

Genesis

Chapter 23 - God's Promise Beyond the Grave

Keeping Destiny in Sight (vs. 3b-13)

Genesis 23:3b-13: ...and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, “I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, “Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.” So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site.” Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons

of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, “No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.” And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept it from me that I may bury my dead there.”

What we have in this passage is an interesting business transaction, isn't it? It almost seems as if Ephron is magnanimous, generous to Abraham, but maybe I need to remind you of certain things.

Jeremiah 17:9 says this, that the heart is deceitful above everything else. It's desperately sick. Who can understand it? God didn't have to teach Cain to kill Abel. If you think about it, no murder had ever taken place up to that point. Where does somebody come up with this idea? How would you think, “Hey, it'd be a good idea to kill my brother”? Who would think of such a thing? It's in the

heart of man, isn't it? And as you go through Genesis, we realize the goodness of God and, of course, the evil of man, that it is his nature, that it's the way that he thinks. His mind is desperately sick.

As you go and you look in Genesis 6, we see the whole world becoming so wicked that they're literally self-imploding. They're going to kill each other off. And God, by virtue of raising up Noah, saves humanity. The grace of God. Nevertheless, you would think coming off the ark, and you see the ramifications of all the evil that individuals do. So, Shem, Ham, and Jepheth come off the ark, and you would think, "Hey, I mean, they understand that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and 'We were saved because of our father's righteousness. So, let's continue along this path.'" No, they all come together and they build a tower of Babel and they rebel against God. It's the nature of man to do that. And so, you see that in Genesis 11.

It is for this purpose that in Genesis 12, God calls out Abraham. Why? Because man left to himself is literally going to degrade. And so, we see the graciousness of God

by calling out this one Abraham, and He says, “I'm going to make you a nation, and this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to bless you, and then I'm going to make you a blessing, and you're going to point to Me so that people will be blessed.” And so, the journey goes.

In this particular passage, we find Abraham dealing with the Hittites, and in particular a man by the name of Ephron. Abraham has gone through a difficult time. He has just lost his wife. The grief and the despair, the heartache, the pain and the sorrow begin to kick in, and Scripture actually makes reference to, and here again, one of the first places that we actually see one mourning for somebody else. It is with Abraham for his wife.

And it reads this way,

(Genesis 23:2) “Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.”

One is dealing with the external crying out, and the other begins to describe the internal pain and sorrow that Abraham begins to express.

The question is, how do you deal with pain and sorrow in this world that oftentimes, the natural proclivity is to go their own way, to think their own way, to have their own way of dealing with the pain and the sorrow. In fact, you see some of the wrestling even with people like Noah, which he had to see all of humanity die. And his first initial response is, "I'm going to make a vineyard and get drunk." And so, to deal with the pain, he finds himself trying to subdue it by virtue of that. And we understand that the nature of man is to try to figure out ways to deal with his pain and his suffering, but there is a way which is called truth.

And so, as we come to this passage, what we are seeing is that God has been training, has been leading, has been directing this individual by the name of Abraham to walk according to truth, to walk according to faith. We walk by faith, not by sight. So, there are certain things that we would normally perceive that ought to be done, but God says, "No, we're not going to do that. Let Me tell you what to do." And God begins to direct our hearts. I have found in my own life that when I just start doing what

Scripture tells me to do, that the problems then begin to dissipate. But as I try to figure out what to do, it just becomes enlarged. We walk by faith. We walk by the truth.

There's an interesting passage found in John 17:15-16. If I were to summarize the verses, it would read something like this: We are not of the world. We're in it, but we're not of it. And there are things that are in the world that are always trying to move us into a certain direction, to think a certain way, and it certainly is a way of destruction. What's interesting about this particular passage is that Abraham has to not only deal with his grief, but he has to deal with it in a way in which it involves a business transaction. So, you have the fact that he not only has to deal with the sorrow, but now he's going to have to deal with the people to somehow get a place of burial for his wife. That seems to be extremely important to him. And so, as we come to the passage, he deals with an individual by the name of Ephron, which is a Hittite. He comes to the Hittites. He comes to the sons of Heth, which once again, just to let you know, the sons of

