

Why God Chose Abraham
Genesis 12-22
By David Feddes

The ultimate seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ, the one in whom all of God's promises come true. But Abraham is certainly of immense importance. We're going to highlight some of those stories and some of the things that God said to Abraham as his life unfolded, and then we're going to reflect on God's purposes for Abraham—why God chose Abraham.

The Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1–3).

So Abram went as the Lord had told him. Abram traveled with his servants. He had a wife, Sarah—or Sarai was her name at that point—and they traveled together. He had a lot of people with him, not because he had children, but because he was the head of a large number of people who worked for him and with him. As they traveled to the land of Canaan and he traveled around there, God said, “Look around. I am going to give your descendants all this land. You're going to live here as a sojourner. It's not going to be your land, but in 400 years it will belong to your offspring.”

God promised him many, many offspring. He said to Abram, “Fear not, Abram. I am your shield; your reward shall be very great,” or other translations say, “I am your shield and your very great reward.” God is his reward, or he's going to give him a great reward. “Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them. So shall your offspring be” (Genesis 15:1, 5). And he believed the Lord, and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6).

So Abram believes this promise that he's going to have many, many offspring. He remembers throughout the years that night he looked at the sky and God said, “I'm going to multiply your offspring so that nobody can count them.” But the years passed by, and they passed by, and they passed by. And Abram is 99 years old now, and still looking to the stars—and still no child by Sarah. He's had one child by the servant girl Hagar, but God has not said that that's going to be the ultimate promised offspring, even though he's going to bless Ishmael, the child of the slave girl. The years have gone by, and Sarah remains barren.

When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am El Shaddai; I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly. Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant—to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I

will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:1–8).

Then, when God later on is considering what he's going to do with Sodom and Gomorrah, he says, “Should I hide this from Abraham?” And then he says, “Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him” (Genesis 18:17–19).

And a year later, a baby was born—a baby that they named Isaac. They named him Isaac because when Abraham had heard the promise when he was 99, renewed, he laughed. And his wife Sarah laughed. So they named the baby “laughter.” They had laughed in unbelief at first, but then laughed in joy when God gave them that baby Isaac.

That child was so precious to Sarah and Abraham. Then one day, God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and offer him as a sacrifice” (Genesis 22:2). So with a heavy heart, Abraham set out with his son. He had his son carry the wood, and he carried a knife and some fire. As they were walking, Isaac said, “Well, Father, we've got these other things, but where's the sacrifice?” And Abraham said, “God will provide a lamb” (Genesis 22:7–8).

When they got there, Abraham bound his son Isaac after laying out the wood. As he raised the knife, a voice came from heaven—the angel of the Lord speaking—and said, “Don't lay a hand on the boy. Now I know that you put me ahead of everything, even ahead of your own beloved son” (Genesis 22:12).

Then Abraham saw a ram caught in a thicket. He took the ram and sacrificed it instead of his son. God said to Abram, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you. I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. Your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:16–18).

Why did God choose Abraham? I want to reflect with you on five main purposes of God in choosing Abraham.

Chosen to

- Relate with God
- Get blessings
- Bless all nations
- Live by faith
- Anticipate Jesus

First, he chose Abraham to relate to God in a covenant of love—to be God's friend, as the Bible calls Abraham.

Second, he called and chose Abraham so that Abraham would get blessings from God. God chose him in order to pour out some wonderful blessings in his life.

And he chose him not only to get blessed but to be a blessing—to bring blessing to all nations.

He also chose Abraham to live by faith and to exemplify what it is to be a person of faith.

And the final reason God chose Abraham, a final purpose, was to anticipate Jesus—to look forward to and point to Jesus.

Let's take a closer look at these purposes.

Relate with God

- Leave old home ruled by idols
- Seek new home ruled by God
- Live in covenant faithfulness
- Love God as dearest friend

First of all, God chose Abraham to relate with God. He said, “Go from your country to the land I will show you.” What was his country? His country was the land of Ur. It was in the same vicinity as the Tower of Babel. And God, after judging Babel and scattering the peoples and disinheriting them and letting them be under the rule of various evil powers, he chose one man to be different. He chose Abram, and he said, “You’ve got to get out of there. I want you out of that land, and I want to send you to a different one.”

