

~Other Speakers S-Z: John Sung:

(Gen. Ch. 11-22)

From Ch. 11:27-32 we learn that Abram's father was Terah. Terah had three sons; Abram, Nahor and Haran. We do not know much about Abram's youth, but here's an interesting story about him:

Terah was a devout idol-worshipper. He built a big shrine in his house. In this shrine he kept all kinds of idols and images, and spent all his time serving them. But, Abram did not believe in idols.

One day Terah went out of the house on business. He entrusted the shrine to Abram's care. Now, while his father was out, Abram took a hammer and smashed all the idols to the ground. Then he put a piece of meat in the mouth of one of the idols, and left them as they were.

When his father returned home to this situation, he was furious beyond words. He asked Abram, "How did all these idols become like this?" Abram replied, "Soon after you went out, someone brought us meat. The idols rushed upon the meat, and a fight broke out. Do you see meat in that idol's mouth?" Terah was dumb-founded, but the whole family turned to God that day.

One day God said to Abram, "Leave this dark place of Ur, leave your home-country." God did not tell him where, but only towards the South. Abram went in absolute obedience. This was his first obedience. To obey God in the first instance, we must leave our "home-country." Beloved brothers and sisters, to obey God, one must leave everything! So Abram went out in obedience to God, four in the company. Himself, father, wife and nephew Lot. They found their way to Haran.

When Abram came to Haran, he halted. He stopped half-way in his journey. Beloved brothers and sisters, Abram got downhearted! How many have followed Jesus and stopped half-way? Now Abram was weak, and God wanted to train him. God also wants us to go forward and not stop half-way.

Now, when Abram halted, the Lord let his father die. Abram wept. "O God, How is it that death has taken my father? And in this foreign land?" God said, "Abram, my beloved Abram! Because you have not obeyed me fully, to follow me all the way." Not going with God all the way has brought death to his father. God said, "Get up and go on."

Ch. 12 vs. 1-4. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." When Abram heard this Word and started out, he was seventy-five years old. Beloved brothers and sisters let us never, never stop half-way. Let us go straight forward, and glorify God.

Vs. 5-8. Abram headed southwards with Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew. That's not easy! The people of the land were giants, and they were short. Moreover this was a wild country where human beings were sacrificed, even sons and wives. They were a fierce people. Abram was afraid, and his heart throbbed. Slowly he came to Sichem, to the oak tree of Moreh. There he built an altar to the Lord. God said, "Fear not, I will give this land to your children. Abram, don't be afraid of your surroundings." Abram was assured, and he continued on his journey.

When he came to Bethel he became frightened. He built another altar and sacrificed to the Lord. The Lord comforted him further, and he went on his way. Beloved brothers and sisters, the greatest lesson is this: Whenever we are afraid, let us look only to God. The oak tree which is deeply rooted and presents a beautiful picture to the eyes is a symbol of Abram's faith. In our heavenly pilgrimage, we should also rise above our circumstances. If not, we will not obey. Elder sisters, do you hear me?

Vs. 10-12. Abram slips! Confronted by a fierce famine, Abram went down to Egypt. And he falls flat. He is overwhelmed by the circumstances. When he went down to Egypt, he no more followed the Lord. O, how many

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on the heavenly pilgrimage have forsaken God when their skies darkened. They also "go down to Egypt," not following the Lord. How many meeting with evil circumstances go it alone. They trust in their own strength!

At that time Sarai's beauty was in full bloom. Abram was very fearful for this and said to Sarai, "Let us promise together. I know you are a charming lady. When the Egyptians see that you are my wife, they are sure to kill me and take you away. Let us call ourselves brother and sister."

When they came to Egypt, the Egyptians lusted after Sarai's beauty. Pharaoh's ministers talked about her before Pharaoh. Seeing she was such a charming woman, Pharaoh took her for himself. Abram wept for having left the Lord and gone on his own way. Beloved brothers and sisters, how many have gone on their own way! They drink bitterness as a result. Why is your family in such bitter unhappiness? It's because you've left the Lord. Otherwise, peace is surely yours.

Abram prayed the Lord to forgive him and the Lord listened to his repenting heart. God in a dream spoke to Pharaoh and Pharaoh got frightened. Pharaoh called Abram and said to him, "Why did you bluff that your wife is your sister?" Pharaoh returned his wife with a gift and asked him to leave. Beloved brothers and sisters, when you truly repent and get back on your heavenly course, God will forgive you.

Now Abram had become a rich man when he returned from Egypt with gold, silver and animals. This divided his attention in ruining the heavenly race. A pilgrim must give up his own plan. Beloved brothers and sisters, a self-wise man is bound to lose his way. As for me, I pray for the Lord's will in anything I do.