Heth are directly connected to the sons of Canaan, which are directly connected to the son of Ham. You'll see this in Genesis 10, as you see the genealogy. So, once again, Ham is one of the guys that came off the boat. And we understand, according to the genealogy, that Shem is alive at this time. There's no reason to believe that Ham is not alive as well. So, the influence of these men that have come off of Noah's boat being the patriarchs of their day, certainly know the truth. And yet the world has gone the way of confusion and gone against God. So, what God has done is He's called this one by the name of Abraham to be a light, to be a beacon of the world, not unlike the church, "Let your light so shine before men that they would see your good works and glorify God in heaven." You know, I have found that it's not a matter of people not knowing the truth; it's just a matter of them not wanting to embrace it. And so, on the whole, we understand that the truth is permeated by virtue of Ham, Shem, and Japheth. They know the truth. And nevertheless, the nations have gone their own way.

It would be erroneous in this particular passage to see Ephron, which is a Hittite, which once again, is related to the realm of Ham, as magnanimous or generous or kind any more than, you remember when the king of Sodom comes up to Abraham and he goes, "Look, I'll make a deal with you. I'll give you all this." And Abraham goes, "No, I'm not going to take anything from you." Now, the thought is, "Well, the king of Sodom is such a nice guy." No, don't think for one moment that he is, because once again, the pattern of the world is revealing itself, that it has this tendency. And had God not called out Abraham, He would be without a witness, because the nature of man is to go into degradation. So, when we read about Ephron in this particular passage, it's important that we're not deceived about what he's doing. He's pretty sly, he's pretty smart. In fact, basically the fundamental way of thinking of the Hittite, reading historically, is that they were really, really good businessmen. And more specifically, when you can consider their laws, their laws were written in such a way that if you did something wrong, even perhaps killing somebody, you didn't suffer by death, you had to pay a lot. So, they were always kind

of thinking monetarily. They were always kind of thinking as far as money goes. And the way the history books record them is they were skilled negotiators, traders. They were known for their diplomatic bargaining. That's an interesting way of describing them, isn't it? They were always looking for ways to profit, even with their enemies. And it's actually recorded that they had a deal with Egypt. Of course, they were a powerful nation. And I think sometimes we go, "Well, Hittites? I don't even know who Hittites are. They must not have been anybody significant." No, they were one of the most powerful nations. They were actually in the realm of Turkey, but had permeated all the other lands and infiltrated by virtue of their business dealings. And you didn't want to cross with them because the nation was so powerful. They had brought in iron, they had brought in three-man chariots. The reason for the three-man chariots is that you have one guy driving, you have one guy with a spear, and another guy that was an archer. And that's how they won their war. In fact, they had taken over Babylon, and they were going to take over Egypt, but they figured out, "Hey, we can make money off Egypt," so they made a deal with

them. And that particular document is actually preserved in Egypt and it's preserved in another place, in a cuneiform. So, we understand that they had this desire to make money. And whatever it took to do a big, good business deal is what they did. And so, they would force the hand by virtue of perhaps intimidation, or they would force the hand by virtue of diplomacy. But however they would do it, was about the money.

We come into this passage and we see that Abraham is kind of in a vulnerable position. His position is that he's in sorrow. And so, it's very easy to take advantage of somebody that is going through a lot of grief and a lot of sorrow. Nevertheless, it's not the grief and the sorrow that moves or motivates Abraham, and I think this is one of the key points of the passage, that emotions are not a bad thing. In fact, they're a necessary thing. God has given us emotions, and those emotions really reveal our priorities. It reveals the desires of our heart. I mean, what do you get emotional about? And the very things that you get emotional about is really defining the things that you value most. And so, emotions are not a bad thing.

