

Living in God's Favor

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Date: 18 January 2026

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[0 : 0 0] Well, brothers and sisters, it's time to find out how our brother Abraham's doing! Yes, yes, we're back. Let's go see what's going on.

We'll be reminded about how God's been dealing with this faithful but flawed man. So the title of the message for this morning, I think it went to sleep on me.

There it is. Living in God's favor. That's the passage that we'll be looking at, but I'm going to take you, since it's been a while, back into chapter 18, beginning in verse 1.

Let's roll into the context of what we'll look at from 16 through 21. Beginning in verse 1, Now the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, there were three men standing opposite him, and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth. And here's why he did all that.

[1 : 0 8] He said, recognizing, My Lord, my Lord, or Master, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by.

Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a piece of bread that you may refresh yourselves.

And after that, you may go on since you have visited your servant. And they said, So do as you have said. So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, Quickly, quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make bread cakes.

Abraham himself also ran, ran to the herd and took a tender and choice calf, gave it to the servant, and then he hurried to prepare it. Abraham took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared and placed it before them.

And he was standing by them under the tree as they ate. Then they said to him, Where is Sarah, your wife? And they didn't ask that question because they didn't know where she was, all right?

[2 : 1 6] So we covered all of that. And he answered there in the tent. He said, Well, I surely will return to you at this time next year, and behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son.

And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old. They were advanced in age. Sarah was past, way past childbearing.

And Sarah laughed within or to herself, saying, After I've become old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also? And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh?

Now remember, she laughed within herself, not out loud. Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I indeed bear a child when I am so old? So this is what I told you before. This is Jesus.

This is the pre-incarnate Jesus here visiting Abraham. And he is reading into the heart and understanding the hearts of all people. He knows exactly what Sarah is thinking within herself and what she has said to herself.

[3 : 20] And so now he's asking Abraham, Hey, what's going on with your wife? And then in verse 14, Is anything too difficult for the Lord? Because that's the question bearing on all of this.

Am I powerful enough to keep my promises? At the appointed time, I will return to you at this time next year. And Sarah will have a son. Sarah denied it, however, saying, I did not laugh for she was afraid.

Why did she say she didn't laugh? Why did she deny what she had spoken of within herself? Because she was afraid. And then he said, No, but you did laugh. No, but you did laugh.

Now, that's what we've covered prior to. And now we're coming back and picking it back up in verse 16. And I'm going to take us down through 21 today. Then the men rose up from there and looked down toward Sodom.

And Abraham was walking with them to send them off. He's just walking a little ways outside of the camp itself to kind of send them off. You know, like you would if you walked your guests to the car after they visited at your house for a while.

[4 : 26] The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do? Since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation. And in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

For I have chosen him. For I have chosen him. So that he may command his children and his household after him. To keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.

And what's the purpose of that? So that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what he has spoken about him. So that the Lord can keep his promises to him. And the Lord said, The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great.

And their sin is exceedingly grave. And I will go down now and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry.

Which has come to me. And if not, I will know. And that is the point. This is about what God knows. And based on what God knows.

[5 : 30] What then God decides to do. What he purposes to do. Based on a perfect knowledge. A perfect knowledge. God isn't confused. God is not at all misinformed.

About any of this. Now this is an important basis that's being set for us in Scripture. Because of what we're going to see God do. And how severe the judgment is going to be for us as we partake or witness this from Scripture.

We need to have a clear understanding of the foundation of what God's actions are going to show us. Because it's not small, is it? When we think about what God's about to do to these people, it's not a small thing.

And so this is the foundation for it. Now, I want to help you get into the spirit, as it were, of what is being communicated here as God speaks to Abraham. As he speaks to the other companions asking, Shall I withhold from him or shall I reveal to him what we're about to do?

I mean, after all, we're about to use this guy in a mighty, mighty way. It's an interesting question. Now, to do that, I want to share with you some of the temptations that we face and the way that we are prone to think when things get really tough in life or even when we're just weary with the day-to-day of life, the way that we tend to drift in our spiritual life.

[7 : 03] This is a constant concern for Pastor Greg and I as we shepherd you and as we follow the Lord ourselves. And so let me make some of these statements and let's just see how they come across to you, how they affect you, all right?

Here's the first one. God delights in your spiritual failure. How's that strike you? Yeah? You like that?

You agree with that? God delights in your spiritual failure. Consequently, God hides His will from you.

