

## Head the Call

### *The Gospel According to Abraham, Pt. 1*

What we're going to do, starting this morning, is begin a series looking at the life of Abraham. One of the foundational figures of the Biblical story. So we are going to be going back to the book of Genesis. Back to the beginning. Well *close* to the beginning. We first read of Abraham in chapter 11...but don't worry, he's anything but bankrupt! You missed me, didn't you? We're going to look at the life of Abraham from now through September. Let me start off by reading you the opening passage.

**Genesis 11:27–12:9.** *“This is the account of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. 28 While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. 29 Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milcah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah.”*

*“30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no children. 31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. 32 Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.”*

And then the first 9 verses of **Genesis 12**, *“The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

*“4 So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. 6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.”*

*“7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. 9 Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.”*

There we are, now who is this guy? Abraham is a pretty important person. Drive past any church, mosque or synagogue and every one of them will be filled with people who consider themselves children of Abraham? Do you know there are three major world faiths – Christianity, Judaism and Islam - the majority of the population of the world, that look to *Abraham* as their father in the faith? Do you think you'd ever be able to understand world civilization if you don't understand this man's story?

By the way, right now the word is Abram. Later on, his name will be Abraham. Don't let that throw you. Abram means "father". Abraham means "father of many". So Abram means daddy and Abraham means *big* daddy. And they sound so much alike, I don't think you have to worry about it.

But Abraham didn't just live life. He didn't just go with the flow of events. Life didn't just *happen* to him. *He* happened to life, you see. He lived a *big* life. You can even see it right in the text we've already read. He stood against his family. He stood against his society. He stood against his culture. You know monotheism is kind of taken for granted by most people today, but back then it wasn't taken for granted. He stood *alone*.

Now where do you get that kind of greatness? He lived a big life. Today we might call him a man of vision, but that's not it. What made Abraham great was the call of God. And the point I'd like to make to you this morning is what makes *your* life special - *your* life distinctive - is the call of God. We have a clothing brand from right here in Austin, my son and I both love it, called Howler Brothers. And their slogan is "Heed the Call". I'm stealing it for the title of today's message. Because it's perfect.

The call of God is what makes you a Christian to start with. You're not a Christian unless you've heard and embraced the call. Heed the call. So what the text tells us is there are three things about the call of God: *the power of it, the radical nature of it, and how we can receive it*. The first part of the passage tells us about the power, the second part tells us about the nature of it, and the third part tells us about how to receive it.

**First, The Power of the Call.** Now, I must admit, that whenever I've preached on the call of Abraham in the past, I've always started with chapter 12. That's pretty standard. So why did we read these few verses at the end of chapter 11? Because I realized I've been doing it wrong! These verses are incredibly important backstory. They're telling us something amazing. They're telling us that *all* human history has come to a dead end.

You see, if you go back and read Genesis chapters 1 to 11 it's evident that it is a story of a spiraling *down* of the human race. You've got the first two creation chapters - "And God saw that it was good." – and then it's all downhill from there. The human race is getting more and more corrupt, more and more evil, more and more violent, more and more oppressed, more and more broken, and it looks bad, but in chapters 1–11 there's *one* ray of hope, and that one ray of hope is a *single* family tree, a single line.

You might remember the story of Cain and Able – fratricide, the first murder – and at the end of Genesis chapter four in the midst of all the violence it tells us that Adam and Eve had another son named Seth. He's the replacement child for slain Able. And Seth, we're told at the very end of Genesis 4, "called upon the name of the Lord", which is a Hebrew way for talking about worship of God.

And in Seth's family *alone*, the knowledge of the true God was preserved and passed on. Noah comes from the line of Seth – so literally the hope of the world. But we started with **Genesis 11:27**, "*This is the account of Terah,*" which brings us to the end of the line. Terah and his son, Abram, are the end of the line because these verses tell us something disastrous.

First of all, the word Terah means "moon". Ur of the Chaldeans – where they lived - was a center of lunar worship. And so the *true* family, the family that was supposed to be preserving true faith - the *last* family knowing who God is and knowing who created the world and knowing what we were built for, think about this - the *last* family who knew anything about God, has gone over to idol worship. And if you're wondering about that, it's confirmed in Joshua.

