

Lesson 6

The Roots of Abraham

Sabbath Afternoon, April 30

God selected Abraham as His messenger through whom to communicate light to the world. The word of God came to him, not with the presentation of flattering prospects in this life of large salary, of great appreciation and worldly honor. “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee” (Genesis 12:1), was the divine message to Abraham. The patriarch obeyed. . . . He forsook his country, his home, his relatives, and all pleasant associations connected with his early life, to become a pilgrim and a stranger.

Abraham . . . might have reasoned and questioned the purposes of God in this. But he showed that he had perfect confidence that God was leading him; he did not question whether it was a fertile, pleasant country or whether or not he should have ease. He went at God’s bidding. This is a lesson to every one of us.

—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 112.

Before God can use him, Abraham must be separated from his former associations, that he may not be controlled by human influence or rely upon human aid. Now that he has become connected with God, this man must henceforth dwell among strangers. His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends, for they were idolaters. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned; therefore his motives and his actions were beyond the comprehension of his kindred and friends.

Abraham’s unquestioning obedience was one of the most striking instances of faith and reliance upon God to be found in the Sacred Record. With only the naked promise that his descendants should possess Canaan, without the least outward evidence, he followed on where God should lead, fully and sincerely complying with the conditions on his part, and confident that the Lord would faithfully perform His word. The patriarch went wherever God indicated his duty; he passed through wildernesses without terror; he went among idolatrous nations, with the one thought: “God has spoken; I am obeying His voice; He will guide, He will protect me.”

Just such faith and confidence as Abraham had the messengers of God need today. But many whom the Lord could use will not move onward, hearing and obeying the one Voice above all others. . . . The Lord would do much more for His servants if they were wholly consecrated to Him, esteeming His service above the ties of kindred and all other earthly associations.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 523, 524.

When called to become a sower of the seed of truth, Abraham . . . “went out, not knowing whither he went.” Hebrews 11:8. So to the apostle Paul, praying in the temple at Jerusalem, came the message from God, “Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.” Acts 22:21. So those who are called to unite with Christ must leave all, in order to follow Him. Old associations must be broken up, plans of life relinquished, earthly hopes surrendered. In toil and tears, in solitude, and through sacrifice, must the seed be sown.

—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 36, 37.

Sunday, May 1: Abraham's Departure

After the dispersion from Babel idolatry again became well-nigh universal, and the Lord finally left the hardened transgressors to follow their evil ways, while He chose Abraham, of the line of Shem, and made him the keeper of His law for future generations. Abraham had grown up in the midst of superstition and heathenism. Even his father's household, by whom the knowledge of God had been preserved, were yielding to the seductive influences surrounding them, and they "served other gods" than Jehovah. But the true faith was not to become extinct. God has ever preserved a remnant to serve Him. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, in unbroken line, had preserved from age to age the precious revealings of His will. The son of Terah became the inheritor of this holy trust. Idolatry invited him on every side, but in vain. Faithful among the faithless, uncorrupted by the prevailing apostasy, he steadfastly adhered to the worship of the one true God. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." Psalm 145:18. He communicated His will to Abraham, and gave him a distinct knowledge of the requirements of His law and of the salvation that would be accomplished through Christ. . . .

It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the land of promise—whether the soil was fertile and the climate healthful; whether the country afforded agreeable surroundings and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God has spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be.

Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them. Who is ready at the call of Providence to renounce cherished plans and familiar associations? Who will accept new duties and enter untried fields, doing God's work with firm and willing heart, for Christ's sake counting his losses gain? He who will do this has the faith of Abraham, and will share with him that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Corinthians 4:17.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 125–127.

Monday, May 2: The Temptation of Egypt

Abraham continued to journey southward, and again his faith was tested. The heavens withheld their rain, the brooks ceased to flow in the valleys, and the grass withered on the plains. The flocks and herds found no pasture, and starvation threatened the whole encampment. . . . All were eagerly watching to see what Abraham would do, as trouble after trouble came upon him. So long as his confidence appeared unshaken, they felt that there was hope; they were assured that God was his Friend, and that He was still guiding him.

