

# The Powerful Seed Who Brings Peace

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[ 0 : 00 ] And now we're going to turn to our Bible reading. Do grab a Bible from the side or the back. Red Bibles are spread across the place for visitors.

Do grab one if you don't have one and follow along as we continue in Genesis together. Willie Phillip, our senior minister, will be preaching to us a little later in the service.

I'm preaching from Genesis chapter 21. Genesis chapter 21 verses 22 to 34. So we're reading together Genesis chapter 21 from verse 22 through to the end of the chapter.

At that time, Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, said to Abraham, God is with you in all that you do. Now, I therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity.

But as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned. Abraham said, I will swear.

[ 1 : 17 ] When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, Abimelech said, I do not know who has done this thing.

You did not tell me. I have not heard of it until today. So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech. And the two men made a covenant.

Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart. And Abimelech said to Abraham, what is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart? He said, these seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well.

Therefore, that place was called Beersheba. Because there, both of them swore an oath. So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines.

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines.

[ 2 : 35 ] Amen. This is God's word and we'll be returning to it shortly. Well, do turn in your Bibles or find a Bible and turn to the passage that we read together, Genesis chapter 21.

Now, the incident that we find in these verses might seem to be a bit odd, a bit randomly placed here in the story.

But if you look at verse 22, it clearly connects these events with the events surrounding Isaac's birth and his weaning. Weaning at that time is when this happened.

In other words, as a consequence of the arrival of Isaac, the long promised seed. A seed who brought delight by his birth. But also, as we saw last time, brought division in the covenant household by his establishment in life, his weaning.

So now the promised seed, the long promised seed has come. He's secure. He's been weaned. He's not dead in childbirth or infancy, as was very common in those times.

[ 3 : 51 ] And he's safe now from the rivalry of his mocking half-brother Ishmael, who's now departed. But the question is, what about the future?

And especially as regards the land where they sojourned, because it was still a place of rival kings and armies and so on. Will he be safe in the future?

What about all the rest of God's promises that hung so much on the future of this birth, the birth of the promised seed? What difference does this birth according to promise actually make?

Well, these verses now show God demonstrating to Abraham and to all Moses readers of this, which includes us, demonstrating that he is the God who keeps all his promises.

And we see the affirmation of every one of God's promises to Abraham going right back to Genesis 12. And we see it being fulfilled step by step. As verse 1 of this chapter reminded us, as God said, as God had promised, so he did.

[ 5 : 00 ] So Abraham has the progeny that God had promised, a son and heir, the beginning of a great people. He's seen God's presence and God's protection all around him to bless those who bless him, to curse those who curse him.

He's seen God's place, the land being confirmed to him, putting down roots there in the land. And now he experiences the pattern of God's plan, which will come to fruition through Abraham's seed, as he brings blessing and as he brings peace to a pagan nation in this covenant of peace that he makes with Abimelech, the Philistine king, the pagan king.

So what's this story telling us? Why does Moses record it right here? Why does he tell us that it was at that time? Well, because he's telling us that this birth is very special, that it's powerful.

And that the birth of God's promised seed is a powerful birth that brings peace to the nations. It issues here in a covenant of peace with pagan nations and their kings through God's chosen servant.

So here is a long promised birth that brings conflict and division within the company of the circumcised, and yet it results in the homage of Gentile kings.

[ 6 : 30 ] Something rather familiar about that pattern, isn't there? If you've read Matthew chapter 2. Well, let's look at the story, starting with scene 1 in verses 22 to 24, which is all about the power of God's presence.

It's the power of God's presence with his covenant servant. And the message is that this God is a God who is faithful, even to imperfect human servants.

Demonstrate these verses the power of God's covenant presence to attract the pagan world to seek blessing and peace by joining themselves with God's covenant servant.

So here comes Abimelech, a pagan king we've already met in chapter 20, and now he's suing for peace with Abraham. And it's an astonishing episode, isn't it, happening at that time, at the time when Israel's future has at last been secured through Isaac, by Isaac's weaning and by his protection as the sole heir.

And he has a Gentile king who in a way seems to grasp more of the significance of the birth of this child than some of those who belong to the household of the circumcision.

[ 7 : 43 ] Well, that sounds familiar too, doesn't it? Verse 22 tells us clearly that Abimelech sees the reality that God is with Abraham in a very special way, that God's hand is upon him, that he is his chosen servant.

And therefore he knows that he must ensure peace with this man and not be in conflict with him. He must have this man with him, not against him.

