

## Cut a Deal

### *The Gospel According to Abraham, Pt. 3*

We're looking, over a period of several weeks, at the narratives in the book of Genesis that cover the life of Abraham. Why? There's a great line in Macbeth, a typically vivid Shakespearean line. It goes like this. "*Each new morn, new widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike heaven on the face...*" Now we don't want to believe that, but that is absolutely true. That is life.

Every morning, the dawn breaks and there are *thousands* more ruined lives, thousands more cries of death, of disease, of despondency, of disillusionment. Thousands! And even if you have up to now led a charmed life and a sheltered life, it is inevitable that one of those mornings it's going to be you...if it hasn't already. "Each new morn, new widows howl..." Every morning. Now aren't you glad you came to church today? How inspiring to be told that that's life; these things are going to come at you. They *are* going to come at you.

And the real question is; Are they going to master you, or are you going to master them? The reason there are three whole world religions - Christianity, Judaism, and Islam - that look to Abraham as a model for living is because it was almost as if he had an anchor to his life,

that no matter how much he was buffeted and beaten by the waves and the winds of life...he held firm. Oh, he was buffeted, but he held firm in the end.

And that's the reason why we look at him. Because the real question is...How can *we* have a life like that? Life is going to come after us like that. Some morning, it's going to be you, if it hasn't already been you. "Each new morn ..." So how are we going to live a life like this? That's why we're looking at Abraham.

And today, we're looking at a particular obstacle to living the kind of masterful life Abraham lived and that we would like to live. And that obstacle is **doubt**. Because when we find ourselves in the midst of all the pain and misery of life it's just very *natural* to say, "How can you believe in a God?" It raises doubts, and all of us struggle with doubt.

Let's read the text and then we'll explore further. **Genesis 15:1–21**, "*After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."* 2 *But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"* 3 *And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."* 4 *Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."*

5 He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. 7 He also said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” 8 But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

9 So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” 10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. 11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. 12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

13 Then the LORD said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. 15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. 16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

Ok, so doubt. How can we trust God? How can we move forward into a relationship with God? How can we live by faith? Doubt. Doubt is a huge problem, and I would even go so far as to say everybody, whether you're inside the church or outside the church or in some kind of transition between inside and outside, all of us are hampered in the way we live because we don't understand or do not know how to deal with spiritual doubt.

But this text helps us understand about doubt under three headings. First of all we'll learn about the *reality of doubt*. Then secondly, God's *deconstruction of doubt*. How does *God* take it apart? And thirdly, we'll just ask how can we *apply it* to our own situation?

**First The reality of doubt.** The nature of it. We could even look at the structure of doubt in the first eight verses. What we see in these first eight verses is pretty interesting. Abram is scared. That's how it starts. The first words we read, “After *this* ...” After what? God comes and says, “Do not be afraid, Abram.” Those of you who are coming each week know we skipped chapter 14 – we are not covering every verse during this series. But in chapter 14, Abram has had to rescue his nephew Lot from four marauding tribal chieftains.

He rescued Lot militarily. He attacked and rescued his nephew and their family, but now he's scared. "What about retaliation? Who's going to come back and attack *me*?" So God shows up and says, "Abram, do not be afraid. I am your shield and your very great reward." It's very supernatural. So God comes in with this very clear, audible revelation that says, "Fear not. I am your shield and your great reward."

And how does Abram respond? Does he say, "Boy, now I feel better. I was losing my grip, but this really helps. I really appreciate it"? No! Abram spews out stuff that has obviously been in there. Basically he says, "Since you brought up this idea of reward...that child you promised me?...where is it?" And so the response to this incredible revelation is *doubt*.

So what does God do? Well, it says in v.4 the same thing it had in v.1, "Then the word of the LORD came to him ...". God showed up supernaturally *again* and said, "Don't worry." And He takes him outside, and this is one of the most loving and wonderful, encouraging assurances God ever gives anybody. You can almost see God's arm around him.

He says, "Look at the sky. Look at the stars. Can you count them? Of course, you can't count them. That's how great the nation will be. That's how influential the salvation I bring through your loins will be.