. . .

. . . With earnest prayer he considered how to preserve the life of his people and his flocks, but he would not allow circumstances to shake his faith in God's word. To escape the famine he went down into Egypt. He did not forsake Canaan, or in his extremity turn back to the Chaldean land from which he came, where there was no scarcity of bread; but he sought a temporary refuge as near as possible to the Land of Promise, intending shortly to return where God had placed him.

The Lord in His providence had brought this trial upon Abraham to teach him lessons of submission, patience, and faith—lessons that were to be placed on record for the benefit of all who should afterward be called to endure affliction. God leads His children by a way that they know not, but He does not forget or cast off those who put their trust in Him. . . . The very trials that task our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us, are to lead us closer to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience the peace which He will give us in exchange. . . .

During his stay in Egypt, Abraham gave evidence that he was not free from human weakness and imperfection. In concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, he betrayed a distrust of the divine care, a lack of that lofty faith and courage so often and nobly exemplified in his life. Sarah was fair to look upon, and he doubted not that the dusky Egyptians would covet the beautiful stranger, and that in order to secure her, they would not scruple to slay her husband. He reasoned that he was not guilty of falsehood in representing Sarah as his sister, for she was the daughter of his father, though not of his mother. But this concealment of the real relation between them was deception. No deviation from strict integrity can meet God's approval. Through Abraham's lack of faith, Sarah was placed in great peril. The king of Egypt, being informed of her beauty, caused her to be taken to his palace, intending to make her his wife. But the Lord, in His great mercy, protected Sarah by sending judgments upon the royal household. By this means the monarch learned the truth in the matter, and, indignant at the deception practiced upon him, he reproved Abraham and restored to him his wife.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 128–130.

Tuesday, May 3: Abram and Lot

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. Genesis 13:12, 13.

The most fertile region in all Palestine was the Jordan valley. . . . There were cities also, wealthy and beautiful, inviting to profitable traffic in their crowded marts. Dazzled with visions of worldly gain, Lot overlooked the moral and spiritual evils that would be encountered there. . . . He “chose him all the plain of Jordan,” and “pitched his tent toward Sodom.” How little did he foresee the terrible results of that selfish choice!

Lot chose Sodom for his home because he saw that there were advantages to be gained there from a worldly point of view. But after he had established himself, and grown rich in earthly treasure, he was convinced that he had made a mistake in not taking into consideration the moral standing of the community in which he was to make his home.

—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 48.

The Holy Scriptures give us marked examples of the exercise of true courtesy. Abraham was a man of God. When he pitched his tent he at once erected his altar for sacrifice and invited God to abide with him. Abraham was a courteous man. His life is not marred with selfishness, so hateful in any character and so offensive in the sight of God. Witness his conduct when about to separate from Lot. Though Lot was his nephew, and much younger than himself, and the first choice of the land belonged to Abraham, courtesy led him to forgo his right, and permit Lot to select for himself that part of the country which seemed to him most desirable. . . . Abraham knew what genuine politeness was and what was due from man to his fellow men.

We should be self-forgetful, ever . . . watching for opportunities to cheer others and lighten and relieve their sorrows and burdens by acts of tender kindness and little deeds of love. These thoughtful courtesies, that, commencing in our families, extend outside the family circle, help make up the sum of life’s happiness.

—*My Life Today*, p. 192.

If we have Christ abiding with us, we shall be Christians at home as well as abroad. He who is a Christian will have kind words for his relatives and associates. He will be kind, courteous, loving, sympathetic, and will be educating himself for an abode with the family above. If he is a member of the royal family, he will represent the kingdom to which he is going. He will speak with gentleness to his children, for he will realize that they too are heirs of God, members of the heavenly court. Among the children of God no spirit of harshness dwells.

—*My Life Today*, p. 196.