Ch. 13. Vs. 1-18. Here is recorded Abram's becoming a rich man after leaving Egypt, having many herds and camels. Lot also changed. Lot now left the Lord out in everything he did. His heart was bent on money and self. He could no longer stay under Abram's roof. This led to quarrels over grass feeds between Abram's servants and Lot's servants. Quarrels led to fights. When Abram heard this his heart was grieved. He called Lot to a dividing of their property. Lot's eyes were upon the world. He took leave of Abram and moved, step by step, towards Sodom. Abram's heart was grieved for Lot, but God comforted him. Beloved brothers and sisters, as followers of Jesus, you must treat money and the world as nothing. God comforted Abram and led him to the highest country. There He told him to look north, east, south, west. He said, "All the land you see I will give you and your children, forever. And I will increase your descendants as the sand." Beloved brothers and sisters, let us never be near-sighted. Let us look to the future. Let us enlarge our vision. Now often there are also conflicts inside the Church. Pitiful! Beloved brothers and sisters, let us not look at the things we now see just in front of us.

Vs. 14-16. As Lot grew richer, he drifted farther to Sodom. He made his pile from Sodom by opening many business houses --- Lot Trading Co., Lot Groceries, Lot Travel Service, Lot Banking Corporation. He built a villa for himself.

As for Abram he kept to his old job of tending the sheep and herds in the country. He received from lofty Lot no better regard than sarcasm and ridicule --- What Jesus? What God? How foolish! Lot prided over his goods and popularity. His daughters could dance and swirl around like society birds. Lot became a tycoon. But Abram remained in the village, away from the world. He praised God all the day.

Now a war broke out between the five kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela and the four kings of Shinar, Ellasar, Elam and Goiim. The five kings were defeated by the four, who broke into their cities. Lot Company and Lot Bank crashed, and Lot Villa was burnt up. Mrs. Lot and eldest daughter were carried away. Lot wept. Beloved brothers and sisters, when Lot wept bitterly for his sins. God comforted him all the same. God sent Abram to save him.

When Abram heard of Lot's misfortune, he forgot the the past. He took 318 of his trained soldiers to go and save Sodom. He recaptured all the booty taken by the enemy, including all that belonged to Lot, even the women. All gathered to congratulate Abram, even kings, with many presents. But Abram refused them and Abram said, "Lot, do you now understand me? I won't take even one blade of grass nor one thread from you. I only pray that God's servant Melchizedek would bless me." Abram spurned these things. What he desired was God. Beloved brothers and sisters, may you spurn money and all this world offers. Follow Jesus to the end.

Now the defeated four kings wanted to take revenge. Fear gripped Abram, but God assured him, "I am your shield. I will give you everything." Abram replied, "But I have no son. What's the use of all these?" God

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said to Abram, "Lift up your head to the skies and look at the stars. I will give you children like the stars." Though Abram was old, he believed and he was counted righteous. Nevertheless, he could not but keep within himself a little doubting. So, God gave him proof, "Take for Me a three-year-old cow and a three-year-old she-goat, one three-year-old ram, a turtle dove and a young pigeon. Cut each one in two." Abram obeyed, and knelt down to pray. Suddenly fire came down from heaven. That day God made a covenant with Abram. God said again, "The day will come when your descendants will be taken into slavery, but I will save them from Egypt to Canaan." Abram believed! Wonderful! Let me tell you, God will open a way for me into all the world, and I believe. Though I am a speck before Him, He is almighty. He can do the impossible. Now wasn't Abram wonderful in having given up everything around him to come and trust in God? But he had no son, and he became anxious. He thought of taking another wife, seeing how pretty Hagar his servant girl was. He did not ask the Lord when he married her, though it was Sarai's plan for him to have a son. But when a person does anything without the Lord, he will get into the soup. When Hagar bore him a son she despised her mistress. Quarrels now rocked the family. Beloved brothers and sisters, one taking things into one's own hands is sure to fail. A quarrelling family is worse than hell; Abram regretted. God told him to send Hagar away and he obeyed. Let us also follow Jesus to the end.

Ch. 17. Now Abram was 99 years old. He was dissatisfied with the old way of life. He put to death the old man in him. He lived a new life. He made a covenant with God through circumcision, separating unto holiness. God changed his name to Abraham, i.e. Father of many nations. Sarai became Sarah. God said, "Next year I will give Sarah a son. I will bless her and she will be a mother of many nations." Abraham did not believe. He said in his heart, "A 100-year-old man. Can he beget a son? How can?" Nevertheless, he clung to God's Word.

Ch.18. Here we see the depraved depths of sin and pollution into which said, Sodom and Gomorrah were sunk. Lot lolled luxuriously on.

