

a world of abundance and of joy and of blessing forever. But even now, friends, and don't miss this, even now, indeed, the very moment that you trust and obey his command, you will know his intimate presence with you now as Abraham did.

See, in verse 7, the Lord appeared to Abraham and he spoke to him, didn't he, words of intimate assurance that his future was secured forever. To your offspring I will give this land.

[36 : 49] And that's what he promises to every believer who steps out in faith and obedience to Jesus. He promises a wonderful assurance that this is his purpose for you. If you love me, says Jesus, you will keep my commands.

And I will ask the Father and he will give you another comforter to be with you forever. The Spirit of truth, you know him, he will be in you. That's his promise.

God's own Spirit, the Spirit of our risen Savior in us to assure us of his presence and his love and of his commitment forever as heirs of his own family.

Because your son, says Paul, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. He sends his Spirit to assure us, first of all, that our worship is real, that he is the true God and that we can know him and trust him and that we can call on his name every day of our lives.

But also, he sends his Spirit to assure us that our walk with him is possible. Is that what's holding you back from becoming a Christian? Is that what's holding you back from following Jesus Christ?

[38 : 02] I find often that it is. Somebody says, well, after they've been coming to church for a while or they've heard the gospel or they've come to Christianity to explore and they say, like that man who went to see Dick Lucas, they say, yes, I understand it all.

I think I can accept it all as true. But I just don't know if I can live it. I can see it's going to be so hard, so costly.

It's too costly. It'll kill me to follow Jesus like that. It'll kill me to walk away from my present life and walk that path of complete newness with him.

It's often the same thing, isn't it, that makes you and I as Christians want to throw in the towel, isn't it? It is with me because we know that's true, don't we? It is hard.

It is costly. It's killing to follow Jesus. Paul says, we die daily. And often we want to give it up, don't we? When our old ways beckon, when old pleasures beckon, when old relationships and practices stalk us.

[39 : 11] But no, you see, the gospel says we have received the promised spirit when we've obeyed the gospel to follow Jesus. And all who so obey and follow shall receive his spirit too.

It's impossible to believe and obey without the spirit of God. And so, friend, if you're not a Christian and that is all that's holding you back, your walk is possible because of the spirit of Christ in you.

So don't hold back. And friends, if you're a fellow believer, your walk is still possible. So don't give up. Keep on walking in the faith of Abraham. Keep on.

Let me close with another version of this same gospel preached beforehand to Abraham. This time later on in Paul's argument in Galatians 5 and 6 where he's urging on God's people of faith, the Israel of God as he calls them.

That's us. When he urges them on just as Moses urged on Israel in his day with a command and a promise just the same. Listen. Galatians 5 verse 16.

[40 : 14] I say, walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. You will walk away and keep walking away from your past life with all the entanglements and sin.

If you walk with Jesus, that's a command and a promise. And here's another. Galatians 6 verse 8. The one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life.

Sow to the spirit and you will reap a command and a promise. You will walk and you'll keep walking and you'll arrive at that destiny of blessing which God has called you to in Christ.

If you keep walking with Jesus Christ your saviour. A command and a promise to Abraham and to Israel and to you and me today.

It's a big command, isn't it? Yes it is. Don't underestimate it. It demands everything from you and it always will. But what a promise.

[41 : 25] What a promise. Blessings beyond imagining in the glory of the new world, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me leave you then repeating the words of that hymn that we sang before the sermon.

Take his easy yoke and wear it. Love will make obedience sweet. Christ will give you strength to bear it while his wisdom guides your feet safe to glory where his ransomed captives meet.

May God grant us all the grace so to walk with our Lord Jesus Christ today and every day until that great day. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, you said to Abraham, go. And Abraham went and came to the land and there you appeared to him.

May we take upon our hearts, we pray this morning, the glorious words of your command and your promise. That in leaving behind the past and in walking with you forever, worshipping you alone, we might know the joy of our presence with us now and the certainty and the assurance of all that you've promised for us on the day of your great return.

[42 : 55] Strengthen us in our walk, we pray, as we worship your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and as we walk with him. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.