*That's* what I'm going to do through you." And verse 6 tells us that at least momentarily Abram *believed* the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness, but then look...

But then look at what happens immediately after, v.8, "*But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"*" "Thanks for the promise, God, but I'm just filled with doubts. How can I be *certain*? How can I know?" If you ever say, "I wish God would just give me a clear sign and then I wouldn't worry." Nonsense. It doesn't get any clearer than this. So what's the first thing we're learning here? It should be obvious.

First of all, we're learning the inevitability of doubt. Think about this. Doubt never goes away. This is a man who is deep into a life of faith. If you've been with us this far, you know he has already launched out. He has already left *everything* - his country, his culture, his family - he's left *everything* in trust on the promise of God. And also, here's the man who half the human race, essentially three world religions, looks to as a paragon of faith, who has just had, first of all, a word of the Lord - a clear, audible revelation - and he's filled with doubt. So how do you think *you're* going to do?

Probably, you're never going to get past it. That means there will always be to some level in anyone's life doubt. There has to be. Doubt, in a sense, is a problem that never goes away. It is an inevitable thing, *but* look at this incredible balance the Bible has here and everywhere. What an incredibly nuanced, balanced view of doubt.

In spite of these *wonderful* revelations twice Abram says, "But how do I *know*? How can I really trust? I'm filled with doubts." Does God say, "How *dare* you question me?" Never! And yet does God say, "Well, you know that's the way it is. We all live with doubt and we can't help it"? No. On the one hand, God does not condemn. On the other hand, God challenges it. God keeps coming after him. There is a remarkable balance.

It's very much like Jesus and Thomas. Thomas says, "I won't believe unless I can see the nail prints." If that was a sinful thing, if that was a wrong thing, why did Jesus show it to him? And yet, when Jesus gives him the evidence, he almost rebukes him and says, "Stop doubting and believe." There's this *fascinating* balance in which doubt is never encouraged, and yet doubters are *completely* welcomed and addressed.

In fact, another way to put it is this is completely different than either the liberal mind's sensibility or the conservative mind's sensibility with regard to doubt.

What's the conservative mind's sensibility? The conservative person thinks of doubt as a complete evil and thinks of doubt as a total failure.

The conservative mindset creates communities, creates churches, in which no one is allowed to talk about doubts; no one is allowed to express intellectual doubts or emotional struggles with fundamentals of the Christian faith. And when you create a church like that or you create a community like that, you're telling the world you can't be emotionally or intellectually authentic and be a Christian.

Tons and tons of people have been just so turned off. They see how incredibly unattractive that is, and not only that, but inside those churches people who *do* have the doubts are so frightened by them and feel so self-condemned by them and can never actually get any answers. What if Abram said here, "Oh, fine. I don't have any doubt"? You never would have had the second half of this chapter, which is one of the greatest things that has ever been done in history.

There's no greater chapter talking about the grace in the gospel in the whole Bible. Nothing in Romans that goes beyond this. In other words, when you express doubt and say, "My faith is weak," instead of God saying, "How dare you?" God says, "Then this is the way to give you a *masterful* life. I will *give* you more. I will *come* to you."

Do you see? So on the one hand, the conservative approach to doubt is not right. God is not condemning them. God is dealing with them. On the other hand, the liberal approach to doubt is to say it is intellectually sophisticated and it's emotionally mature to always be in doubt about everything - to be skeptical, to be cynical, to have unresolved eternal doubt about *everything*. But we all know – don't we? - that's not true. You can't be completely dubious about everything.

You can only doubt *everything* if you refuse to doubt your doubt itself. You can only be cynical about *everything* without being cynical about your *cynicism*. You say, "What do you mean by 'being cynical about your cynicism'?" Well, at least be open to the possibility that what you have here is gutlessness. That underneath all the veneer of cynicism and all the veneer of being so dubious and so skeptical and so sophisticated is really a cowardice. "If I don't open my heart it can never be broken."