So verse 23 he says, Swear here to me by God that you'll deal kindly with me. Notice there, you see, he's assuming, isn't he, that God's promises to Abraham are true because he's talking about the future, the future of their descendants.

He's assuming that Abraham's descendants are going to be there in the land as a people of God's special blessing. So he has grasped something of the significance of God's promise to Abraham and he's acting accordingly.

He's a Gentile, he's a pagan, but he's determined to throw in his lot with the future of the people of God. Astonishing thing, isn't it?

[ 8 : 53 ] The power of God's presence with his servant Abraham to exhibit that kind of response from this pagan king. And Abraham is experiencing God's promise to him in action.

Here he is being a blessing to those of the other nations of the earth, despite all his faults and his failings. And Abimelech, for one, certainly knows all about Abraham's faults and failings.

Just read back into chapter 20. In fact, that might be why he says in verse 23 here, swear that you won't deal falsely with me, because, of course, that is precisely what Abraham had done with him before.

And yet he senses the power of God's presence upon the life of this man at that time, at the time of the birth and the establishment of the promised seed of blessing.

But also, and I'm sure this also is significant, at the time when Abraham had exhibited great obedience to God's call to trust him and to show that trust and that commitment to his covenant through a great deal of personal pain and personal cost.

[ 10 : 03 ] Remember, he'd had to send away his other son, Ishmael and Hagar, for the sake of God's plan and purpose for his life. It was at that time that the power of God's presence was such an evident reality in his life and that his witness among the pagans was most fruitful and most real

in abundance.

That's an abiding pattern, isn't it, that the Bible teaches? That the God of power makes his home and abides with those who love him and who keep his word, as Jesus said.

And it's those who abide in him like that who bear much fruit. Because apart from him, we can't do anything. Isn't that what Jesus said?

He gives his spirit to those who obey him. But that's a wonderful encouragement, isn't it, to obey God. To commit, to consecrate our lives to his covenant purposes, whatever the cost, whatever the pain, whatever the forfeits in terms of this world's treasures and this world's relationships.

To know the power of his presence in our lives, like that, the drawing power to the world around.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? Think of the encouragement that must have been for Moses' first readers, for Israel, on the brink of the land of Canaan, with everything that lay ahead of them.

[11:34] When Moses was handing over to Joshua to lead the people in Deuteronomy chapter 31, he says this to him, Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of all these pagan kings you're going to meet.

For it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you. And that's just what God is saying to Abraham here.

Don't fear these pagan worlds and nations around about with their kings and their rulers and their armies. Look at Abraham. When God's covenant servants consecrate themselves to him and walk in faith and trust in his promise, even the world around will see that the Lord is with you.

And they'll fear. fear him rightly. And they'll come to you and want to be in peace with you. And if you read on in the story of Joshua, in fact, you'll find that's exactly what happens.

It's astonishing, isn't it? In Joshua chapter 2, how Rahab, the pagan Canaanite, echoes exactly the words of Abimelech, the king here. We've seen, she says, and we've heard that your God, the Lord, is God of heaven and earth and that he's with you in all that you do.

[12:49] So now swear to me by the Lord your God that you'll deal kindly with me and with my family and that you'll deliver us from death. It's very striking, isn't it?

Because she sees also the power of God's presence with his covenant servants when they're advancing at God's command in obedience to him. Later on in Joshua, there's an even more astonishing story.

You remember, the Gibeonites, they were so desperate to save themselves that they actually got into an elaborate deception in order to get Joshua to swear a covenant of peace with them.

And they sort of forced their way in, so determined were they to have God's blessing. And actually, God honored that persistence. He granted them a covenant of protection. You see, when God's people trust him, when they obey him, when they are committed to his great covenant purpose, above all other things, the advance of his kingdom, then he is powerfully present in the midst with them to bring that peace and to bring blessing to the pagan peoples of the world around.

People who sense that there's something there, who are moved to seek peace with the God of heaven and earth. Because we shouldn't be surprised, should we, to see that pattern at work here.

[14:10] Because as well as recording the history of redemption, the Old Testament is also prophecy. It's a book of promise. It's looking forward all the time to ultimate fulfillment in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moses wrote about me, says Jesus. I wouldn't be surprised at all to see the same pattern coming to its climax in the abundantly powerful presence of God with the servant of the covenant, Jesus himself, the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

In Jesus, who is himself God with us, Emmanuel, and from whom the power of God's personal presence shone forth with all the glory and might of eternity in all its fullness.