However, you never want emotions to be the drive. In other words, emotions shouldn't be the one thing that moves you or drives you to do something. What am I going to do in light of the way that I feel? And Scripture says, you want to move in accordance with truth. So, Abraham within this particular passage is going to deal with his emotions, but he's going to move in the realm of truth. If I can put it this way, the wind that will be in the sail will be truth instead of all the other decisions and all the other things that can motivate somebody. And I think there are a lot of them. Circumstances, you know, you perceive certain circumstances, you go, "Well, maybe I need to do this in light of the circumstances. Maybe I need to do this in light of maybe the consensus. Everybody's thinking this way, maybe I need to do this." And if you allow those things to make your decisions, then you're going to find yourself making wrong decisions. More than that, defaming the word of God.

So, as Abraham begins to walk through this, if you'll pick up with me in Genesis 23; Abraham will start off by saying,

(Genesis 23:4) “I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

That's a very interesting phrase, “out of my sight,” isn't it? You wouldn't expect that. In other words, “I don't want to look at this.” The word “sight” actually is the word “face,” “*pānîm*,” which makes reference to, “not in my face,” “I don't want this to be in my face.”

What we're going to see is Abraham walking by virtue of truth rather than by walking by the emotions themselves. It'll go on and say,

(Genesis 23:5) “The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,

(Genesis 23:6) “Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.””

Now, I don't know if the Hittites at this juncture were recalling the fact that he had pushed back the Babylonians when they came and they had kidnapped Lot.

Maybe they were thinking, “Wow, he's a pretty strong guy.” Maybe they were thinking in terms of the fact of his great wealth. Maybe they had seen God move and protect him by virtue of protecting him from the Pharaoh or protecting him from Abimelech. Maybe they had heard all these things. I'm sure that the Hittites were privy to the things that were going on because if you're a businessman, you have your ear to the ground and want to know what advantage you have. And so, maybe all of those things were involved. However, there is the issue of flattery, and there's no doubt that they know the character of Abraham by this point, and they know what he longs to do. I mean, he's already said to the king of Sodom, “I'm not going to take any money from you. What I'm going to do is give money to God, and we're going to exalt Him. We're going to give Him all the credit.” Now, they know his mentality. So, I tend to think that you have a Hittite, and he's just playing the game. And he's saying, “Oh, no, you're so great. You're so wonderful. We're going to give this to you,” knowing that, you know, “When are you going to pay us for the burial site?”

It goes on and says this in the passage,

(Genesis 23:7) “So, Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

(Genesis 23:8) And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish (soul) ...”

And he's trying to convey, “If you really, really want to give me this...”

“... “If it is your wish (soul) for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron ...”

Apparently, Abraham had already found a place that he wanted, specifically in the particular area of the Oaks of Mamre, that he wanted to bury his wife, and he's already picked it out. So, he knows who lives there, and he knows the property, the individual that owns it.

“And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me,

(Genesis 23:9) that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field;

for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site.””

And once again, Abraham's careful to make sure that it's done in the presence of everybody so that people aren't saying, “You never paid me for it.”

(Genesis 23:10) “Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying,

(Genesis 23:11) “No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.””

This is a little bit of grandstanding. Scripture's conveying to us that he wants to make sure that everybody's listening. He wants them to hear how magnanimous he is, how generous he is. It's good PR, quite frankly, within the passage. And here again, I know the tendency is to think, “No, this Ephron, he's a really good guy.” Really? So, why does God have to call on Abraham to be a witness to goodness? Why is it that only Noah is the righteous one in

all the face of the earth? It's not the tendency of these nations to think this way. Nevertheless, boy, it sure sounds wonderful. It sure sounds generous and kind and thoughtful.

(Genesis 23:12) “And Abraham bowed before the people of the land.

(Genesis 23:13) He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept it from me that I may bury my dead there.””

Now, some of you have probably cheated and read on, but as we read on, Ephron goes, “What are 400 shekels for a piece of land, you know?” Oh, really? You had already calculated how much it was worth? I thought you hadn't been thinking about this. But he knew exactly how much he wanted from it. Nevertheless, he's bargaining, he's stealing.

There's an interesting study about psychopaths. And I know that your thought probably is, “Where do psychopaths come in this particular...” Well, what was interesting is that a lot of salesmen are psychopaths.