At the end of the book of Joshua, Joshua gets the people of Israel together and gives a little speech that starts in **Joshua 24:2**, "*Long ago your forefathers, including Terah, the father of Abram and Nahor, lived beyond the river and worshiped other gods.*" So do you realize what has happened? Spiritually, the last little candle has just flickered out. The last place anybody knows about God is right there, and spiritually, the last family that knew anything about God has just lost it.

And it's not just true spiritually, but physically. Sarai, Abram's wife, is barren. What does that mean? It means not only has the last family that knew anything about God lost God *spiritually*, but it's about to literally end *physically*. There's not going to *be* any more family.

That's why Walter Brueggemann, who wrote a good commentary on the book of Genesis, describes the barrenness of Sarah like this: "Barrenness is the way of human history. It is **an effective metaphor for hopelessness.** There is no foreseeable future. There is no human power to invent a future." (Genesis, 116). The human race and human history have just hit a dead end. It's over. And then God speaks and there's hope again.

Now what's the first principle? The first principle is we're being shown the power of the call. Let me get this down to earth. The power of the call means the call of God is absolutely *necessary* and absolutely *gracious*. Let me show you. First of all, it's absolutely necessary. Abram was in the *best* family – the best family on the earth! - but if it weren't for the call of God, he was spiritually dead.

Let me be vivid about this. I have two children. They were raised here. They were raised in Southwest Family, which I think is a good church. They were raised in our home, where my wife and I did everything we possibly could to put Christianity before them in an attractive way and explain it to them. All right? But I want you to know something. Unless each of them hears the call of God to them *personally*, unless the call of God comes in, disturbs them, convicts them, humbles them, and shakes them

up, unless the call of God comes to them and they embrace it, they're just going to be nice little idolaters like Abram.

See, it doesn't matter how good your family is. Everybody tends to take something created, like the moon...My children are going to be nice, because we're nice, they're going to be moral, probably, because we're moral, they're going to maybe even be religious, but they're going to be idolaters. They're going to live for their career, or they're going to live for their family. They're going to live for something else unless the call of God comes into their lives.

Now by the way, I'm not concerned about my children spiritually. I don't want anyone to be worried. I'm very happy with their spiritual progress, but their progress is the result of *the call*. If they're making *any* spiritual progress it's because of the call. It doesn't matter your family. See, in Genesis 1–11, you have a contrast: the family of Cain, the line of Cain, the bad people, the wicked people; the line of Seth, the good people. That doesn't matter. You're in spiritual death sleep without the call. It is an absolute necessity. It has to come in. It has to disturb you. It has to disrupt you. It's necessary.

And secondly, it's absolutely gracious. The power of the call is not just seen in that it's absolutely necessary, but also that it's absolutely gracious. Abram is unqualified. Abram is *not* a good guy. Abram is *not* a faithful man. The call comes to Abram *because* he's unqualified. Let me put it this way. The call of God doesn't come because you're qualified; you're qualified because it has come.

It qualifies you. In other words, if I want to hire a computer programmer, I'll call you up *if* you're a computer programmer. Why? I will only call you if you're qualified. A human call can't *give* you the qualifications, but God's call *does*.

Have you ever seen the classic 1964 movie *Becket*? Peter O'Toole played English King, Henry II. Richard Burton played a commoner, Thomas Becket. It's based on a true story. This is the twelfth century AD. Henry and Thomas were drinking buddies. Now, Thomas was a priest, but he was, just like the king - corrupt, hotheaded, living for sensuality. They were just carousing, good ol' boy drinking buddies.

And then one day the Archbishop of Canterbury died, and Henry II had a brainstorm. "I'll make Thomas the Archbishop of Canterbury!" Why? "Because Thomas is just like a regular guy. He's not going to be telling me how I have to live my life.

He's not going to be telling me not to oppress the poor. He's not going to be telling me to stop whoring around. He's not going to do any of that stuff. He's my buddy. This is great. Finally we've solved the problem of church/state relations." And so he makes Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.

And then something happens. Thomas is shaken, because he knows that even though it has come through Henry for all the wrong reasons, and even though he's completely corrupt and completely unholy and completely unworthy and completely unqualified, he is now the head of the church of England. And he suddenly realizes a sense of the call of God in his heart. He realizes the grace of it. He realizes how unworthy he is of it, and it changes him.