But then, He expects you to live by it. And when you fail to live a Jesus-pleasing, godly life for lack of spiritual knowledge, lack of spiritual desire, lack of spiritual power to do what He expects you to do, He takes great joy in punishing you.

Say, Jeff, where in the world is this coming from? This is coming from life. This is coming from how people, Christians, can start to view themselves and God and their life when things are difficult, protracted.

[8 : 23] Let me go on. God is actually happy to see you wallowing in self-pity. He is actually happy to see you defeated, lonely, and doubting your salvation as well as His love for you.

That's horrid, isn't it? We do this. We're tempted to this. It can happen quicker than you think.

And as a pastor, I see it more than you might realize. So how does all of that as a perspective square then with this one brief verse?

Listen to this. You are good and do good. And that's the psalmist speaking of God. God, you are good and you do good.

That's Psalm 119, verse 68. And keeping in Psalm 119, this is how you are to live in response to that goodness declared in that verse.

[9 : 38] Listen to this. Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. For His loving kindness is everlasting.

So that is an always statement. God is always good. His nature never changes. Your sin, your failure, your doubt, your stinky perspective, your self-pity, that doesn't change the nature of God at all.

But it also doesn't do this. It doesn't change God being good to you. Because He's good to you in grace and mercy. His loving kindness is everlasting.

You can't eject yourself from God loving you in a kind, generous, and gracious way. You can't do it. You can't get away from God.

His love will pursue you and hound you until He tackles you, gets on top of you, as it were, looks into your face and says, hey, why are you running? I love you.

[10 : 45] Why are you running? Where are you going? Where are you going? I remember doing that with my kids. We would wrestle.

I would wrestle with my kids. And between the first one and the second one, there was a nine years difference. And so, you know, as I was wrestling with the smaller ones, that big one, whew, man.

And I remember sometimes pinning them down and putting their hands back and holding them. And then I'd get down and I'd start kissing all in their neck. You know, my mom calls them pig kisses. You know, like that.

And they would just laugh and that would just spur me on the more. I'd give them time to get air, right? Take a breath and then I'm coming back for some more. And I would tell them, where are you going?

What do you think you're doing? You can't get away from me. I love you. And we'd go at it again. You cannot escape the love of God for you.

[11 : 44] You can't do it. Why would you want to? Why would you want to? We want to because we start doubting His goodness toward us because of how we feel when life gets hard.

We start doubting God's goodness to us because we can't forecast out ahead and figure out how this thing's going to turn out. Where's this going to go? Am I going to get what I want?

Is God going to do what I'm asking for? Is this thing going to turn out the way I'd like it to turn out? And we're not very far in those instances from getting to the place where we start doubting His goodness, doubting whether or not God is going to really take care of us and do for us in the way that He promised.

Abraham's facing these same temptations. No, God is good. Now look, folks, we don't have to be going through a difficult time of life for this kind of thinking to tempt us about the Lord.

Listen, folks, I understand. I'm one of you. The day-to-day wear and tear of life can tempt us to drift from the truth of God being good and doing good to us always.

[12 : 55] Always. Regardless of how we feel, regardless of the kinds of things that are happening or not happening in our life. So to prepare you to join Abraham in what I'm saying is a faithful understanding of God's goodness and His actions to do good to us always, always, let's review a few passages that I think speak very plainly and powerfully to God's spiritual will for your life.

Now I want you to keep in mind as I do this with you real quick, this is still part of the introduction, there was a time in your life when you didn't know anything about God in a true way, a salvific way of being saved.

You were not rightly related to the Lord. So you didn't know. You thought you knew. You didn't know anything. There was a time when you could not know the truth and the will of God for your life. There was no way for you to gain any sense of hope or direction for your life as it related to God's wisdom for what you needed to do and think and how you needed to act.

You didn't have any of that. That wasn't even possible for you before you were born again because we're told that the only way that we can discern the spiritual things of God is by the power of the Spirit living in us to interpret them for us.

Right? So remember that as we go through this. There was a time in your life where you could not know the will of God. You couldn't know basic things. You could read them in the Bible, but they'd mean nothing.

[14 : 23] Nothing. You wouldn't even have a desire to implement them. And then God did this wonderful work in your life. In the way of just giving you a few of these, I'll try not to put too fine a point on it, but let's look at it.

Colossians chapter 1. Now we could just turn to page after page after page of God saying specific things that reveal His will for you as His follower, His disciple, His child, His saved one.