Remember, even as a young boy in Luke's Gospel, you read of Jesus as he grew up and the favor of God was upon him. In his life too, he showed exactly the same pattern.

Within the household of Israel, within the people of the circumcision, his presence often caused conflict and division. Isn't that right? And yet, to those outside, often it was the Gentiles, the pagans, so often for whom he had a wonderful drawing power.

[15:26] Think of the Gentile kings who came to pay homage at Jesus' birth. Think of the Gentile centurion whom Jesus said showed greater faith and understanding than anyone in the whole of Israel.

Maybe the most striking story of all is that one in Matthew chapter 15 of the Canaanite woman, the utter pagan, who comes to Jesus and says, Lord, have mercy on me, son of David.

And she actually uses the same words as Rahab uses in the Greek version of the Old Testament in Joshua chapter 2. And you remember at first, Jesus says, no, no, no, you're an outsider. He's saying to her, in effect, you're a Gentile dog, a pagan dog.

Yes, she says. Do you remember? But even dogs can get some of the crumbs that fall from the master's table. And she won't take no for an answer.

She forces her way into that covenant of peace with God's great servant of the covenant, the Lord Jesus himself. And Jesus says to her, great is your faith, so be it done to you as you desire.

[16:29] You see, all because of the power of God's presence in perfect fullness. in the life of Jesus, the true servant of the covenant, Emmanuel himself, God with us.

And that's as the prophet Isaiah had spoken. Do you remember? The Lord will rise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you and nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising.

That's the great zenith. That's the great fulfillment in Jesus Christ, God's perfect covenant servant. But it's a pattern, isn't it, that's at work all through the story of God's promise and God's redemption. And it's reflected here in Abraham's life way, way back then. But of course, it's also the calling, isn't it, of every true servant of the covenant of Lord Jesus since Jesus' coming.

What did he say? You are my witnesses. You are my ambassadors to carry the power of my presence to the pagan world. God. That's the meaning of Pentecost.

[17:36] That's the significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit, of the risen Lord Jesus upon his church so that we may carry the power of his presence, the presence of God, to all the nations of this earth for the salvation of all those who will see and understand and seek peace with God, seek a covenant of peace in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will receive power, said Jesus, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. Go and make disciples of all nations and I will be with you, he said.

Do you remember? Even to the very end of the age. The power of God's presence with his servants. Power to draw, the outsider, the absolute pagan, the enemy.

because they see God is really with you in all that you do, just as they said to Abraham. That's exactly what you see demonstrated, isn't it, all through the book of Acts.

They had the favor of all the people because people could see that God was really among them. And the Lord added to that number daily those who were being saved as a result.

[18:50] That's extraordinary. But remember, it was the power of God's presence among a consecrated people, a committed people. Those verses in Acts tell us that the people were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and to prayer.

They were devoting all they had in their substance to the needs of the kingdom. They had glad and generous hearts for the gospel. And like Abraham, that meant that they knew the cost of being covenant servants.

They knew the power of the risen Christ because they also were sharing in his sufferings. There's no cheap steps, there's no easy steps either to lives that are full of the power of God's presence. There's no special baptism, there's no special blessings that you can have to suddenly bring that power into your life. No, no, no. It's what the old Puritan said, out of the presses of pain cometh the soul's best wine.

And there's a real challenge in that for all of us. But there's also a real encouragement. Surely there's a great encouragement here for flawed and imperfect servants of the Lord as we are, as Abraham was.

[20:01] Now where God's servants put his gospel demands at the heart of their lives, where a fellowship of God's people put the word of God and obedience to it at the heart of their corporate life, then the power of God's presence will be at work among his people and it will be seen and it will draw people to the light of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Even the total outsider, the great ones and the humble ones, the Abimelechs and the Rahab, the harlots. And that happens even in our gathering just like this morning, just like today.

Paul, the apostle, says that that will be so where God's word is at the center, where the gospel is the focus. He said to the church in Corinth, if a total unbeliever, an outsider comes in, however

ignorant, because God is among you and his presence is among you, the secrets of his heart can be exposed and he will worship God and say, God is really among you. Isn't that what we should be praying for week by week in every one of our gatherings as a church? I wonder if we ever do do that. Remember, Jesus says, you don't have because you don't ask. So we should be asking, shouldn't we? Always. But it's a great encouragement, isn't it, for our own lives, personally, even our ordinary lives, just to live for the Lord Jesus with all of our might. [ 21 : 26 ] Remember what Peter says, beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles, keep your conduct among the pagans honorable so they will see your good deeds and glorify our Father God on the day of his visitation.