God decided to destroy the two cities and God told Abraham. Abraham was very worried, so he knelt and prayed, "O God! Would you destroy that city if there are fifty righteous men in it?" God said, "If there are fifty righteous, I will for their sake pardon the place." He prayed again, "If forty-five righteous? Thirty righteous?" God said, "If there are so many, I will not destroy it. And I will not destroy it if there are only ten righteous." Beloved brothers and sisters, God treasures ten righteous souls more than anything. Everything is vanity. Souls are most precious. God loves the souls of the righteous. Beloved brothers and sisters, God regards the souls of ten righteous men more precious than the whole world. So does He regard Amoy and Kulangsu's ten righteous souls today. For Abraham's sake He saved Lot, and with Lot only two daughters. Mrs. Lot who lingered behind to take a last look at the world was turned into a pillar of salt. Sodom and Gomorrah perished in flames. God showed Abraham that the world was all vanity. God had trained him many years so that he would give up every whit of materialism.

Now, the next year saw the birth of a son, Isaac, when Abraham was 100 years.

Ch. 22. God had led Abraham step to step to treasure His Word, to treasure the value of righteous souls. Now he must needs put him to another test, even his faith.

Isaac was a handsome, lovable son, the darling of Abraham's soul. How should a son of a 100-year-old father be not beloved? As Isaac grew up, he was a gentle character, at the beck and call of his father. Abraham loved him, like "carrying a pearl in the pan of his palm." Isaac had become his idol, occupying his thoughts more than God. Isaac took the place of God.

One day God said to Abraham, "Take your son, your only begotten son, your beloved son, to Moriah, to the mountain of my appointment, and there sacrifice him to me." Beloved brothers and sisters, Abraham burst into tears! But though he understood not, he obeyed: The Lord's will be done.

The next day, before it dawned, Abraham got up. Silently, lest Sarah should know, he took Isaac and two servants, and off they went to Moriah.

A lovable son of thirteen left with his father Abraham in the mirky darkness of dawn. As they went along, Abraham's heart ached with every step. That night they stayed at an inn. Abraham told his two servants to sleep in the hall, while he and his son slept inside the room.

Abraham spent a sleepless night. He knelt before God and cried, "O God, I can't understand this. He is a lovable boy of thirteen. Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." Isaac woke up afraid. "Father," he

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said, "How are you? Father, why are you awake?" Abraham replied, "My son, sleep on!" Abraham pleaded with the Lord, "O God! Let this bitter cup be removed from me. Only let Thy will be done."

As they continued their journey the next day, his heart weighed heavier still. This heaviness wore on into the third day, which made Abraham even more restless throughout the night. As he now stroked Isaac's head and gazed on his gentle, handsome face, he groaned, "O God! Why did You deceive me? Did You not promise me many children like the stars? But why do you want to take away my only begotten, darling son? Why? Yet, I trust in You." As he gazed for the last time on his son so soon to leave this world, he wept.

The morning of the third day saw the four of them plod on to their destination. Abraham told the two servants to wait at the foot of the hill. Isaac now carried the wood, and step by step father and son climbed the hill. Frightened, Isaac asked his father, "Father, everything is ready. But where's the lamb?" Stabbed to the heart, Abraham said, "My son, God can prepare it for us."

On the top of Mt. Moriah, Abraham held Isaac's hand, and said, "My little darling. You are the lamb! God wants me to offer you a sacrifice." Isaac replied, "Father, May the Lord's will be done!" So Abraham tied his darling, 13-year-old son and made him kneel over the wood. With eyes upon his son he called to heaven, "O God, I praise Thee, I obey Thee! I love you above everything." Now, to Isaac he said, "My son, I love you, but I have to carry out God's will..... As he painfully raised the knife to kill his son, suddenly a voice called out, "Abraham, Abraham." Abraham answered, "Here I am." God said to him, "Do not hurt your son. Now I know you love Me. You love Me more than all, even more than your only begotten son!" Beloved brothers and sisters, today God is still seeking, seeking for you. On Moriah God had found Abraham. Beloved brothers and sisters, on Mt. Moriah, there was one who had offered his only begotten son to God.

Abraham looked up when he heard the voice, and lo! in the thicket there came the bleatings of a lamb. God said, "Offer this lamb to Me. Abraham took that lamb and offered it a burnt offering, its blood in the place of his son. This lamb's blood saved Abraham's children and children's children. Who is the Lamb? O, He is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He walked after God for 33 years. Finally he gave His precious body a sacrifice for the whole world, to save all mankind. On Golgotha God sacrificed His Son for Abraham's children. Beloved brothers and sisters. Do you know what the Cross means? Beloved brothers and sisters, do you love Jesus above everything? Abraham was victorious! He became the Father of all ages. He loved the Lord over everything. Beloved brothers and sisters, who in Amoy and Kulangsu loves God more than everything else? May the Holy Spirit pour out His power to move us to love Jesus to the end.

THEME SONG

All to Jesus I surrender,

All to Him I freely give;

I will ever love and trust Him,

In His presence daily live:

I surrender all, I surrender all.

All to Thee, my blessed Saviour,

I surrender all.