So he sought a new home, where he would live under God's rule. And the Bible says he didn't even know where he was going; all he knew was he was going where God pointed him. So he left that old country, he left the idols, he left his family, and he went to a new land. He went there to worship the true God and to seek a home ruled by God. God chose him to take him out of fallen humanity and create a different purpose for him. He also chose him to live in covenant with him. God set up a covenant with Abraham—an agreement where God would be Abraham's God and Abraham would be God's friend and worshiper.

He was to love God as his dearest friend, to put God ahead of everything else. And he made that covenant. He said, “I am El Shaddai, God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless.” He was to be a friend of God who lived in obedience to God and lived under God's direction and within God's covenant of love. When God chooses you, he wants, above all, a relationship of love with you—where you are loved by him and he is loved by you. So it was with Abraham. And so it is with everyone who follows in the footsteps of Abraham. God makes a covenant and forms a relationship because he wants to pour out his love and he wants to be loved.

Get blessings

- Great name
- Great nation

- Great offspring
- Great reward
- Great land

God also chose Abram—and later called him Abraham—to give him great blessings: a great name, a great nation, great offspring, a great reward, a great land. God wanted to bless Abram greatly.

He gave him a **great name**. He started out named Abram, which means “exalted father.” That sounds like a pretty good name. And then, when Abram still had no child of promise, God said, “I’m going to change your name. I’m going to change your name to Abraham—father of multitudes.” You wonder what Abraham was thinking at that time. “I have zero children by Sarah. Zero! And now God changes my name to ‘father of multitudes’?” But you have to remember who’s talking. This is the one who says, “Let there be light,” and there was light. The one who said, “Let there be land,” and there was land. The one who said, “Let there be animals,” and there were animals. The one who declares things, and then they happen—because he said so. So when Abraham had no offspring, God said, “I call you father of multitudes.” And father of multitudes he became.

Along with a great name, God gave Abraham a **great nation**. He said, “I’ll make you a great nation, and will bless you and make your name great.” So he had these promises together—of a great name and then a great nation, and in fact, of many nations that would come from him.

He promised **great offspring**: “Look to the heavens and number the stars—so shall your offspring be. I’ll make you exceedingly fruitful, and I’ll make you into nations, and kings shall come from you” (Genesis 15:5; 17:6). When we think of great offspring, we can think of the number of people who have descended from Abraham and the number of people who’ve been influenced by him. But we do not understand fully the greatness of his offspring unless we understand that ultimately, God was talking about one particular offspring of Abraham. The New Testament begins with these words: “The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). When you think of Jesus as the great offspring of Abraham, then you understand God’s true and ultimate purpose for making Abraham great—the blessing that his offspring would be the Savior of the world.

God promised Abram **great reward**. He said, “I am your shield, your very great reward,” or, “Your reward will be very great.” And in giving himself, he also gave Abram many other rewards.

Among the great rewards was the **great land** that he promised. He said, “You’ve been walking around, you haven’t had a place to settle down, but I’ll tell you this—everywhere you’ve been walking is going to be your land.” So he promised that great land of Canaan which eventually belonged to Abraham’s descendants, the people of Israel. But God also had in mind a greater land. The book of Hebrews, chapter 11, when it talks about Abraham’s faith, says that he really didn’t have a land that he got to keep in this life, but he was looking forward to a better country—a heavenly one. He was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10, 16). That’s ultimately what God had in mind. He expected

the offspring of Abraham not only to inherit that particular land, but to inherit the earth—and not to inherit just this earth, but the new earth, the transformed creation, the eternal home that God has in mind for all of his people.

God promised that Abraham would receive great blessings, and he chose Abraham so that Abraham would get these blessings and receive these blessings.

Bless all nations

God also chose Abraham not only to get blessed but to be a blessing—not only to be the father of a blessed nation but to be a source of blessing to all nations. “In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:18). So God told Abraham, “You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. Him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2–3).

God's plan did not aim to cast off all nations forever. God issued a great judgment at the Tower of Babel, but it was temporary. He had a plan. And in that plan, those nations would be drawn back to him again through the blessing that he gave Abraham—to be a blessing to all nations.