But in Colossians chapter 1, I chose this passage. It begins in verse 9. Notice how Paul is going to express this as God's will for these people.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of their faith, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask what?

Here's what he's going to ask for God. Remember, he's praying the priorities of the gospel into these people's lives. Here's what we want you to know. Here's what we want you to experience.

[15 : 29] We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

There it is. That's the foundation. We are asking God to help you know His will for your life in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Why? Verse 10, so that you will walk, live in a manner worthy of the Lord.

So that your entire life will be worthy of the Lord. Pleasing Him in all respects of your life. Bearing spiritual fruit, that is, the character of Jesus, in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, the will of God, the understanding of God.

Verse 11, strengthened with all spiritual power according to His glorious might for the attaining of all steadfastness, patience, and joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now folks, you don't have to guess. You can read this and say, here's God's will for my life right here. That's as solid as it gets right there. This is what should characterize my life as I follow the Lord.

[16 : 45] How much of my life am I even thinking about as it relates to what I just read? Am I pleasing Jesus in all respects? Does that even matter to me? Am I concerned with showing the spiritual character of Jesus in the way that I live with my husband and my wife and my kids and the people around me?

Do the people in my church benefit from the spiritual fruit of my life being intentionally invested in them so that they follow Jesus more faithfully? Am I doing that? It's right there.

Didn't I just read it? I'm not making this up. How about 1 Thessalonians 4? Just turn a couple more books back. 1 Thessalonians 4.

Now notice this. For this is the will of God, your sanctification.

1 Thessalonians 4, verse 3. This is the will of God, your sanctification. Now if I stopped right there, if you look up at me, stop right there. What this means then, this is God's will for you.

[17 : 53] That you be set apart in holiness to Him. That your life is set apart by God to be used by God for His purposes as you draw near to Him.

So that in all that you think, say, and do, you're making it about honoring God in your life. That is God's will for your life unequivocally.

It's right there written in plain English for you to see. Now he goes on to say that much of this is in the context of abstaining from sexual immorality.

So he's concerned that you keep a certain purity about your life. And he goes on to tell you that you're not to live in verse 5 in lustful passions like unbelievers.

And that you don't in verse 6 transgress and defraud people in any of these ways. You don't want to take advantage of people in these ways. For God in verse 7 has not called us for the purpose of impurity but in holiness.

[19 : 00] He's called us to live a holy life. In other words he's called us to live a reflective life of his own holiness. We are called to be holy because he's holy Peter said. So he who rejects verse 8 he who rejects this this teaching this life of holiness is not rejecting man but the God who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Now verse 9 as to the love of the brothers you have no need for anyone to write to you. You yourselves are taught by God to love one another. There's God's will for you folks.

You are taught by God to love one another. Are you? For indeed you do practice it toward all the brothers who are in Macedonia but we urge you brethren excel still more.

Go even more. Keep going. Don't get complacent in that. And we pray that you'll make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. What is God's will for you friends?

That you will make it your ambition your spiritual intention to lead a quiet life. To attend to your own business. To work with your hands.

[20 : 05] In other words earn your living. Earn your keep. Do your part. Just as we commanded you. So that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

There you go. It's God's will for you to work hard mind your own business stay at it persevere be kind love one another. It's just not hard to see that.

And finally let me give you 2 Peter. 2 Peter 1 Now I never grow tired of doing this with you reading off the scripture to you in these larger portions like this so I pray that you'll be able to follow this and really take into your heart what we're talking about here.

Remember we're asking and answering the question of how are these passages speaking directly about God's will design purpose for our living before him.

What is he telling us in specific terms that we can have no doubt about in the way that God wants us to live. This is his will. It's not ambiguous or gray or anything like that.

[21 : 13] Simon Peter a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ to those who've received the faith of the same kind as ours by the righteousness of God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you notice in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. That's the basis. We have to turn to where God makes his knowledge of himself and Jesus known to us.

That's the scripture. Seeing that the scripture his divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence.

By these wonderful and magnificent promises he has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises so that by them you may become what? Partakers of the divine nature.

Having escaped the corruption that is in the world by evil desires or lusts. So God in Christ Jesus has helped us escape that life of evil desires and lust.

[22 : 14] Now in verse 5 what does all this mean? For this very reason also as you apply all spiritual diligence in your faith supply moral excellence. It is God's will for you to be morally excellent.

In that excellence knowledge that is the spiritual knowledge of following God and how he's revealed himself. In that knowledge self-control it's God's will that you be self-controlled in your life.