And he becomes a good person, and he becomes a man of integrity, and he begins to represent the gospel. He begins to represent Christ. And he begins to call out Henry for the things he's doing wrong – just like the previous Archbishop had - and Henry is going nuts. Why can't Thomas just pipe down and leave things the way they were. And Henry is just filled with conflict because he loves Thomas, and yet now he's so mad at Thomas for becoming this goody-two-shoes all the sudden. It's convicting him, right?

Finally one night, if you remember the story, he's in a drunken state at a party and in his agitation he cries out, "Who will rid me of this meddlesome priest?" And four of his knights look at each other and sense an opportunity to get in the king's good graces. So they go to the Canterbury Cathedral and hack Thomas Becket to death right there on the spot. December 29, 1170 AD. It really happened.

But in the movie, as Richard Burton's Thomas is lying there dying, he utters his last words. He says, "Poor Henry." You see, he's like Jesus now, "Father, forgive Henry. He doesn't know what he's doing." The call had made him holy. The call had made him like Christ. Just as a priest he was completely unworthy, he was just as corrupt as anybody else, but *the call* had come into his life, and now he's like Jesus.

The call of God is so powerful, not only do you have to have it or your life is a dead end - I don't care how nice a person you are - but it also will transform you, no matter how *bad* a person you are. Dead end, barrenness, hopelessness. Right? But in comes the call, and there's hope again. So the first thing we learn is the power of the call.

**The second thing we learn is The Radical Nature of the Call.** A lot of you are saying, "Okay, it's powerful, but what *is* it? What is it a call *to do*?"

What is the *content* of the call? And that is what we see in the famous place, **Genesis 12:1-3**, where it says, "*Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*"

Now let me show you how radical this call is. What is this call? First, it's personally radical. When he says, "Leave your country..." That's the NIV translation, but the old King James is right when it translates it, (**Genesis 12:1 KJV**) "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, **Get thee out of thy country...***". "*Get thee out,*" because there are *two* Hebrew words there, not one. Literally, God says, "Go *yourself* out. Get yourself out. Get out yourself." Do you know why?

It has to do with the little word "but" we read back in 11:31. See the whole group - Terah and Nahor and the children of Haran, and Abram - they had *all* set out for Canaan. It says in **verse 31**, "*...together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. **But** when they came to Haran, **they settled there.***" Why did they stop at Haran? They didn't want to go any farther. That was it. They had been called to go to Canaan, but they stopped in Haran.

And that's the reason God doesn't just say, "Leave your country." He doesn't just say, "Get out." He says, "Get *yourself* out." And this is what He's saying. Abram basically is having a conversation, and he's saying, "Well you know, God, I've come halfway. This is as far as Dad and everybody else wants to go. You know, Nahor and all the guys...I just can't get them to leave...They like it here, you know, and they don't want to go any farther. I've come halfway." And so what is God saying? "Then come yourself."

God is saying, "It's not good enough to be part of a religious ethos." It's not good enough for you to say, "Well I'm in a Christian family, and I've always joined a church," or "I'm from Scotland, and I feel *at home* in a Presbyterian church," or "I'm Italian, and I feel *at home* in a Roman Catholic church," or "I'm a Texan, and I'm *at home* in a Southern Baptist church." It's not enough to be part of the ethos. It's not enough just to be part of the environment.

"Yes, of course, I feel very comfortable around Christians, and I like..." Have you met God *yourself*? Have you gotten out *yourself*? Have you encountered God yourself, in your own self? Has it penetrated you as an individual? Have *you* made the personal commitment? Do you see that? That's the first thing. It's *personally* radical. You can't come in on anybody else's coattails. It's got to be *your* faith. That's number one.

But number two - and this is the part you're going to hate, just to let you know -it's *volitionally* radical. Why do I use the word "volition"? Because at the heart, the call of God is a **surrender of the will.** And the place where you see that is where this first sentence is left open-ended. (V.12) "*Leave your country, your people, and your father's household, and go to the land that I will show you.*" Now this is *terrible!* God doesn't say, "Go to the land at latitude, longitude...25 more miles on the interstate, third exit, turn right." He just says, "Get out...but I'm not going to tell you where you're going to go."