Now I need to highlight a misinterpretation of this passage and then identify the most accurate interpretation of the passage. The misinterpretation is this: when God says, “In your offspring shall all nations of the earth be blessed,” and “The one who blesses you I will bless, and the one who curses you I will curse,” there are those who say, “And you know what that means? It means that any government that sides with Israel and its government will do well, and any government that does not side with the government of Israel will not do well.”

But has it ever meant this? Did it mean this in the Old Testament when the people of Israel were clearly God's chosen nation, even as a political entity? The Philistines, who sided against Israel, were often very successful. Israel even carried the Ark of the Covenant into battle against the Philistines—and lost. The Babylonians, who were against Israel's government, did very well. They ruled a huge empire. They conquered Jerusalem and destroyed its temple. Prior to that, the Assyrian government, which was against the government of the ten tribes, conquered them and deported them all. Israel's enemies often triumphed, and Israel and its allies were often defeated. It's simply not true that any political entity that sides with the government of Israel automatically flourishes—and it never has been true. When Israel broke covenant with God, it was not automatically protected, and those who sided with Israel were not automatically protected.

So we need to understand what's going on when God says, “Through your offspring all nations will be blessed,” and, “There will either be curses or blessings depending on how they relate to your offspring.” Those blessings do not come from the government of a nation siding with the government of Israel. God still loves the Jewish people and those who live in the land of Israel. But it is a misinterpretation to say that government policy means that you always side with Israel's government no matter what, and things go fabulously for your government if you do that.

What this passage means—leaving aside the political misunderstandings—is this: people are blessed through the offspring of Abraham, namely Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ is what brings blessing to all nations—not siding with the government of this or that country. When we read Galatians chapter 3, it emphasizes that these words do not say “and to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one: “and to your offspring,” namely, Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Let me read just a little bit more from Galatians 3, because it helps us to understand the true understanding of Abraham’s offspring being the source of blessing to all nations. In Galatians 3:6 Paul quotes one of the passages we read from Genesis, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Then Paul declares in verses 7-9, “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed. So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.’” A bit later Paul says, “In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham has come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14). Verse 16, which I quote previously, emphasizes, “It does not say, ‘and to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘and to your offspring,’ who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

Christ is the one offspring of Abraham who brings blessing to all nations, and if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise. That’s what God is talking about when he tells Abraham, “I’m going to use you and your offspring to bring blessing to all nations.” It is through Jesus Christ that the blessing comes to all nations. And so we can rejoice that God made that promise to Abraham—not just to those who are physically related to him but to all who have the faith of Abraham.

Live by faith

- Shaky faith of ungodly sinner
- Faith reckoned as righteousness
- Active faith shown real by deeds
- Faith in Lamb and resurrection

Here’s the next thing that we want to highlight: God chose Abraham to live by faith. And living by faith involves a number of things. One is simply that living by faith means you’re counting on God and not on yourself—on God’s power and not your strength, on God’s holiness and righteousness and not your own, on God’s provision, not what you can do for yourself.

We might read stories of Abraham, and if we skim over them and read them only selectively, we think, “Abraham was a mighty fine man and a good guy, and God chose Abraham because he looked and thought, ‘Abraham’s about the best guy out there. I think I’ll take him.’”

But what does the Bible actually say about the matter? “Long ago your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates—Terah, the father of Abraham—and they served other gods” (Joshua 24:2). Abraham’s main qualification is: he is an idol-worshipping son of an idol-worshiper. That’s what he is when God calls him. And the true God comes to Abraham and reveals himself. He did

not come to Abraham because Abraham was already a splendid specimen of spirituality. He came, and he chose him. Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. But he was chosen when he was an ungodly idol-worshiper. And even after meeting God, Abraham had a pretty mixed track record.

If you read the stories in Genesis, you find that twice Abraham lies. He's cowardly. He's afraid that people are going to look at his wife and they're going to think, "Whoa, what a babe. I want her, and I'm going to kill whoever gets in the way." And so he tells Sarah, "Now you lie. Say I'm not your husband; say I'm your brother." Twice that happened with two different kings. God got Abraham and Sarah out of trouble both times, but not because Abraham was so truthful or so brave. He was cowardly and a liar.