Wednesday, May 4: The Babel Coalition

Abraham, dwelling in peace in the oak groves at Mamre, learned from one of the fugitives the story of the battle and the calamity that had befallen his nephew. He had cherished no unkind memory of Lot's ingratitude. All his affection for him was awakened, and he determined that he should be rescued. Seeking, first of all, divine counsel, Abraham prepared for war. . . . His attack, so vigorous and unexpected, resulted in speedy victory. The king of Elam was slain and his panic-stricken forces were utterly routed. Lot and his family, with all the prisoners and their goods, were recovered, and a rich booty fell into the hands of the victors. To Abraham, under God, the triumph was due. The worshiper of Jehovah had not only rendered a great service to the country, but had proved himself a man of valor. It was seen that righteousness is not cowardice, and that Abraham's religion made him courageous in maintaining the right and defending the oppressed. His heroic act gave him a widespread influence among the surrounding tribes.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 135.

At the time of Lot's removal to Sodom, corruption had not become universal, and God in His mercy permitted rays of light to shine amid the moral darkness. When Abraham rescued the captives from the Elamites, the attention of the people was called to the true faith. Abraham was not a stranger to the people of Sodom, and his worship of the unseen God had been a matter of ridicule among them; but his victory over greatly superior forces, and his magnanimous disposition of the prisoners and spoil, excited wonder and admiration. While his skill and valor were extolled, none could avoid the conviction that a divine power had made him conqueror. And his noble and unselfish spirit, so foreign to the self-seeking inhabitants of Sodom, was another evidence of the superiority of the religion which he had honored by his courage and fidelity.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 157.

God positively enjoins upon all His followers a duty to bless others with their influence and means, and to seek that wisdom of Him which will enable them to do all in their power to elevate the thoughts and affections of those who come within their influence. . . .

Every act of our lives affects others for good or evil. Our influence is tending upward or downward; it is felt, acted upon, and to a greater or less degree reproduced by others. If by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same beneficial influence upon others, and thus hundreds and thousands are affected by our unconscious influence. If we by acts strengthen or force into activity the evil powers possessed by those around us, we share their sin, and will have to render an account for the good we might have done them and did not do, because we made not God our strength, our guide, our counselor.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 132, 133.

Thursday, May 5: The Tithe of Melchizedek

God has never left Himself without witness on the earth. At one time Melchisedek represented the Lord Jesus Christ in person, to reveal the truth of heaven, and perpetuate the law of God.

It was Christ that spoke through Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchisedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world. When God chose Abraham as a representative of His truth, He took him out of his country, and away from his kindred, and set him apart. He desired to mold him after His own model. He desired to teach him according to His own plan.

—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 1092, 1093.

In the Hebrew economy one tenth of the income of the people was set apart to support the public worship of God. . . .

But the tithing system did not originate with the Hebrews. From the earliest times the Lord claimed a tithe as His, and this claim was recognized and honored. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Genesis 14:20. Jacob, when at Bethel, an exile and a wanderer, promised the Lord, “Of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.” Genesis 28:22. As the Israelites were about to be established as a nation, the law of tithing was reaffirmed as one of the divinely ordained statutes upon obedience to which their prosperity depended.

The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man’s gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

Money is a blessing when those who use it consider that they are the Lord’s stewards, that they are handling the Lord’s capital, and must one day give account of their stewardship.

Does your account book reveal that you have dealt faithfully with your Lord? Are you poor? Then give your little. Have you been blessed with abundance? Then be sure to lay aside that which the Lord registers as His own. . . . The neglect to confess Christ in your account books cuts you off from the great privilege of having your name registered in the Lamb’s book of life.

Our heavenly Father teaches by His own example of beneficence. God gives to us regularly, freely, and abundantly. Every earthly blessing is from His hand. What if the Lord should cease to bestow His gifts upon us? What a cry of wretchedness, suffering, and want would go up from the earth! We need daily the unfailing flow of Jehovah’s love and goodness.

—*Our High Calling*, p. 192.

Friday, May 6: For Further Reading

My Life Today, “Hospitality,” p. 194;

Counsels on Stewardship, “A Test of Loyalty,” pp. 65, 66.