Now here's how we are. I've had plenty of people say to me over the years, "I'm interested in being a Christian, *but*...will I have to break up with my boyfriend or my girlfriend? Will I be able to still live the material lifestyle I have right now? Will I have to stop this? Will I have to stop that? Will I have to start this? Will I have to start that?" And you know what? When I was a younger minister, which was a long time ago, I made the mistake of trying to answer those questions. I used to say, "Well yeah, Christians can do this and they can do this, but they can't do this and they can't do this."

But eventually I began to realize how completely wrong I was. Because when you say, “I’ll get out *if* you’ll show me where you’re taking me, if you’ll show me *exactly* what you want me to do and *exactly* where you’re going to have me go,” you’re not answering the call. You’re staying in control of your own life. You’re not giving up your volition. You’re not surrendering your will. You’re staying on the throne, as it were. You’re staying in the driver’s seat.

What you’re really saying is, “I’ll be happy to go *if* I know where you’re going and it makes sense to me.” But God actually says to Abram, “Get out,” and Abram says, “*Where?*” and God says, “I’ll show you later; just go.” And later God’s going to say, “I’ll give you a son,” and Abram says, “*How?*” and God says, “I’ll show you later; just trust.” And finally he says, “Go to the top of the mountain and put your son to death,” and Abram says, “*Why?*” and God says, “I’ll show you later; just climb.” That’s Christianity.

While we were in Italy we went to a lot of old churches – a lot! And time and time again we saw churches built over the tombs of early Christian martyrs. One example; this is the tomb of St. Cecilia – patron saint of music, this is who Paul Simon was singing about. But this tomb sits on the site of her house. She was a 3<sup>rd</sup> century Roman noblewoman who chose to follow the call of God – during the time of the Roman persecution – and for that she had her head taken off with a sword on this spot.

And I realized, the call of God has always been this way. Not just in the Bible, but the history of the church - and its present – is littered with stories of people who changed everything to follow the call. God says, “Get out. You’re going to be radically changed. Don’t ask me whether or not what I’m about to do will fit into your agenda. Christianity is a whole...new...agenda. Don’t say, ‘How is this going to enrich my life?’ Christianity is a whole new life.”

What does it mean to answer the call? It’s to get out, not knowing where you’re going. That’s what Hebrews 11 says. We did an entire series on this chapter last summer. **Hebrews 11:8** summarizes Genesis 12 like this: “*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, **even though he did not know where he was going.***”

Unless you say to the Lord, “I will do whatever I discern as your will unconditionally from here on in,” you’re not a Christian. You haven’t answered the call. You’re not a Christian to say, “I will obey *if*...I will obey if it looks like it fits in.” You’re not a Christian until you’ve taken your hands off your life. It’s personally radical, it’s volitionally radical.



Thirdly, it's missionally radical. Now why do I use the word missionally? Look at this. God says to Abraham, "I will bless you..." Ah, but why? "...that you may *be* a blessing". "Because *through you* all of the peoples of the earth will be blessed." The foundational principle of Christianity is "blessed to be a blessing."

To become a Christian is to be changed so that now you are not making your decisions on the basis of "What is the most comfortable for me? Where do I live that's most comfortable? What job do I take that's the best for my safety and my comfort and my influence and my status?" You don't make your decisions like that anymore. The call of God reshapes you so you're asking yourself the question, "Where can I most *be* a blessing?"

See, the call of God goes like this. "If you seek to be blessed, you'll be empty. If you seek to bless others, I'll bless you. If you live for the blessing of others, if you live to fill others up, I'll fill you," says God. "I will bless you that you may be a blessing." God *only* blesses that you may be a blessing. You say, "Well then *how* can I be a blessing?" And the answer is you have to *get out*. "Get out, and I will bless you that you may be a blessing." Let me show you how that works.

What does it mean to get out of your country? What does it mean to get out of your family? It means to get out of your security zone, get out of your comfort zone. It means to get out of the familiar. There's a saying I like, "Ships are safest in harbor. But that's not what ships are for." The blessing comes when you step out of the ordinary.

It shouldn't surprise you. This is what God says. God says, "If you're willing to get out, I'll make you a blessing. If you want to stay in safety, if you want to keep a tidy, manageable, comfortable little life, you're not going to be of much use to anybody." I mean that's in the macro *and* the micro. Right now in your life, there are people around you who need you to tell them the truth about something, and you're scared. You won't do it.