And he was not always a man of unshakable and mighty faith. He is the man who laughed at times when God told him that he was going to have countless offspring. His wife Sarah laughed and then denied she had laughed, but God says, "I heard it. You laughed. I know you did. Just name the baby Isaac, which means 'laughter.'" God didn't choose him because Abraham was fantastic before God chose him, or even after God chose him. Did he have a spotless track record of always living as a man of great boldness and courage and faith and goodness? He often blew it.

The Bible says in Romans 4:5: "To the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5). Abraham is an example of a man who trusts a God who justifies the ungodly. That's what it says in Romans chapter 4. He put his faith in God—even when he didn't deserve God's blessings and his new name and all those other good things God had promised him—he trusted God.

Sometimes the trust wavered. Sometimes it weakened. Once he took a detour—he thought, "God's promise isn't coming true, and Sarah is not getting pregnant." She suggested, and Abraham went along with it: "Let's just see if we can get a surrogate baby." So Abraham took the servant girl Hagar and impregnated her, and she had a child. God said, "I'll bless that kid too. But he's not the one I had in mind. My promise will come true through a son of Sarah."

Abraham was originally plucked from being a worshiper of other gods, and even after he came to faith and walked with God to some degree, it was still a shaky faith. Even so, God still reckoned his faith—he counted that faith—as righteousness.

And as we already heard, the gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham—the gospel of salvation for all nations, but also the gospel of justification by faith, of being right with God by trusting him—not by trusting in your own qualities.

But having said that—even though Abraham wasn't always perfectly obedient, and even though he didn't start out deserving it at all, nonetheless, his faith was real and active. His faith did show itself by putting it into practice. When God said, "You leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to the land I will show you," Abram did not say, "Well, I believe that that is excellent advice, and I believe you probably do have a good land out there somewhere. Now I'm going to stay put." He

went. He lived by faith. Faith meant ultimately he did go. He went and followed God's call and walked with God in covenant friendship with him.

Later on, when God said, "Take your son, your only son," what did Abraham do? He didn't say, "Well, I believe that I am justified by faith, and offering my son is a bridge too far. I am saved by faith, not by works—and besides, that is one work I would never consider doing." The Bible says in James chapter 2, "Was not Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend" (James 2:21–23). You see, his faith may have been weak and wavering early on, but his level of commitment had become so strong that he believed so much in God that he would follow him even to giving up his own son. It was a faith that showed itself by real deeds.

The Bible explains a little bit more about Abraham's faith. No parent should ever follow Abraham's example in offering up their child to die. But the Bible says two things. One: in the original story, when he's going up the mountain with his son, he says, "God will provide a lamb" (Genesis 22:8). And another thing that the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 11 is Abraham reasoned that God would raise the dead (Hebrews 11:19). So when Abraham went up that mountain, he had two great thoughts in mind: "God will provide a lamb. God can raise the dead." Faith in the Lamb. Faith in resurrection.

And when Abraham acted in that faith, God acted and said, "Don't kill the boy." God had something else in mind. He provided the lamb, and he gave the boy back to his father. And so Hebrews says, in a sense, he did get his son back from the dead (Hebrews 11:19). And God praised that faith of Abraham and said, "Because you've done this, I know that you have put me before everything else."

That's what it means to live by faith. It may be shaky. You may start out ungodly. But God counts even a mustard seed-sized faith as righteousness.

You might be somebody who thinks, "I can't see why God would choose me." If so, you're right—there is no reason that God would choose you, except that God would choose you regardless of your faults, that God would love you and set his love on you and want to be in a relationship with you.

You might say, "My faith has wandered. I've taken my detours." It may not have been a Hagar detour, but we all have our detours and our doubts and our cowardice. You may not have lied about who your wife is, but you may have told a few lies. You may have been chicken-hearted and cowardly.