He's saying, we're just humble sojourners. We're just exiles in this world like Abraham was. But we too can be the witnesses that God uses to bring outsiders to rejoice in him. That's the power of God's presence with his servants. Even feeble and imperfect servants like Abraham and like us. He's a God who is wonderfully faithful to those that he calls his own. But there's more for us to see in this message than just the power of God's presence because if you look at verses 25 to 32, they give us great insight into the pattern of God's peace. The pattern of his peace through his covenant servant.

And the message you see here is that God is a God who is to be feared and that his covenant of peace is a serious thing. It's not a trifling matter. And these verses demonstrate a pattern that shows that peace with God's covenant servant is not without cost.

[ 22 : 45 ] Not without cost to his servant and nor is it without commitment to honor his due rights and lordship in the things that are naturally his.

Remember the first readers of this? The people of Israel in the desert? They understood all about covenants. Their whole identity. They were centered on their covenant with God. And they knew, didn't they, that whenever a covenant was sworn, even if it was freely given and graciously given, as Abraham gave this promise here in verse 24, I will swear, he says, nevertheless, they knew that a covenant was never one-sided.

they knew that a covenant oath always makes demands. And it demands a response of real commitment. And that commitment is something that is evident not just in words, but in deeds, in real life, in specific actions.

And that's what we see here, you see, in this covenant between Abraham and Abimelech. That's the point of verse 25, you see. Just saying peace doesn't mean anything if that's just words, because real peace involves action.

Real peace has to be made. Real peace has to be observed. Real peace has costs associated with it. If not, it's just a pretend peace. And so Abraham says, yes, Abimelech, I will swear to be at peace with you.

[ 24 : 10 ] That is a promise. But now, there's a matter of this well that your servants have seized from me. And if we're going to have a covenant of peace, then you also have got to be true to it.

You need to put things right that are wrong between us. As Abraham's just being realistic here, he's saying to Abimelech, all right, you acknowledge God is with me, you acknowledge that this promise of the land is for me and my offspring and we're going to be here, but you know as well as I do that if we don't have access to water, this land is worth nothing and we're finished.

So if you really want to confess your faith in my God's promise, if you really want to find blessing through me, then show me your faith by your deeds, as James would put it.

Now, whether Abraham, verse 26 here, whether he really didn't know what had gone on with the well or not, we don't know. But either way, Abraham forces him to show the reality of his desire for peace.

Notice how different his approach was, by the way, from the encounter with Abimelech in chapter 20 when Abraham had acted with deception, do you remember? And it all ended in a near disaster. But here, he seems to have learned that you can trust God and his promise to protect you and to be with you and to really trust God's promise about the land.

[ 25 : 32 ] So he just puts it absolutely straight to Abimelech and asks for his well back. Because what he's saying is there can be no real peace with God's covenant servant if his rights and his demands are going to be ignored.

Now again, you see that familiar pattern. Abraham takes the initiative, he freely grants peace, but he also demands a right response.

He says Abimelech has got to put things right. He's got to commit to changing his ways. Now again, you see it's God's servant, it's Abraham, who initiates, indeed who provides the covenant sacrifice, verse 27.

He provides all the cattle for the sacrifice. Verse 28, He provides these seven new lambs. It's God's servant who bears all the cost of making this peace and this being a lasting peace.

That's striking, don't you think? He pays a heavy right, a heavy price for what is actually his by right. But in doing so, he enables Abimelech to enter into a real covenant of peace and where peace is truly made and where past wrongs are put to right.

[ 26 : 47 ] And yet at the same time, God's servant demands fidelity, he demands loyalty, and he demands that there is a yielding to him of what is rightfully his as God's chosen one. Now again, there is surely a prophetic pattern, a shadow of the great climax of that in the work of the Messiah Jesus, the true seed of Abraham because Jesus also called outsiders into his presence, didn't he?

He called sinners, even tax collectors and Gentiles, and he called them freely by his grace and yet at the same time he always called them to repentance, to submission to his lordship, to yield to him everything that is his by rights.

His call was a call of grace, it was a call of great grace. Lord, have mercy on me, Lord, deal kindly with me, and he says, yes, I will, I will swear, but come, follow me, give to me what's mine by rights, your life, which I created, which exists to bring glory to me.

That's the true gospel, isn't it? There's no cheap grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There's no cheap peace in the covenant of peace with the true God. The gospel is a call of grace, always, but it's real grace which calls to real repentance, to real commitment, to real discipleship, recognizing the true lordship of God's covenant servant, Jesus, over everything and over everyone.