Do you know why? You don't want to *get out*...of your safety zone. You don't want to be criticized. You don't want to look bad. You don't want to risk making yourself vulnerable. Right? You don't want to do that. And as a result, you're not able to bless them. The call of God works like this. To the degree you're willing to get out - get out of the familiar, get out of the safe, get out of the comfortable - God says, "I will bless you in order that you may be a blessing. I'll *appear* to you. I'll *come* into your life." So the call of God is radical – personally, volitionally, missionally.

I need to say one more thing. I'll be really brief about this. The call of God is *culturally* radical. Boy, I'll tell you. When people tell me the gospel gives you pat, easy answers, I just know they don't know what they're talking about. I'm sorry. That sounds disrespectful, but I have to say it. The Christian life is all about managed tension. Abraham left but never arrived. Do you know that? I know it says he arrived at Canaan, but here's the whole point of the story of Abraham.

He is told, "Leave your people and your nation and your culture and go to another land where I will make you to *be* a nation, make you to *be* a new culture," but Abraham himself never actually gets it. He never sees it. Right? Abraham lives his entire life in a huge gap between promise and reality. That's very uncomfortable. It would have been more comfortable if he'd stayed in Ur. It would have been more comfortable if he had actually arrived in a nation filled with his descendants, but he never is there.

Now what's interesting is that whenever Paul talks about what it means to be a Christian in Galatians and Romans, he's *continually* referring - *not* to Moses and *not* to David - but to Abraham. When Paul got into this controversy, when he began to win Greeks and Romans to Christ and the Jewish Christians back in Jerusalem said, "Well now that they're Christians,

they need to be culturally Jewish; they need to wear Jewish things and eat Jewish things," Paul said, "No, no, no. They are changed; they're *Christian* Greeks, they're *Christian* Romans, but they are *Christian Greeks* and *Christian Romans*."

And what it means to hear the call of God is very uncomfortable. Here's how Eastern European theologian, Miroslav Volf, summarized what the Abraham story means. He says, "The courage to break his cultural and familial ties and abandon the gods of his ancestors out of allegiance to a God of all families and all cultures was the original Abrahamic revolution..."

"To be a child of Abraham and Sarah and to respond to the call of their God means to make an exodus, to start a voyage, become a stranger... Christians can never first of all be Asians or Americans, Croatians, Russians, or Tutsis, and then Christians. At the very core of Christian identity lies an all encompassing change of loyalty, from a given culture with its gods to the God of all cultures. A response to a call from that God entails rearrangement of a whole network of allegiances." (*Exclusion and Embrace*, 39-40)

But then he goes on to offer a warning of balance. “Christian children of Abraham can ‘depart’ from their culture without having to leave it. Departure is no longer a spatial category; it can take place *within the cultural space one inhabits*. And it involves neither a typical modern attempt to build a new heaven out of the worldly hell nor a typically postmodern restless movement that fears to arrive home.”

“Never simply distance, a genuinely Christian departure is always also presence...Christians are not the insiders who have taken flight to a new ‘Christian culture’ and become outsiders to their own culture; rather when they have responded to the call of the Gospel they have stepped, as it were, with one foot outside their own culture while with the other remaining firmly planted in it. They are distant, and yet they belong.” (49)

Let me illustrate this personally. People have asked me since our return from Sabbatical, “Weren’t you so excited to be back in America?” No. I mean, I missed queso and BBQ, sure. But I’ve traveled the world enough to know this isn’t the only comfortable place to live. We’ve got plenty of problems. I mean the day I got back the former President was being arrested on charges of treason. I was like, “What have I *missed* in two months??”

“Oh, so you’re going to go live in Italy then?” No. I mean, you’ve never tasted food that fresh for that cheap. And if I told you what kind of house you could afford from the equity of what you have here in Austin, you’d be tempted to drop out and live like a Roman king. But they’ve got plenty of problems over there too. And besides, wherever you go, there you are. We tend to take our own problems with us.

No, there’s a great balancing act in being a Christian. See, it is vastly easier to leave your culture and say, “I’m a Christian now; I want nothing to do with you,” *or* to stay in your culture and say, “I’m this first, and Christianity is sort of a peripheral kind of hobby that helps me enrich my private life.” No, no, no. Here’s what’s so bad, and here’s what’s so great. The call of God makes you a cultural pilgrim. It says, “Stay with your people, but be a Christian member of that old society,” which *means*...it’s very hard work. It’s *very* hard work.