It is encouraging to read what the saints of God were like—and then what God says about them later on. Hebrews 11 says of Abraham, "Without wavering, he put his trust in God." He is listed among the heroes of faith. And Sarah, by faith, became pregnant and received a child (Hebrews 11:11). Yes, Sarah the laughter, and Abraham the very flawed. God counts faith as righteousness. A little faith goes a long way with God, because it's faith in God. So as long as you're looking at yourself and say, "What are my qualifications?"—you're going to be desperate. When you look

at the God who justifies by faith, then you can have confidence in him—faith in him. And then it becomes active faith, where you’re going to obey him, where you’re going to try great things or do great things that you thought were too hard.

And even in that terrible story of “Offer your son, your only son, whom you love”—what is the upshot of that story? There will be no human sacrifices by people who worship Yahweh. There will be no human sacrifices by those who worship El Shaddai, the God of Israel. There will be no human sacrifice permitted there. God’s message is, “I called the father of the nation. He demonstrated a willingness to do it if called upon to do so—but he doesn’t have to. I provide a lamb. I provide a different way.” There is one human sacrifice coming, and that’s the only one God will ever accept—and it’s the one he provides himself in the man who’s also God: Jesus Christ. God canceled all human sacrifice, because he would provide the only worthy one.

Anticipate Jesus

- Rejoices to see Jesus’ day
- Rescues from enemies
- Pays honor to priest-king
- Intercedes for others
- Offers his beloved son

God chose Abraham to anticipate Jesus. We’ve hinted at that again and again. The Bible says that Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus’ day. It says that Abraham knew this seed was coming. We don’t know how clearly God revealed to Abraham what was going to happen, but Jesus says, “He saw my day and rejoiced” (John 8:56). Jesus also said in the very same discussion, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). So he is the great “I Am” who existed before Abraham, and he is the one—the human Messiah—whose day Abraham saw coming and rejoiced. One of the greatest aspects of Abraham’s importance is how he anticipates Jesus, how he is a type of Jesus in some ways, or of God’s relationship to Jesus.

Abraham was somebody who rescued others from enemies. Remember what happened when Lot and his family were taken captive by a gang of enemy kings? Sodom and Gomorrah had been conquered, had lost in battle, and Lot was captured. What happens? Abraham hears about it. Abraham says, “I have 318 people—people who can wield a weapon pretty well. I’m going to get Lot out of that mess.” Abraham is not just one more little peon, okay? He’s got 318 warriors that travel with him, and vast herds and so on. So he’s a very powerful sheikh or chieftain in his own right. And he takes his 318 fighting men, and they go in the night and they destroy the enemies and take Lot and his family and all the other people back again. Abraham anticipates Jesus is by being a type of rescuer—being a picture of a God who saves his people from their enemies.

Another way in which Abraham is a type—someone who’s anticipating Jesus and helping us to understand more about Jesus—is that he pays honor after that battle to a mysterious priest-king. Mysterious Melchizedek. A guy who seems to come out of nowhere and vanish into nowhere. But it’s said of him that he is the king of Salem—the king of peace. His name means king of righteousness: “Melchi”—king—“Zedek”—righteousness. So he’s the king of peace, the king of

righteousness. He's a priest of God Most High. You might think Abraham's the only godly person on the earth, but there's this priest of God Most High, who is the king of peace and the king of righteousness. After the rescue of Lot, Abraham takes a tenth of everything he has and gives it to Melchizedek.

Then Melchizedek vanishes—until the book of Hebrews talks about the incident and says there's somebody greater than Abraham: a great priest-king. And Abraham is paying honor to that priest-king. Hebrews says that if you thought the priests who descended from Aaron were big shots and really important, the greater priest is the one who is the king of peace, the king of righteousness, that mysterious figure Melchizedek. Hebrews says that Jesus is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. He's a priest-king.

So there again, you have in the Abraham story the pointing ahead to Jesus. You can say, "Well, we don't need all that pointing-ahead stuff anymore. Abraham was 2,000 years before Jesus. We're 2,000 years after Jesus. We know how the story turns out. Why even read about Abraham anymore?" Well, when you read Abraham's story, you can see God's working throughout history. But you can also then understand a bit more about how Jesus is greater than Abraham—how he's a priest in the order of Melchizedek, which makes him a king and a priest for us.