In that self-control perseverance that you persevere in faith and in your perseverance godliness that is god-likeness. In your god-likeness brotherly kindness and in your brotherly kindness love.

If these qualities are yours if they're increasing they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus. See this is true Christianity folks.

He who lacks these qualities is blind short-sighted having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore brothers be all the more diligent this is God's will for you brothers and sisters that you are to be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you.

[23 : 24] He called you and chose you for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble. Did you realize that? It is God's will for you to on occasion make certain in your life do a life check do a soul check do a heart check and make sure that you are living in these kinds of spiritual priorities for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

So I'm going to always be ready to remind you of these things he says. Now why go through this little exercise back to Genesis 18 why go through this little exercise together? Because I want you to see that whenever we open the scripture and we start reading and talking about and studying together these different things we're talking about how God's will for your life.

You don't have to guess. You know if we stopped right there and I said folks let's just pray. Let's just stop here the sermon's over. We're just going to take these passages and pray them back to God and we're going to dismiss.

And this next week over the next six days before you come back here again these three passages are your homework. Take these three passages and every day this next week think very carefully and meditate very seriously and soberly about how you can begin to make all of that a part of who you are and how you live in your relationships with other people because that's God's will for your life.

We could do that. No guessing. Every time we open the Bible we're talking about what it means to know God's will to know God in that will and to live that out in our lives.

[25 : 06] In other words we're surrendering. We're submitting. We're obeying. Why? Because we love Him because God is teaching us to love Him and those people that we love we have this respect and regard for in a way that we want to do what pleases them.

Alright? So look. I'll put this up here on the screen for you. God wants us to live by His heavenly certainties. We're not guessing here folks.

The Christian life is not a guessing game. It's not a well I hope it turns out this way. That's not the Christian life. He wants us to live by His objective truth.

What He's written and recorded for us in the Word of God to encourage our hearts. He wants us to live by His grace through faith. His grace is His divine favor on our lives.

He wants us to live in and out of that favor that He has showered on us in Jesus. And that is all about us having faith in that one person, Christ.

[26 : 08] Christ. Those three things. Now God helps us know His heart. He helps us know His ways through a covenant relationship with Him.

That is what we see in Abraham. God favors us with His knowledge about how He operates in His relationship to us and to His world.

That's what we need. God to show us what He knows. And then that knowledge becomes the knowledge we use to interpret life, to interpret what's happening to us.

That helps define how we live. In fact, let me share this with you. My title for the last message that I brought to you from this passage from Genesis 18 was entitled The God Who Cares.

The God Who Cares. I know it's been a little while, but I want to share with you the first paragraph of my introduction in this. So I'm going to put it up here and just read it off to you.

[27 : 13] You and I need to know and remember something very important about our God. He cares. And He cares for you. The world doesn't care for you.

The devil doesn't care for you. Your own flesh doesn't truly care for you. Each of these will drive you into a wasted life and ultimately into a devil's hell.

But God cares. Now the Apostle Peter told us to humble ourselves before the Lord, to cast all of our anxiety on Him.

And here's why He told us to do that. Because He cares for you. He cares for you. God's love. And then I went on to talk about Abraham and Sarah and how that caring of God is being played out in their life as God comes to literally condescend and sit at the opening of their tent in their camp in the dust and talk to them.

It's just amazing to me. The outline that I used from last time just to walk you into this started with God's friendship in the first eight verses of Genesis 18.

[28 : 27] And the scripture was fulfilled which says, And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned or accounted or credited by God to Abraham as righteousness. And then Abraham was by that righteousness called the friend of God.

God made Abraham his friend. He called him out of paganism and moon worship and made him his friend and promised to bless him. And it wasn't because Abraham had all this to offer the Lord.

It's because this is God's heart. It is a heart to care. To care. And then I gave you this, point two, God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness.

That took us up to verse 15 and we'll start in verse 16 in just a moment. By faith even Sarah herself from Hebrews 11, 11, received the ability to conceive even beyond the proper time of life which is just what the text told us.

The early part of chapter 18. Since she considered him faithful who had promised. So she came to a point in her life where that laughing thing within herself where she doubted the Lord went away.

[29 : 34] All that fear, God worked with Sarah. Abraham worked with Sarah and she came to the point where Hebrews could say this about Sarah. Look at it. She considered him faithful who had promised.