There are specific psychopathic traits. They're superficial, and they use a superficial charm and grandiosity. They're pathological liars, so these always come in handy for sales. I'm not saying all salespeople are that way, but I'm just saying. They seem to lack remorse or guilt, which actually comes in handy when you're trying to sell because, you know, you're trying to sell somebody something oftentimes that they can't afford. But so, if you felt guilty about that, you would try to talk them out of it, right? A good salesman won't try to talk them out of it.

But the study reads this way: According to the study from the University of Notre Dame published in the Journal of Business Ethics, psychopaths have a natural advantage in the workplaces. Pretty interesting. Certain psychopathic traits overlap with the skills required for sales, such as fearlessness, superficial charm, the ability to read people. This allows them to project unwavering confidence, take bold risks, and to close deals without being weighed down with any conscience or emotional attachment to the outcome. They display, and it actually gives 4 examples, superficial charm and persuasion. Psychopaths can be

highly charismatic and articulate, which enable them to make instant, positive first impressions. They are fearless and stress-tolerant, which means they lack normal fear and anxiety responses. And this helps them remain calm under pressure, take bold risk, bounce back quickly from rejection. “Go ahead, take all the land. It's all yours.” Oh, you're gambling. You're throwing the dice. Yeah, he's throwing the dice. They actually use selective empathy. They often possess a high cognitive empathy. Now, cognitive empathy is different than true empathy. True empathy is when you're feeling with the person, you actually feel with them. Cognitive empathy is you're figuring out how they feel. And so, what they do is they have the ability in this cognitive empathy to read what the other person is thinking and feeling without getting emotionally involved. This allows them to spot vulnerabilities and pain points and to exploit them and make a sale. If, in fact, Abraham was a generous and thoughtful and kind individual, what would you want to exploit? That he was generous and kind and magnanimous and thoughtful. So, where would you come across? Sure. They are often ruthless and focused,

unbothered by rules and the emotional impact that actions they take may have on either their co-workers or the people that they're selling things from.

The fundamental point of the article is that they make really good salesman. Now, after saying that, they actually do a list of jobs or careers that have the highest amount of psychopaths in them. Would you like to know what they are? I thought you would. At the top is a CEO. Under that is a lawyer. Third is media. Fourth is salespeople. Five is a surgeon. Journalist. A police officer comes under that. And you're never going to guess what the next one is. Clergy. And it's one of the reasons why in 2 Peter, it warns of those that are taking advantage.

Look with me in 2 Peter 2. Peter is warning of these false prophets who move in. And of course, we know, as 2 Corinthians reminds us, that even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, as an apostle of Christ.

But if you look in 2 Peter 2:1, it reads this way,

(2 Peter 2:1) “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

(2 Peter 2:2) Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

(2 Peter 2:3) and in their greed they will exploit you with false words...”

In other words, they'll tell you whatever you want to hear. In other words, they begin to figure out who you are, and they know what to say to draw you in. They know what's important to you. If you're talking about your family, they're going to be talking about their family, how wonderful family is. It doesn't have to be true. It just has to, in some way, connect to your emotions. And then they take advantage of you. They exploit you. In their greed, they exploit you. Well, what we're finding within this particular passage is that the way of the world is working its system to do what it needs to do. Ephron will make the sale, but Abraham is not going to be directed by Ephron.

He's not going to be directed by the people that are there. He's not the consensus. It may seem like he's trying to cooperate, but he's actually, in many respects, not going with them because he's saying, "This is what I want to do right from the start. I want to pay full price." And he begins to show the truth that begins to delegate what he does. So, at this particular point, what I want to focus on within the passage is how Abraham is emotionally moved, but how he's actually driven by the truth.

Scripture tells us in Ephesians 4:14, that we're not to be driven by every wind and doctrine, by the trickiness and the craftiness and deceitful scheming of man. In other words, we're to be moved by doctrine, by truth. It is the truth that tells us what we are to do with these feelings, with these emotions, with the things that we're feeling. I mean, Cain was feeling left out. What does he do? He kills his brother. That's how he deals with it. And when you realize that Noah deals with his sorrow by drinking and Lot by his drinking as well with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, you realize that the way that man deals

with sorrow, though the emotion may be correct, is inappropriate and will bring destruction.