Recognizing, as the reformers used to put it, the crown rights of the Redeemer over everything you are and everything you have. You see, the God of Abraham is the God of heaven and earth and he's exalted Jesus, his true servant, as both Lord and Christ, says the apostle.

[ 28 : 49 ] And this servant came into the world to make peace and to grant real peace with God. And he offers peace freely in the word of his gospel.

But that same word always demands submission, always demands a yielding to total control to him, to whom it belongs by rights.

That's the pattern of God's peace, always. The pattern that's offered freely to the outsider through his covenant servant, whether it's in Abraham's day or in Jesus' day or indeed whether it's in our own day.

See, Abraham might have easily been tempted, might indeed, to hide the frank demands of God's revealed way, to make his gospel of peace a bit easier as it were.

Yes, yes, peace, Abimelech, let's have peace. You don't need to worry, there's no change needed, you don't need to repent, you don't need to give up any of those precious wells or anything else.

[ 29 : 49 ] You don't need to actually demonstrate that you do want peace with me and that you do see that I have a claim over these things. Abraham could have adopted that kind of approach.

Yes, I do believe in what God says about wells, it's just I don't preach it, I don't mention it because we don't want the gospel to put people off. We don't want a gospel that has to challenge people with things about changing their behavior about wells or something else.

So let's keep that quiet, let's not mention these things. No, you see, that's not what Abraham did. Abraham gives the full gospel with all the demands to repent, to change, to yield to God's chosen servant everything that God has put into his hands and given him sole authority over.

And unlike back in chapter 20 where Abraham did obfuscate and did try to hide the truth and where it was a disaster, here, where he's confident in God's great promise and confident in the full demands that the covenant makes, here, is where Abimelech actually responds.

And the oath that they swore was real, was lasting. And it was enshrined in the name of the place, Beersheba, a play on the words seven and oath. But you see, that pattern of God's peace is an abiding pattern.

[ 31 : 16 ] And it's when God's servants don't hide the true gospel but are confident in the power of God's presence and in the real promise of God to call people from every nation to bow to the lordship of Jesus.

It's then when they proclaim that gospel that people great and small, even rulers and kings, will bow the knee to the Lord Jesus and find in him real and lasting peace.

Now we tend, you see, in our sinful hearts to think that's foolish, don't we? We tend to want to hide the cost of submitting to Christ as king. We tend to want to play down his command to repent, to yield to him, to give him back all the precious wells of our lives, our thought life, our professional life, our social life, our financial life, our sex life, all the rest.

We think, don't we, it's foolish to talk too much about the cost. But you remember what Paul says, the truth is that it's pleased God through the apparent foolishness of true gospel proclamation to save those who believe.

We preach a crucified Savior. It's foolishness to the world. We acknowledge that, says Paul, to preach him as Lord and judge of all.

[ 32 : 41 ] But that alone is the power of God for salvation. That alone is the pattern of God's peace through his covenant servant. The true gospel always says what Psalm 2 says to the world.

Be warned, rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear. Rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way.

The true God is a God to be feared. He is Lord of heaven and earth. He offers peace. He promises peace. He makes peace. at great personal cost. But he demands that you yield to him all his sovereign rights.

That's always the pattern of God's peace. But finally, don't miss verses 33 and 34 there at the end which talk about wonderfully the permanence of God's provision.

Permanence of his provision for his covenant servant. And the wonderful message here is that he is the God who is forever. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord the everlasting God.

[ 33 : 59 ] Abraham's received from God provision for all his earthly life. He receives peace with Abimelech and also with the rather menacing Phicol, the general of his army.

No longer a threat to his life. And he also receives and secures the rights to a well, to the water that will mean life and a future in a dry land. But God also here gives a fresh provision for his spiritual walk, doesn't he?

And a new revelation of himself as the everlasting God, the forever God. God's already revealed himself to Abraham by a number of names, hasn't he?

Chapter 14, he was El Elyon, God Most High, above all earthly lords, so that if you have his protection, no other is needed. Chapter 17, he called him El Shaddai, the all-sufficient one who can do everything that he promises.

Chapter 16, remember, in the desert he revealed himself as El Ruih, the seeing one who sees all his folly, who sees all his failure, but still restores him and prospers him.

[ 35 : 10 ] And now Abraham discovers that this God is also El Olam, the forever God, the everlasting God, whose powerful presence with him is forever, not just fleeting.