This is where the Lord is taking Sarah. She's not quite there yet, but she'll get there. Why would God do that? Because he cares. Because he doesn't leave you, he doesn't leave me where we are.

He's not going to leave you where you are today. Whatever it is you're resisting God in today, whatever it is that you're not dealing with in your life that you know God is wanting you to deal with, he's not going to leave you there.

He will never leave you, he will never forsake you, he will never give up on you. God will hound you in his love. God will pursue you relentlessly in his love.

Now that should elicit a great amen. Because folks, if it was left up to you, you would leave. You wouldn't have the wherewithal, the love, or the caring to persevere.

[30 : 38] But God will not leave you. You belong to him now and you can't shed him. You can't get rid of him. You may say things, think things, and do things that don't please him in the sense of reflecting his character, but you can never displease the Lord that he denies you after he has said, you belong to me.

You don't belong to Satan anymore, you belong to me. And God will make sure that he loves you in that favor. This is where he's taking Sarah, this is where he's taking Abraham, this is where he's going to take the nation of Israel.

And right now, while Israel is temporarily set aside and God works in the Gentile world to bring people like us who are not strictly Jewish into faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he promises there will be a day when the nation of Israel on the whole will turn to Jesus Christ as Messiah.

What a day. And millions of Israelis are going to be converted to Christ in the future. And the nation of Israel will be a great testimony of God's grace in their life.

And so what are we talking about here? This is what we'll deal with now, God's favor. God's favor. And we see this in the text in what we're dealing with.

[32 : 00] Verse 16, Then the men rose up from there and looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham was walking with them to send them off, which was the custom of the day. And then the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do?

Shall I hide this from him? In other words, as I put it up here on the screen, it's like he's saying, I've made known to you my righteous will, Abraham. I've shown you my ways, I've revealed to you my thoughts, and God has done all of that in Abraham's life, in the years that Abraham's known the Lord.

This is how we know God's will and purposes for us in our walk with him, folks. This is how we know. Same way Abraham knew, God has to reveal them to us, or they remain unsearchable and unknowable.

Again, think about what you were and who you were before the Lord opened your eyes to see your need for his forgiveness in Christ, and then began to teach you how to walk with him.

Please don't take that for granted. Now, why does the Lord choose to reveal to Abraham what he's purposed for Sodom and Gomorrah?

[33 : 16] Why do that with Abraham? More generally speaking, why does God let us in on these kinds of things? Why did God send us the scripture?

Why does God call us together every Lord's day to sit under the word so that we can unpack the truth for each other, for our lives? Why does God favor the righteous with the knowledge of his will?

Do you realize now, folks, listen, there's a lot of people out there in Williamsburg who could care less about what's going on in here right now. And they're not going to give 30 seconds of thought to what it means to live for Jesus and to please God and to have their family honor God this next week.

Not one moment will that cross their minds. They'll be completely consumed and preoccupied with self and pursuing their agendas and their money and their stuff and making sure nobody gets their stuff, etc., etc.

Advancing themselves in their careers. Now, all of that in exclusion to thinking about honoring the Lord. They won't give one thought to honoring God.

[34 : 33] Now, we do those kinds of things and all of that is submitted to God, isn't it? If we're advancing in our careers, all of that is submitted to God. Mark just shared with me that he got a promotion last week, Mark.

Hallelujah, right? But where do we know that came from? The Lord blessed you with that promotion, brother, because you belong to the Lord and God's in charge of all of that.

There are people out there getting promotions right now and they have no idea that it's connected to God and no concern. Being a mom, being a dad, being a worker, being a wage earner, God has nothing to do with that in their life.

Now folks, if those people are not converted, they will die in that pride and go straight to a devil's hell. So it is not just about here and now.

It's about an eternity. You know people like that and I know people like that. I have family like that and so do you. How we live, how we think, how we prioritize life has everything to do with the way people look in our lives and see what matters most to us.

[35 : 49] We're going to see in this passage what God wants to do with Abraham and Sarah and it goes way beyond them just like your life. What God's doing in you right now goes way beyond you.

How you're handling now matters and it goes way beyond you. You say, well Jeff, what does that even mean? I don't know. I don't even know it about me.

I don't know if I'll be alive 24 hours from now. It's not about what I know or don't know. It's about what he knows and he's helping me know it and that's enough.

Is it? Is it? Is it enough for you to know what God wants you to know? You might say, I don't know.

It depends. Oh boy. We're in trouble. It depends. These questions up here are important.