Now, here's the point. The tendency is to “throw the baby out with the bathwater.” In other words, our thought is, maybe we just do away with emotions. No, you see what happens with that, because people just become manipulated and you stop caring. And it's the caring that really defines who we are as believers. It was the compassion of Christ that would weep when He would see the multitudes and when He would see the lack of faith in the realm of Lazarus' resurrection. So, you know that the emotions have to be there. They have to be there. However, they cannot be driven by the force of circumstances, by the force of maybe consensus, by the things that come in, the consequences. Maybe sometimes we think in terms of, “How is this going to end?” “So, I can't do it that way.” And you can't think of it that way. You almost see this passage as Abraham coming in and going with great abandonment, “I'm just going to do the right thing.” And that begins to move him.

What is the fundamental truth that Abraham is working off of? Well, I would say the first is very clear, because the thing that Abraham has made clear and has seen as clear in his life is that God loves him. He knows that, he is so aware of that, he's willing to put his son on the altar. He trusts that God would even be able to raise him from the dead, as it writes in Hebrews 11. So, we know that there is this sense that God loves him, so that begins to motivate him, begins to move him. It's one of the reasons why he rises up. As you read in Genesis 23:3, "Then Abraham rose from before his dead..." In other words, there was a time of weeping, there was a time of sorrow. As 1 Thessalonians 4 says, we do not sorrow; we do not weep as those who have no hope. So, he gets up and you see this sense of resolve, and you see in the face of death that he arises. And it's an interesting picture that Scripture is giving in verse 3.

He then goes into the passage in which he talks to the sons of Heth, and we begin to see doctrine coming out. What's the doctrine that's coming out? Well, the fundamental doctrine that Abraham has is the same

fundamental doctrine that we have, and that is, we are sojourners, and we are strangers in this land. This is not our home.

If you look with me in Hebrews 11, there is a reminder of this within the passage.

It states this,

(Hebrews 11:13) “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

(Hebrews 11:14) For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

(Hebrews 11:15) And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

(Hebrews 11:16) But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.”

What motivates us to do the things that we do? What motivates us to do the things that we do is truth. That's

what moves us. I mean, the emotions actually get us out of the realm of complacency. You know how life seems to be pretty much mundane up to a point, and then something really happens that begins to tug on your heart? Well, that makes you stand up. It makes you move, and it makes you feel deeply. The question is, where are you going? And the answer is truth. Truth is going to impel me to take the right steps, to do the right thing. So, the very first thing that Abraham wants them to know is, "Look, I'm a stranger. I'm an alien. I don't even belong here. This isn't my home." That's a fundamental truth. Now, if in fact you don't believe that, then you're going to be prone to try to manipulate circumstances just like the Hittites do. But if you actually believe that you're just a stranger passing through, what you're going to do is just tell the truth. Just do the right thing. That's what I do.

In fact, one of the great texts, and we won't turn to it, but in 2 Peter 3:13, it says that we're longing for this place, which is heaven, where righteousness dwells. And you can just imagine how out of place Abraham felt being surrounded by all these people that had the tendency to

go the wrong way. I mean, some of you can feel this now, right? You feel like, “I don't feel at home. This isn't where I belong.” And so, coming to that point and thinking along those lines gives a great peace, but also gives great direction.

So, the passage reads this way,

(Genesis 23:4) “I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

He'll repeat that phrase in verse 8 as well, “I want to bury her out of my sight, out from before my face.” That's probably the way that it's put.