If you're not even *open* to that, if you haven't even tried that on, if you haven't even looked at that, then you are giving everybody else something you're refusing to give to yourself. You can dish it out, but you can't take it. God doesn't do the liberal thing of saying, "That's fine." He goes after it. God doesn't do the conservative thing of saying, "How dare you doubt?" Instead, God says, "Doubters are welcome because honest admission of

weakness and difficulty and struggle is the way you become Abrahams."

Now, if you are willing to start to look at your doubt, which modern people don't want to do, there's even one more thing I think you learn here about the way doubt is structured before we move on to see how God deconstructs it. And what that is is there are really, from what I can tell, two components to doubt. You can see it in the two objections.

The first objection. Look at v. 2. "*Abram said, "You have given me no children what can **you** give me?"*" Then look at the second expression of doubt in v. 8, "*O Sovereign Lord, how can **I** know that **I** will be in possession of it?"* Do you notice the dominant words? There are two components. One is we're saying, "How can I know about God? How can I know about **you**?" A lot of people don't want to believe in God because if they do believe *in* God then they might have to actually lose control *to* God.

A lot of us who do believe in God are *still* scared of that. We don't know we can trust Him. We're afraid He's going to make us do things we don't want to do or do things that will hurt us or do things that will give us empty and miserable lives. So the first component of doing is "How can I know about *you*, God?"

But there's another problem. There's another thing that keeps us from entering into relationship with God and living confident lives. The other aspect of doubt is, "O Lord, how can I know about *me*?" See, that's the other side. People are afraid to move out into a relationship with God and because they say, "I don't know about *me*. I think I could never keep it up. I can't see myself as the kind of person who could pull off this sort of thing." So I'm scared of faith a) because I don't know about you, and b) because I don't know about me. And those are the two aspects of doubt.

And God deals with them in the second half of the chapter in an utterly stunning way, in an utterly amazing way. That's our **second point, God's Deconstruction of Doubt**. Now, we're going to have to do a little bit of background if we're going to understand how stunning it is. So in v. 9-10 the Lord says, "*Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon. Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.*"

Now notice something interesting. God doesn't tell Abram what to do with it; he just *does* it, which means as soon as God says, "Go get some animals," Abram immediately knows what God is talking about.

God and Abram both know what's going on, but *we* don't! Here's why. As soon as God said, "Go get some animals," Abram knew God was about to make a *covenant*; a solemn, binding contract.

Now if we're going to understand this, we have to realize in some ways we're different than they are; in other ways, we're not. We live in a written culture. We no longer live in an oral culture but a written culture. But we have contracts too. So imagine I'm building a house and I meet a contractor. The contractor says, "I will give you x number of bricks for x number of dollars." And I say, "All right. Great."

And three months later, he comes by with the bricks and he charges me quite a bit more. He says, "Oh, I'm sorry. They went up," or "This happened," or "That happened." I'm so upset, and my friends say, "You idiot. You should have made him write it down. If he puts it on paper and if he signs it, then you can go to a judge, *then* there's consequences for breaking the promise." See? See, in a *written* culture, you have to have it written down, then there are consequences, then there's a penalty.

And so what I should have done is when I met him I should have said, “O great contractor, how can I *know* that you will give me x number of bricks for x number of dollars? How can I deal with my doubts about you? How can I live in peace? O great contractor, how can I know?” And the contractor says, “I know. I will *sign*. And when I sign a contract, that means I am saying I’m willing to pay a *penalty* should I fail to fulfill my promise. I make myself *accountable* to pay a penalty if I don’t keep my promise.” And if I see him do that, then I say, “Ah. Okay.”

But Abram lived not in a written culture but an oral culture, a storytelling culture, and therefore, the way they made contracts is they *acted out* ritually and they dramatized the consequence of breaking the covenant. But see, in one way, they’re just like us. In other words, you have to find a way to make the promisor accountable to pay the penalty. *Then*, we can know he’s going to come through or she’s going to come through. Right?