Another thing Abraham does that points to Jesus is that he intercedes for others. He speaks on behalf of others. When God and a couple of angels came to Abraham, he said, "I'm not going to hide from my friend what I'm going to do." God told Abraham that he was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham thought to himself, "Lot is there"—and then he began to intercede and to bargain with God. He said, "God, you wouldn't really wipe out the righteous with the wicked, would you? What if there are fifty righteous people in Sodom? You wouldn't blow the whole place away, would you?"

God says, "No, for the sake of fifty I'll spare the city." Abraham says, "Well, I'm just dust and ashes, but hey—forty-five. For only five fewer people, you'd really destroy the city? You wouldn't want to do that."

And God says, "For the sake of forty-five, I won't."

"Forty?"

"I won't destroy it."

"How about thirty?"

"I'll keep it safe if there's thirty."

"Twenty?"

Abraham bargains down to ten. And God says, "For the sake of ten righteous people in Sodom, I will not destroy the city."

But God doesn't find ten. He finds three—if you could call those three righteous. You have Lot and his two daughters. Lot's wife turns back, disobeys God, looks at Sodom, and turns into a pillar of salt. So you have Lot and his two daughters—who end up committing incest. Those are the three “righteous” people in Sodom. And for those three, God listens to Abraham's intercession and gets them out of there and saves them before he unleashes fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah.

It's a remarkable story in its own right. But it's also a picture. We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (1 John 2:1). We have an advocate with the Father. And he's no longer trying to bargain with the Father and say, “Fifty—forty-five—forty—thirty”—you know, almost like an auctioneer only headed the opposite direction. Instead, we have an advocate who already knows it all—who knows exactly how many righteous there are. And the actual sum total would be zero, except for himself. He pleads on the basis of one righteous person who became human for the whole human race. And on the basis of pleading the righteousness of that one man Jesus, God spares all who belong to him. Jesus is still at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (Romans 8:34). So who can bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:33–39).

And then, one last time, let's return to the terrible story of Abraham offering his son. In one sense, it's a demonstration of a faith that is totally committed and totally surrendered. But in another sense, it is a picture of God doing what ultimately he did not require Abraham to do. In the end, Abraham did not have to sacrifice his own son. But somebody else did. Somebody else gave his only Son. God said to Abraham, “Offer your only son, your beloved son” (Genesis 22:2), but then didn't require him to go through with it. But God did offer his only beloved Son. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And so in the story of Abraham offering Isaac, we see the love of God in the giving of his Son. Abraham lays down the one he loves most—and that shows the greatness of his love for God. And when God comes to us in Christ, he lays down the life of his own beloved Son, whom he's loved from all eternity—and that shows the extent of his love for us. “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Children of Abraham, chosen to:

- Relate with God
- Get blessings
- Bless all nations
- Live by faith
- Point to Jesus

This is why God chose Abraham: to relate with God, to receive God's blessings, to be a blessing to all nations, to live by faith and exemplify the meaning of faith, and to anticipate and prefigure our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you hear these things, I hope you rejoice in what a great God you have. As one hymn puts it, “The God of Abraham praise.” We praise the God of Abraham. We worship him because of what he’s done in the life of Abraham and throughout the generations. And he’s still, 4,000 years after Abraham, faithful to those whom he chooses.

Are you living in covenant friendship with God? It was said of Abraham that he was God’s friend. It was said of Jesus, “Greater love has no one than this: that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends” (John 15:13–14). Do you ever think to yourself, “I’m God’s friend. I live in covenant with God. God made a promise, and he called me to live with him. I’m his child. He’s my Father. I’m going to relate with him in love”?

And do you ever think about the blessings that you have? Jesus says, “To the one who overcomes, I will give a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it” (Revelation 2:17). God has in mind for each of us a name. He named Abraham “Father of a multitude,” even when he had no children at all. When God gives you a name, that is who you become. Think of Simon, whom Jesus named Peter, which means “Rock.” Peter wasn’t very rock-solid at the time, but he ended up becoming so. When God gives you a name, that is who you become. He gives you a mighty name. He gives you membership. The Bible says, “You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9). God said that Abraham would become a great nation. You are part of that great and holy nation if you belong to Jesus Christ by faith.