Scripture tells us that we set our affections on things above, knowing that we are strangers and aliens, knowing that there is a better place in which we're heading. We never face that death as our focus. Death is never our focus. What is our focus is life. What is our focus is the peace of God and the relationship with God and the fact that I'm going to be with my loved ones once more. It's one of the reasons why there is, and I don't want to get too much into this, a necessity of burial. Because what

burial declares is, we believe that God's going to raise that body. Romans says that God, the same God that rose Jesus from the grave, will raise, and I directly quote, these mortal bodies. And in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul will actually use that as an argument why you shouldn't commit fornication and adultery. He'll say, "Don't you know that these bodies are going to be raised? Therefore, glorify God in your bodies." We actually believe that one of the reasons why we take care of the body, and even when you see the care of Jesus when He's taken into the tomb, is the realization this is not the end. And God so loves us that He loves who we are. We're not discards. He's not going to reinvent us. It's who we are that He loves. And so, it's a wonderful truth that begins to move us. So, our focus isn't on the death, but it's on the life.

And the sons of Heth then answer him saying, "Well, mighty prince, whatever you want to do, you can bury them wherever you want to." But as the passage goes on, Abraham will declare something that perhaps they had never heard. And that is, he will openly proclaim and demonstrate a love and devotion that goes beyond the

monetary. And this is a key point because of the fact that the world is very focused on finances and things and money. I mean, all you have to do is go into a restaurant and you can hear most conversations are about money. And even when they're about other people, they're about the money that they have. And most people get more upset over a loss of money than they do over a loss of a loved one. "What am I going to do? How am I going to take care of myself?" And so, all the anxiety over things rather than the loss of the person. Not Abraham. His point is that "I want to pay full price. I don't care what you ask for. I can't put a price on the value of my wife." I've oftentimes told people, I said, "You know, you can try to get a deal on a lot of things, but I wouldn't try to deal on somebody's casket or graveside. Pay the full price, whatever. It's like buying your wife's wedding ring. "Well, I'll give you \$15 for it." Stop. Pay more than what it's worth. Because your wife is worth so much. You start putting an amount on something. What you do is diminish the value of the individual. So, Abraham begins to express the very thing, the very fundamental truth that we as Christians express.

2 Corinthians 8 talks about the church that is in Macedonia, and they're not a rich church. But Paul gives them as an example to the Corinthians, because the Corinthians are a little bit on the stingy side, and they're holding back giving to the church in Jerusalem, though they're going through trials with the famine and all sorts of things that are going on, he says, "You need to give, but let me give you an example." So, he gives them the example of the Macedonians. And he says that these people came, and they begged him for the privilege of giving. And he says, "They gave out of their poverty."

The question is, when you give, how do you give? Do you give by virtue of, well, the consequences of that? "Well, what's going to happen? My bookkeeping is going to be..." Or do you give according to the Spirit? Do you give according to the circumstances? "Well, maybe this is all that they need," or do you give out of the Spirit? What is it that moves you? What is it that motivates you? What is the truth? And the truth is that I should be motivated by my love for that person rather than by the circumstances, by the consensus, "What is everybody else giving?" I

should be thinking in terms of, what is God saying to me? What's the truth? How is it motivating me? Jesus will use this in many interesting ways as He comes to the rich man. He goes, "Sell everything you have and give it to the poor. Follow Me." Now, the main issue in that particular passage is, "Follow Me." In other words, "How much do you value following Me? Would you sell everything to follow Me?" If somebody's sitting down and they're starting to calculate, they're not ready. Their heart's not in it. They're not following the truth. What's the truth? The truth is that God is worth more than everything. He possesses everything. Selling everything you have is not losing anything. It's gaining everything. Nevertheless, if in fact you're calculating, you're not walking by truth, see. And all the way through, you see these wonderful pictures of Christ revealing the fact that if in fact your heart is following the truth, then hey, if you see a brother in need, you don't stop and think, "Should I give to him or not?" You just give to him. Because it's the truth that moves you. It's the truth that motivates you in all these things.

In Luke 12, you'll have the one young man come up and say, "Tell my brother to give me my part of my inheritance." Jesus goes, "There are all kinds of greed that can infiltrate you. So, don't allow these things to move you and to motivate you into the things that you're doing."