But what were the animals about? Well, here’s what the animals were about. In **Jeremiah 34:17–20**, there’s another cryptic spot, but I think when we put the two together, you’ll start to understand. “*Therefore this is what the Lord says: You have not obeyed me... Those who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made*

*before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces...I will deliver [them] into the hands of their enemies who want to kill them. Their dead bodies will become food for the birds and the wild animals.”*

Do you see what’s going on? Here’s how you made a covenant in those days. You cut an animal in half and you walked between the pieces. (Nobody tell PETA). And what you were doing is you were ritually identifying *with* the pieces and you were actually acting out the consequence, the penalty, of breaking the contract. And what you were saying is, “If I do not do all the words I’m saying today, may I be cut off, may I be cut up, may my flesh be strewn out on the desert to be the food of birds and beasts of the wild.”

So the form is much more dramatic than signing a piece of paper, but what you’re doing is *exactly* the same as what the contractor is doing, and that is you’re making yourself accountable to pay the penalty for failure to fulfill your promise. That’s pretty effective. Next time you build a house, suggest your contractors do *this* instead of signing a piece of paper, and you’ll probably get better service. Think about it.

So **Genesis 15:18** reads, “*On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram...*”. Except that’s not actually what it says in the Hebrew. Literally, in the Hebrew it says, “On that day they *cut* a covenant.” The term in Hebrew for making a covenant is *karath beriyth*, “to cut a covenant”, because cutting was at the essence of making a covenant. Cutting. Bloodshed. It was the covenant curse.

The promisor did a malediction. The promisor took on the covenant curse and said, “If I do not do everything I’m saying today, may this be true of me.” And God was willing to enter into this kind of cultural Near Eastern form - which is amazing. Everybody understood. When Abram heard about bringing the animals, he said, “Great! This is going to be terrific.” He understood immediately what God was going to do.

But when God enters into a human cultural form, He also transforms it. He participates in it, but He transforms it. And two stunning things God did in verses 17 and 18 must have *utterly* astounded Abram. I mean, they astound me. The first stunning thing is *who* passes between the pieces. **Verse 17.** “*When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared...*” Now what in the world does that mean? First of all, if you go back up a few verses it says that “*As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.*”

Now, there are two things happening there. First the sun is going down. But that’s not what causes the “think and dreadful darkness.” There was a darkness in the darkness. It literally means when it was getting dark *physically* outside, there was an *inner* darkness of horror and of terror that came over Abram. This sleep is more like a trance, because he is aware of what’s going on around him.

So Abraham is just paralyzed by the weight of this heaviness. And then, what appears is a blazing torch and a smoking firepot. A billowing smoke and a fiery blaze appear. Now these are hard words to translate, but one thing we know - and every commentator I read said so - is these are the same two words that describe the top of Mount Sinai when God came down on it later on with Moses - “a billowing smoke” and “a fiery blaze,”

*And* these are the same two words that describe the pillar of God’s presence that went before the children of Israel in the wilderness after the Exodus. Because, you remember, in the daytime when the sun hit it, what did it look like? A cloud of smoke. But in the nighttime, when the sun went down, what did it look like? A pillar of fire.



So what have appeared are the emblems of God's actual glory presence. A searing streak of lightning appears and holds its shape, and then with all of its sparks and thunder and smoke and fire, it goes down the aisle formed by the pieces and speaks and says, "I *will* give you this land." And Abram would have been utterly dumbfounded, because there was only *one* thing this could mean.

This is *God* saying, "Abram, do you want to know how you can know? Do you want to know about me? If I don't bless you, may My immortality suffer mortality, may My immutability suffer mutability, may My infinitude suffer finitude, may the impossible become possible, may *I* be cut off, may *I* be cut up, may *I die*." Is that enough?

You say, "Wow!" Do you know what? That's not all God does. And here's the reason why it's not all God does. If all God did was he passed through the pieces, we still have that other half of the problem. Do you remember the anatomy of doubt? Maybe I'm speaking for myself, but I don't think so.

I look at that and I say, "Oh, wow, *but* I never really, really, really was scared *you* wouldn't keep *your* part of the promise. I mean, you want to enter into a covenant with me, and you say, 'You will be my people, and I will be your God.'" That's the covenant.

"Okay. I know *you'll* be there. I know *you'll* come through. I know you're willing to take the penalty if you should fail. I know that you're going to be my God.