[36 : 53] Why does God favor the righteous with the knowledge of his will? Why has God favored you? Why did he save you? Why is God helping you know his mind?

Why does that matter for you? Why does it matter for God for you? Can I give you some reasons? This is my sermon. So I'm going to give them to you. Here they are.

Number one, because he wants us to trust him and his ways. You got saved and now you live in this world and you live with yourself and you live around other people that are like you and you need to learn to trust God and his ways.

That's a process. number two, because God wants us to be encouraged and faithful. Number three, because he wants to teach his ways to others.

God wants to use your life to teach other people what it means to love, to honor, trust, and be encouraged by the Lord to walk with God. God wants us to know his will because he wants us to be blessed in his love.

[37 : 59] And then finally, he wants us to know his goodness. That's why he shares the knowledge of his will with us. That's why we have the word.

That's why Jesus lives in us. That's why we have the Holy Spirit as our counselor and teacher. Because God wants us to know his goodness. It enriches our lives. It blesses our lives.

It gives purpose to our lives. It helps us know that we're living for someone and something outside of who we are. That the limits of my humanity are not the limits of God's use for me in life.

Aren't you glad? Aren't you glad you can get on your knees and say to the Lord, the fact that Jeff Jackson starts and stops. Look, I'm going to give you an example.

That Jeff Jackson starts and stops right here. Do you see any space between those hands? See, that's how insignificant. I can't even move. But what does God do with that?

[38 : 57] He does this. And He does it in ways I'll never see. People will be blessed and I'll never meet them. I'll never know them.

How do I know this? Because He tells me. You're going to see it right now in this passage. God is telling Abraham, I'm going to use you to bless millions and millions and millions of people.

I'm going to use you and your wife to bless so many people, Abraham, that you won't be able to count them. They'll be like the stars of the heavens. Wait a minute.

He doesn't even have a child that he and his wife have made together. Not yet. You see what God's doing?

This is a big old God. This is a wonderful big old God. Well, this might turn into two sermons. I may have enough for next time.

[39 : 58] And that's good. That's all right. All right. Now, look, here's what I want to do. Let's take these five things, see how far we get. If we only get two, that's fine. We'll do the rest of them next time. But let's explore these a bit more in turn because of how they speak to how we're supposed to walk with the Lord.

We're going to let! Abraham and Sarah teach us as God and these companions with the Lord help us understand what they're doing in Abraham's life. All right.

So the first one that we'll deal with and we'll come back because God wants us to trust him in his ways. This is why God helps us know his will. This is the answer to the question, shall I share with Abraham what we're about to do?

Shall I share with Jeff who I am and how I work and why I made him? Shall I do that? I think I will. I think I'll save Jeff in Christ Jesus my son and then I will reveal myself to Jeff and I will help Jeff understand what it means to love me and know me and to be loved by me.

And so he does and I don't deserve a bit of it. Neither do you. The first reason that I'm highlighting from this text is God does this because God wants Jeff Jackson to trust him and to trust his ways in Jeff's life.

[41 : 14] God's taking Jeff beyond Jeff and I'm so thankful. Abraham's going to be blessed. He's going to become a great and mighty nation so that through him, notice, all of the nations of the earth will be blessed.

That's verse 18. He says, shall I share with him since Abraham's going to become a great and mighty nation and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? See, I've made that promise to him.

That's going to happen. That's going to happen. So, shouldn't I bring him in on what this is going to be since those nations that come from him are going to be affected by all this?

He's the foundation for it. You say, now, wait a minute. Wait a minute. We know what's coming, Jeff. We read ahead. We know what's about to happen to Sodom and Gomorrah. These people are not going to be blessed, brother.

They're not going to be great. There's not going to be any blessing for any of those people. So, how can the Lord say that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham when he's getting ready to destroy a big old portion of these people so that all the cities of the valley, not just Sodom and Gomorrah, but many other cities in that valley are going to be destroyed.

[42 : 26] They're literally going to be turned to ash. How are we to understand this difference? Is it unfair of God? Is God being cruel, unjust, unrighteous?

God blesses one and he destroys the other. Is that right? What does God say about it? Now, why is that important? I'm asking all this for this reason.

Think about this now. Who are the readers of this? Who's Moses wanting to share this with? Israel. And so, Israel needs to hear this.

The nation of Israel has to keep this in spiritual focus as they serve the Lord. Why is this so important for them? Because, you know, they're very fond, the religious leaders were very fond of coming back and talking about our father is Abraham and bragging full and puffed up with pride.