His pattern of working peace with his enemies is forever, it's not just occasional. And his provision for his servant is forever, even though as verse 34, reminds us, Abraham is still just a sojourner, he's just passing through in life.

But this wonderful new revelation is given to him, and it looks as though Abraham marked this revelation by planting this tamarisk tree, a long-living tree, an evergreen tree, by this well of water. And surely that's an expression of trust in the God who is the forever God. Reminds us, doesn't it, of the pictures that the Bible so often uses of those who truly know and delight in the covenant God.

Think of Psalm 1, blessed is the man whose delight is in the instruction of the Lord. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, fruitful always, not withering, secure, and all that he does, he prospers.

[ 36 : 24 ] And here, it says that Abraham is saying, yes, Lord, I believe you when you say that you are the forever God. That what I've seen you do in the past, that what I've seen you do now, today, you'll keep on doing in the future and forever.

That I can trust you to be the permanent provider for me and for all my needs on earth, just as this well will permanently provide for this tree and keep it alive.

So I can put down roots in this place that you've given me, despite all these pagan kings, despite the armies, despite all the uncertainties, the things that otherwise might make me fear.

Because I trust in the permanence of your provision for me. Because you are my God forever. Do you think that was a wonderful thing for Abraham to know then?

That the God who had done all these things in his life, who promised all of this for him, was the forever God, was the unchanging God, the everlasting God? Because all his life he was just a

sojourner, wasn't he?

[ 37 : 30 ] It's there. Verse 34 to remind us at the end. And we are too. And doesn't it make a difference to you to know that, that your God is your permanent provider forever?

You see, on the one hand, that means that you can accept that you are but a sojourner. You are just, you're just fragile, you're finite. And we're often feeble, aren't we? We're passing through this life, we're ever drawing nearer to the twilight days of this life, like the grass that withers and fades, that soon will be gone.

And yet, on the other hand, at the same time, you're like Abraham's tree, evergreen, you're rooted, you're permanent, you're planted by an abundant source of life-giving water, belonging forever to the forever God, to the one who's promised to be your provider, whatever the future holds, and to be God to you forever, because you also are Abraham's seed, you're an heir, according to the same promise.

That's something that means everything to me, because it means however uncertain in this world I might be, I can't entrust my future to him. I can put down roots in eternity with the everlasting God, because he forever is my God, and I can live in the present without paralysis, without worry, because he's told me he will provide everything I need, and I can trust him forever on that.

He did it yesterday, he does it today, and he says he'll do it forever. You can trust in the word of a God who's forever.

[ 39 : 16 ] I can and so can you, because we have an even greater assurance, don't we, than Abraham? Jesus says he knew of Christ from afar, but we've inherited, haven't we, a far greater fulfillment in the Lord Jesus, and actually we have the words on his lips, on the lips of the one who is himself, the forever God.

Listen, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you'll put on, for life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.

Consider the lilies, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin, and yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. And if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown in the oven, how much more will he clothe you, who you have little faith?

And don't seek what you're to eat and what you're to drink, nor be worried, for all the pagan nations of the world seek after these things, and your father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and all these things will be added to you.

Fear not, little flock, for it's your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. See, don't Jesus' words liberate us from chasing possessions in this world, liberate us to be generous here, knowing that we have treasure in heaven that will never fail, and allowing our hearts to be fixed there where true joys are to be found.

[ 40 : 55 ] These are the words of the Son of God, these are the words of our permanent provider, the forever God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And the good news of the gospel is that if you belong to Jesus Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, your heirs, according to that same promise.

Abraham's God is your God. God. So let's trust, friends, in the power of his presence, even among very imperfect servants like us, the power of his presence to bring the blessings of his peace to a pagan world because of what God's true Son, Jesus, has done.

Our God is faithful. And let's be confident in the pattern of his peace. Through a gospel it does make real peace, but demands real commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over everything that is his because our God is to be feared.

Don't forget that. But above all, let's rejoice in the permanence of his provision to frail sojourners and frail bodies in this uncertain, hostile world with armies and kings and rulers.

Our God is forever. He's the everlasting God. And he has made himself known to everyone. He'll listen to the words of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 42 : 23 ] Well, let's pray together. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

And so we thank you, our Lord Jesus Christ. You've made known to us the name of the everlasting God in the name of the one whose name has been exalted to the highest place, Jesus our Savior, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And so, Lord, as you call us in your grace, offering us peace, grant every one of us the glad joy of submission to you as our Lord and our King, that we may indeed be yours forever and ever.  
Amen.