But I don't know if I'm ever going to be able to be your person. I don't know if I want to enter into a relationship like this. I don't know how I can walk out there in life and try to live according to these great principles when I just can't see myself getting to the finish line. *I'm* going to fail. I'm going to let you down. I'm going to let me and everybody else down."

Because our problem is not just, "I don't know about You," but our problem is also, "Oh God, how can I know about *me*?" But there's a second amazing thing that we see here. Not just who does go through the pieces – God. But the second stunning thing is who *doesn't* go through the pieces.

We know from history and we know from archaeology that what we have here is called in Ancient Sumaria, a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. A suzerain means ruler or king and vassal is a servant. So when they would enter into a land deal and the king said, "Ok, I will give you some land and protection, but in return you send me back a portion of the produce from the land and you agree to show up with your spear if I should call up the army."

And who do you think then walked through the pieces to say, “If I fail to keep this covenant, I submit to being butchered like this cow”? Not the king! It was the little guy. Always. I mean there was one king and a whole bunch of peasants. So the king could say, “Hey, I don’t need you like you need me. Why should I go through the pieces and make all these vows? I’m not going to do that. *You* come through and you promise to be a good vassal. Then, I promise to protect you and to do this and do this and this, but I’m not going to go through the pieces.”

But in the case of Abraham, God alone goes through the pieces and then says the covenant is finalized. Abraham doesn’t do a stinking thing but lay there in a stupor and watch. There’s no record of any other covenant like that. How could that be? What does it mean?

Well, there’s only one thing that could mean? God is saying, “Abram, I will bless you. No matter whether I fail, I will pay the penalty. No matter whether *you* fail, I will pay the penalty. I will absorb the cost for either of us, including you.” This is a one-sided covenant. Unbelievable. This is God’s way of saying, “I will be torn apart if I fail, or I will be torn apart if you fail. If you fail, I will take the consequences. I will take the penalty. I will do it.”

And Abram had no idea the cost of this oath of grace, but centuries later, a darkness came down again. Right? It was so great and so dreadful that it put out the sun at noon. Because **Mark 15:33** says, “*At the sixth hour ...*” - which is noon - “*... darkness came down.*” It enveloped Jerusalem, it enveloped Mount Calvary, and on the cross, what happened to Jesus when he said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” What happened to Jesus?

**Isaiah 53:8** says, “*For he was cut off from the land of the living...*” Cut off. That’s covenant language. That’s the curse. When he says, “My God, my God ...” what is he saying? “I’m in the dark and I’m alone and you’ve cut me off.” Why? This is God saying, “I’m going to bless you unconditionally. If you believe in me, if you enter into this relationship with me, not only will I not fail...but *your* failures are not going to get in the way of me blessing you.”

And that’s the reason why Paul has the audacity to put it like this when he’s meditating on Abraham. He says in **Galatians 3:13–14**, “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to us all through Jesus Christ.*” Now what does this mean? Let me apply it a bit.

Last point, **How can we apply it to our own situation?** Let's talk about two kinds of people that always are in a room like this. There are some of you who've never really made a commitment to Christ. There are some of you who thought you did, and then you started going to SWFF and I've thrown you into doubt. Ok, but the point is some of you have never made a commitment. Why not? Some of you say, "Because I have all these questions and doubts."

Oh, do you think you have to get it all together before you step out? Is that it? Don't you realize you're actually contradicting the faith at its heart? Because if you can't handle the fact that you're *always* going to have questions and there are *always* going to be flaws in your faith, then what you're really doing is rejecting the *heart* of this faith.

Every other religion makes *you* go through the pieces. Even if you make up your own religion. I'm not knocking the other world religions. Every other approach to living confidently says, "This will be my shield. This will be my reward. I'm going to be a moral person. I'm going to be a good person. I'm going to be a liberal person. I'm going to be a conservative person. I'm going to liberate people. I'm going to be a tolerant person." Everybody is walking through the pieces - "then, I know I can face life" - and you are going to fail.