Our father is Abraham. We're special because we're Jews. That's just how they were. All puffed up in it. Listen, if they don't maintain a proper spiritual focus just like you and I need to do, if they take a wrong view, that is, look, if they take a man-centered view of this issue of God's favor on their life, it's going to foster pride, terror, and apathy against the Lord, just like it will in your life and my life.

[43 : 48] That's in this passage. I'll put this up here. A man-centered view of God's favor will foster pride in your life. Do you know this? You get this favor of God on your life wrong and you turn this into a me-focused way of living?

Pride is going to eat you up. What are we talking about? This is the kind of thing that talks about us being chosen and you're not. We're special, we have special privileges, and you don't.

We have a corner on the market of this. Blah, blah, blah. We're God's favorites. We're better than you. It's this weird pride. Listen, here's the antidote to this.

Remember who you used to be. Israel, Jeff, remember who you used to be. Before you get all puffed up and carried away with it being about you, making it about you, Jeff, remember who you were an unforgiven enemy of God.

You were separated from God in all of His ways. You knew nothing about the Lord. You thought you did, you didn't. That's very humbling, isn't it? What about terror? Terror here is not the fear of the Lord that we talk about that is a reverential trust and a high view of God.

[45 : 04] No, this is pure terror. I'm afraid of him and I'm afraid of his punishment. And it makes me where I don't like him. I don't even like him. God is not fair with me.

This is what terror says. God isn't fair with me. In his injustice, he punishes the righteous with the wicked. He just puts them all in one big bucket and then he slams them.

God is we can never know God's mood. He's so moody. You just never know what's going to make him mad. We can't know his mind on stuff.

We don't understand him. And so you know what we do? We learn to resent him. We cast God in our image and then we learn to resent him.

We see him as an intrusion or we see him as some distant entity that said a bunch of stuff but never follows through. So I resent him.

[46 : 03] He's not giving me what I want. It's not turning out like I want. What's behind all of that is terror. I'm terrified of him.

I can't trust him. The antidote to this is this. Remember whose you are. Christian, fight this. Remember whose you are. God gave his son for you.

He's good. He's gracious. He's kind. He's long suffering. You need to put that focus on his character and who he is and who he's revealed himself to you to be.

He first loved you that you might love him. But he started the process. Finally, apathy. Apathy. This is the heart that says, you know, God does what he does and we can't do anything about it.

We're just pawns, puppets in his hands. His whims dictate. So you know what? Here's what we do. We don't worry about it.

[47 : 07] We can't do anything about it, so why worry about it? We just take it as it comes. And so we learn to live in apathy. We just learn to be apathetic about God and his ways.

Here's the antidote to that. Remember who you are. Remember who you are. You are bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. God's greatest, greatest treasure is his son. You are God's child, friend, forever.

So you need to remember these things. This is how God has revealed himself to us. God is showing Israel through his covenant relationship with Abraham, the Lord makes himself and his will known to those whom he loves.

And he does that so that they will learn to trust and obey. He'll be a blessing. Abraham will be a blessing to all the nations. People, groups from all over the world will be blessed through Abraham's faith.

We're told that unless we have faith like Abraham, we can't know the Lord because it's saving faith. It's faith in Christ. This is all serving as a warning for Abraham and Israel to walk in God's ways.

[48 : 19] Walk according to God's word. Live that way. Trust the Lord in everything, folks. I'm not going to turn to it right now, but let me give you another passage that correlates to this that you could look at and it'll encourage your heart.

Proverbs 3, 1-8. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Acknowledge Him in all your ways. God involves Abraham in the knowledge of His will so that Abraham will walk in God's ways and learn to trust the heart of the Lord in all things, especially the hard things.

And He's got a hard thing coming. Do you not think that when He tells Abraham to take his son Isaac up on to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him, do you think that's a hard thing?

He's still got the hardest thing to come, folks. He's not done yet. You think it's been hard so far? Try that one on for size. Let's take Mace up on the hill, brother, and let's plunge a knife into his heart to give him to God, because that's what God told you to do.

You know, when I was a daddy reading through this and thinking about it with my little little kids, that destroyed me. To even think about that for five minutes. Abraham's still got a ways to go.

[49 : 35] Need to trust me, Abraham. I shared this quote with you two sermons ago. Look at this. God's concern in prayer is to shape a heart that trusts him with everything.