It’s exciting work. Like Abraham, you depart but you don’t arrive. You’ve been pulled out of your home culture somewhat. What if you’re a Texas WASP? You’ve got the big truck, the tanned skin, the boots. You’ve been educated by the Horns Up or the thumbs up. But you’re not just like the rest of them; you’re a Christian, and yet what are you supposed to do? Ditch the boots? If you ditch the boots, you’re going to pick up somebody *else’s* cultural thing.

You're African-American, you're Asian, you're Latin American... When you're a Christian, you're a Christian *first*, and you're Latin American second. You're a Christian *first*, and you're Asian second. You're a Christian *first*, and you're African-American second. *But* you're an *Asian* Christian, which means you have to be Abraham - one foot in your culture, yet a transformed Christian member of that culture. It would be far easier just to get out of it or stay completely in it, but God says, "Get out," and *yet* you don't arrive somewhere else. And therefore, the call of God is personally radical, volitionally radical, missionally radical, and culturally radical.

Now let's end. Somebody is out there saying, "But practically speaking, how in the world do you bring that into your life?" Somebody is out there saying, "I don't understand how in the world *I* could bring *myself* to surrender like that, to make that kind of commitment." And here's the answer. Abraham had all of these promises, but there was one promise under all of the promises. There was one promise key to every other one.

He was going to be a nation, but first he had to have an *offspring*. Do you see that word? A son. He was going to have a nation of his people...but first he had to have a son. He was going to have a great name, he was going to bless all of the peoples of the earth...but first he had to have a son. Everything came down to that. But Sarah was barren and Abraham was old. And that meant the son was going to be an act of miraculous grace.

Here's what God says. "Abraham, you can't qualify yourself for this; you just have to live with faith in the son. You have to live out of faith in that, and if you just live as if I'm going to give you that, live on the basis of that, everything else will come true." Now Abraham's son, Isaac - we'll get to him - points us to the real Son, and we're in the same position. Here's what I mean. Look at Jesus. He got out. He had a call. He was told, "Leave your Father's house." We sing hymns about it. Famous line from Charles Wesley:

He left his Father's throne above,  
So free, so infinite his grace;  
Emptied himself of all but love,  
And bled for Adam's helpless race.

He left the ultimate Father's house. He left the ultimate security. Jesus had *real* security. And why did he do it? *For us*. He went out not knowing whither he went. He went into the abyss. You talk about homelessness? He was *utterly* homeless. You talk about fatherlessness? He was *utterly* fatherless. But why did he do it? He did it so he could pay the penalty for our sins. He lost his Father so *we* could get his Father...so we could be brought into his family.

And this is what Jesus is saying. It's very simple. "If you realize that I answered the original and ultimate call away from security so you could have the ultimate security of knowing you're adopted into the family of God, and you're loved in me, then you'll be able to live the Abrahamic big life. You'll be able to move out into the world, you'll be able to critique your culture, yet not be afraid to stay in it. You'll be able to surrender your will. You'll be able to handle any opposition."

That's the key. The Son of promise. Do you see it? Do you grasp it? I mean, in a sense, the key for Abraham is the key to us. If you say, "I'll never be able to handle this call," you're forgetting something. Somebody handled it *for* you. Somebody already heard the call in degrees and realms of depth beyond anything you're going to be asked to do.

You may be asked to follow Christ, and your family thinks you're a nut, just like Abraham's. But Jesus Christ answered the call and lost his Father. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In other words, he went out *for* you so now you can go out *for* him. He lost the *ultimate* security for you; now you can certainly lose your little securities for him, because you have the ultimate security *in* him.

Let the call of God come into your life. Hear it, surrender to it, and it'll make you like him. It'll make you great. It'll qualify you. Heed the call.

Let us pray...

Jesus we look to you. Ultimately, it's not Abraham's example we want to follow, it is yours. Because you did that for us, we can do anything now for you. We pray you would teach us how to live the same big life that you did. Teach us how to live for others. Teach us how to live for you. Teach us how to live for the people around us. Bless us...so that we can *be* a blessing. Give us the courage to stand as pilgrims and aliens in our culture and love them enough to show them a better way. No matter what it costs us. Give us the same big life with your saints because we have heard the call ourselves. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.