If you really look down deep, you're going to know you're never going to come through. Do you remember how I said Abraham is sort of like a man who had an anchor? I think the Hebrews writer was thinking about this passage when he says in **Hebrews 6:13**, "*When God made his promise to Abraham, he swore by himself saying, 'I will surely bless you' because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear, so he confirmed it with an oath. We have **this hope as an anchor for our souls, firm and secure.***"

If you say, "I'm having lots of doubts and I'm afraid to give myself to God," I want you to see you can't avoid giving yourself to *something*. Your anchor is down in something. There's *something* that you're using to say, "If I have that..." You're putting your anchor into friends or into your talents or into your looks or into your career or *something*.

Now, I am not a boat guy, I'm a land guy. But I do know how anchors work – besides I can Google stuff. Without an anchor, the boat of your life will be adrift. If I go fishing in the Gulf and I don't drop anchor, I'm just going to float out to sea. We all need an anchor to hold us steady.

In your life, what do you think will always be there for you? What are you putting your anchor down in? See, you say, “I don’t want to give myself to God and to the promise of God,” but you’re giving yourself to something, and it’s *water*. It’s ebbing. It’s flowing. Is it your family? It’s going to go. Is it your looks? It’s *really* going to go. Is it your talent? It’s going to go.

We buried my uncle on Friday. He and my aunt had been married for 70 years. If your spouse is your anchor, what are you going to do when you walk into the funeral home and see your anchor lying in a casket? “Each new morn new widows howl...” Everybody puts their anchor down into something. But God says, “Here’s something that will outlast the the iron of the largest anchor.”

When God says, “I am your shield,” what is He saying? He says, “Unless I am your shield, you don’t *have* a shield. Unless I’m your security, you don’t *have* security. Unless I am your anchor...” It’s just silly to think you have any security in this world – do you follow the news? So you’re afraid of giving yourself, but why aren’t you afraid of *not*?

And secondly, Christian friends, I want you to think about this. Do you know *all* of your problems are coming because you don’t have your anchor down far enough? Let’s just extend the metaphor for another 60 seconds. It’s possible to drop anchor on a boat, but not get it down into the seabed. You can be out fishing and when the waves start up, that anchor is just going to drift along with you all the way to the Yucatán Peninsula!

And you know, being a Christian is like this. When you realize you’ve been trusting other things for your salvation and you say, “I’m going to trust in Jesus Christ,” and you really, in a sincere act of faith, do that, you give yourself to Christ - you’re a Christian. It’s like dropping anchor. And for a while everything seem fine...but then the storms come. And the anchor is not the problem, you just didn’t lower it deep enough. Didn’t get it into the rock.

Why are you worried today? If you’re really worried, if you’re really anxious, it’s because you’re saying, “I’m afraid God is not really going to come through for me.” And that’s because, though you *intellectually* believe God did this and God said all these things and God walked between the pieces and God was torn to pieces for you and God is unconditionally committed to you...you don’t *emotionally* know it.

If you're bitter because somebody has insulted you and made you look bad and you can't get past it and you can't forgive... You don't get over worry just by trying not to worry, and you don't get over bitterness just by trying not to be bitter. You have to say, "Who cares what people think when God loves me like this? Look what He did for me."

Your anchor is not down far enough. You're not going to overcome your problems just by trying. You have to see this. When you get that anchor down into the seabed properly, there's a lot of pressure on that anchor - all that water, all that force - but it holds.

But when Jesus Christ went down under the wrath of God and divine justice, that was worse than the greatest typhoon that's ever ravaged the ocean, and he stayed and he held for me. When you think about him doing that for you, does it move you? Does it make you a little emotional? Does it make you say, "Why am I not realizing this more?" Ah. Your anchor is going down.

That's what we're going to do right now with the Lord's Supper. Do you know what the Lord's Supper is? The Lord's Supper is a way of ritually acting out what Jesus Christ did. He was broken to pieces, he was cut to pieces, just like the bread that's coming around to you, so that he could say, "I will bless you,

and you can know about me or you." It doesn't matter. "If your hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts."

And therefore, the Lord's Supper is a way for us to get the anchor down further and to be able to face life like Abraham. Because just like Abraham we ask God, "How can I know? How can I know?" And God gives us the same answer in the bread and the cup. "Look at what my Son did. *This* is how you know."

Let's pray...