God promised Abraham offspring, and he said, “I chose Abraham so that he would teach his children” (Genesis 18:19). If you’re a parent here today—or if you have a role in the life of children, even if you’re not a parent—if you have a role in the life of children and young people, you have the great blessing of teaching and bringing a legacy for those who can follow in covenant with God. What a blessing and privilege that is.

You have a mission and a purpose. Abraham was sent by God to be a blessing to all nations, and we, in Jesus Christ, are part of that Great Commission. We have a purpose on this earth. You are the light of the world because Jesus is the light of the world, and he’s shining from you. We are part of that great plan to bless all nations and make disciples of all nations.

We have the privilege of living by faith. And, as I said before, you may have started out very poorly. You can’t get much worse than an idol-worshiper living in close proximity to Babel. But I don’t care how you started—when God puts you on a different path, it is going to lead to a great destination. So you leave what you were, and you become what God calls you to be. You leave where you were stuck, and you go toward the goal that God has in mind for you. You walk by faith. It may be flawed faith. It may be weak faith. But it’s still faith, and God counts it as righteousness—because he’s a God who justifies by faith.

As you live by faith, you believe that God provided a Lamb. God is able to raise the dead. In Romans 4, it says: “The words ‘it was credited to him’ were not written for Abraham alone, but also for us who believe in God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God”

(Romans 4:23–5:2). That’s what the Scripture says to us. When we live by faith, we have peace with God.

Abraham’s life pointed in advance to Jesus, and this is the purpose of your existence and mine: to point to Jesus. We don’t anticipate and point ahead to Jesus, but we do live to point to Jesus—to be living testimonies to him, to be living sacrifices for him, so that by our lives, by our words, people will know that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

These things are all part of being children of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for your great love and for your wisdom and plan. We praise you for choosing our father Abraham, and for choosing us to be your children and friends, like Abraham was your son and your friend. Lord, help us to live each day with the joy and privilege of your covenant—in relationship with you, in friendship, being your children and you our Father.

We thank you, Lord, for the immeasurable blessings, for the unsearchable riches of Christ that you have poured out upon us. Father, whether it’s in our family life, or in the wonderful things of glory that still await us—that city with foundations whose architect and builder is God—may we live by that same faith of Abraham in the eternal future that you have prepared and promised.

In the meantime, Lord, bless all nations through us, so that in our own communities and through our support of mission around your world, the nations will be blessed, and more people who don’t know you yet will be gathered in by faith in our Savior Jesus.

Help us live by faith each day with confidence, knowing that our sins are all forgiven and that we’re right with you. At the same time, Lord, give us not a dead faith, but a living faith that takes action: that when we’re called to go, we go; when we’re called to make a sacrifice, we make that sacrifice; that we, Lord, will live by a genuine and real faith and rejoice in you.

And then, Lord, may our lives point to Jesus. May our life be Christ. To live is Christ, to die is gain. Lord, we want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead. May we be people, Lord, in whom the life of Christ is experienced in our own minds and hearts, but also in which the life of Christ is evident to those around us.

We pray, Lord, that you will do all of this, not because of our abilities and wisdom, but because of yours and your great love and righteousness in Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.

Why God Chose Abraham

Genesis 12-22

By David Feddes

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12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” ⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.

15:1 “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great... ⁵ “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them... So shall your offspring be.” ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly. ⁴ “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.” ⁷ “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings... for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

18:18 “Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. ¹⁹ For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

22:16 “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Chosen to

- Relate with God
- Get blessings
- Bless all nations
- Live by faith
- Anticipate Jesus

Relate with God

- Leave old home ruled by idols
- Seek new home ruled by God
- Live in covenant faithfulness
- Love God as dearest friend

Get blessings

- Great name
- Great nation
- Great offspring
- Great reward
- Great land

Bless all nations

In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (22:18).

It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16)

Live by faith

- Shaky faith of ungodly sinner
- Faith reckoned as righteousness
- Active faith shown real by deeds
- Faith in Lamb and resurrection

Anticipate Jesus

- Rejoices to see Jesus’ day
- Rescues from enemies
- Pays honor to priest-king
- Intercedes for others
- Offers his beloved son

Chosen to

- Relate with God
- Get blessings
- Bless all nations
- Live by faith
- Anticipate Jesus