The point of the matter is that we're driven by our conviction, not by convenience, not by consensus, not by circumstances, not by the consequences of our decision, but we are driven by the conviction of our hearts. And Abraham doesn't flinch. He doesn't, he just is moved to do exactly what the Spirit is telling him to do because of his love for his wife, because he knows that it's right. And there's no doubt he's dealing with some pretty sharp guys, but he doesn't care.

I was talking to a guy last week, and we were working an interesting deal, and I knew I could probably get some more money out of it. And I said, "Okay." And he looked a little shocked. I said, "Okay, you've got a deal." And he looked at me, and I said, "You should make some good money off that." And he looked at me like, "Yeah, I guess I

need to make money off it.” I said, “No, you're making good money off that.” I said, “But that's good. I'm not trying to hold you back from making money from it.” The doctrine that was moving me on that particular case was that you need to convey that you want that person to do well. Paul will say something interesting to the Corinthians. He'll say, “I wish that you were all kings, that you were wealthier than me.” Why would we wish that? Because we have a doctrine in our head. The doctrine in our head is, “We're just passing through. This isn't our home.” And quite frankly, if I could convey that an individual is more valuable than worldly goods, wouldn't I do that? If I could convey in some way that I actually believe that God is going to take care of me if I put Him first, and if I elevate Him and His Spirit, don't I believe that He loves me? It's doctrine.

There's a final passage that I want you to turn to. It's found in John 17. If you turn there with me. Jesus states this to His Father as we have this wonderful prayer in John 17:12,

(John 17:12) “While I was with them...”

Speaking of His disciples.

“... I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

(John 17:13) But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

(John 17:14) I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

Now, it's a very interesting dichotomy within the passage. I don't know if you picked up on it, but it's this: “I've given them joy, and the world hates them.” Now, if you look at those two things, you would think, “If the world hates me, I'm miserable.” But they're going to be happy. So, what that's telling us is that it's not the circumstances or the consensus or the things around us that bring us joy. It's the truth. And if you believe that will sustain you in the midst of the hatred of the world; in fact, Titus 3 says, “You once too were hateful, hating one another.”

It goes on and says this, if you look in the passage,
(John 17:15) “I do not ask You to take them out of the world...”

The world's a miserable place, isn't it? Get me out of here.

“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

(John 17:16) They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Watch verse 17.

(John 17:17) Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

“Set them apart as those who walk according to what is the truth.” It will change the way that you make decisions. It will change the way that you do business. It will change the way that you live your life. If you'll live your life according to the truth, rather than... And you'll find yourself being joyful. You'll find yourself being hopeful. In fact, the great hope that Abraham had was, “I'm going to see her again.” And one of the reasons why he was burying her in this particular area, same reason why he

was buried in that same cave, and same reason why his son will be buried, his wife will be buried in that cave, and his grandson will be buried in that cave, and his wife will be buried in that cave, because they believed that was the promised land and where the promise was, and they were banking on the promise of God that He would not allow their body to undergo decay, that God was going to resurrect them. And that was a great hope that was seen in Jesus Christ and the great prophecy fulfilled. We know these things are true. We should be walking in them. If you'll walk in them, God will do great things. Look, the tendency is to begin to walk like the world and think like the world. You know, you get hurt by the things that happen, and you say, "Well, I'm just going to build up a wall, and I'll just go take advantage of people." And you cut off your emotions. That's the way you deal with emotions. Or maybe you try to cover them up in some ways, but just turn and say, "I'm going to let truth direct my emotions," and you're going to find yourself rising up.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, we give You thanks for Your word and for this example of Abraham in the midst of a business deal, revealing his confidence and his heart, his priorities and the desires, but ultimately the truths that he banked on, that which he knew to be true, to be right, to be righteous, to be pleasing to You, he walked in.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. Perhaps you're going through sorrowful times, times of depression, times of heartache. Don't suppress the emotions. That would just make you cold-hearted and make you indifferent and cause you to take advantage of people and use them. But don't be driven by the way that the world is driven. Don't try to deal with those emotions their way. Bring yourself back to the truth. Ask yourself these simple questions: What is the truth? Does God love me? Does He have a hope for me? Will my focus on others bring light out of this darkness? Begin to walk according to truth.