Folks, every work of God in your life trains you in trusting Jesus. So now, challenge you. Where are you right now in your life? What are you facing right now in these moments in your life?

What is tempting you most? What are you being tempted in most? What are working on you in the way of doubt or drain or strain?

What is keeping you from having a sense of greater freedom and joy and lightheartedness in the Lord? What is it? What are those things or thing? I'm telling you, every work of God in your life trains you in trusting Jesus.

Right now, God is working in your life in that circumstance to train you to trust Jesus. Listen for the next thing. It's not that the thing now is unimportant, but there's going to be another thing unless God brings you to heaven.

[50 : 46] Now, what do you think your enemies want to do with you right now? If they can trip you up right now, if they can discourage you, dishearten you, if they can weaken you right now, when the next thing comes, especially if it's a bigger thing, what about that?

Now, here's the good news. Before you despair and before you go too far off in a forecast and think, oh my goodness, what's about to happen to me? Now, look, remember who we serve?

Remember? He's a big old God. He's sovereign. He's got you. That doesn't mean you sit back and coast. That means the Lord has you and He's going to work His purposes in your life.

We're going to see that. This is what God's due. Every work of God in your life, trains you to trust in Jesus and get you ready for the next thing. What's the next thing?

We're in constant train mode, folks. We're constantly being trained in the Lord to trust Him, to trust His ways. Again, I'm going to say this to you over and over.

[51 : 48] It is not about what you know. It's certainly not about what you don't know. It's about what He knows. And are you getting in on what He knows? Are you living by what He has revealed as His will?

That's why I did that whole introduction exercise with you. You don't have to guess. You don't have to guess. Look at this second one with me. He reveals to you what He's about to do or what He has done because He wants us to be encouraged and faithful.

Verse 19, for I have chosen him. Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm about to do since he's going to be a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed?

I've chosen this man. I have chosen him. He's my instrument. You are God's instrument. Now how special is it that you were chosen by God?

You know, don't trip over this chosen thing, folks. Once you see chosen in Scripture and accept it for what it is, you're going to see it on every page. It's everywhere throughout the Bible.

[52 : 56] God gets to choose because He's God. How should that knowledge of God's will toward you affect the way you live? How should the knowledge this morning as you sit here thinking to yourself, there are people in my life that I love very, very dearly and they are not chosen, at least not yet.

They don't seem to be. They're not in the Lord. It doesn't seem that God chose. Why did He choose me? Why me? Why not her? Why not him?

Why not them? Would you say to the Lord, Lord, I would rather you choose my kids than me. I'd rather you save my kids. Why did you save me?

Do you know why I don't go there? Because it's dark. It's something Jeff can't know. So Jeff runs to what he can know. He runs to the light.

Thank you for saving me, God. And as long as they have breath in their bodies, there's still hope you'll save them too. And that's where we live. Now you know what? We could not live there without the hope of Jesus.

[54 : 08] We couldn't do it. Do you know where that hope comes from? It comes from what God has revealed to me about who he is and what he does. He saves.

He's the savior and he's still saving. Jesus hasn't come back yet. He's still saving. So there's still hope. That's where I stay. All your babies, that's where you stay, isn't it, brother?

You pray and you pray. And that's where we live. This is where he needs to live. To be chosen of God. God. It's the difference. You see this?

I'm not going to turn there for the sake of time, but Ephesians 1, 3 through 6, that's typically the foundation passage that most people will turn to when they talk about this issue of God choosing us in Christ.

Before the foundation of the world was ever laid, God chose us in Christ to be saved. He rested his favor on you before he made the world. The point is God chose you. Folks, please don't wrestle with that.

[55 : 11] Accept it. Read it in the Bible and say, wow, wow, and then be thankful. If that's not astounding enough, now put that together with what Paul says in Ephesians 2, verse 10, where he tells us that God saved us so that he could work his good purposes in our life.

God saved you for good works. He saved you to use you to do good in the world of people around you. He saved you to do that. He saved you to be a good element of blessing to other people as you serve the Lord.

He wants to use you to be a blessing of goodness, his goodness to the people around you and connected to you. You get to be in on that. You get the privilege of being able to have a life like that, that you know when those good purposes of God are worked through your life and the life of other people even if they don't like it.

Even if they hate you for it, God blesses you. And those things will count for you as you stand before the Lord to give an account when you go to meet Him. And they'll all count for the treasure that God will shower on you in heaven as if Jesus weren't enough.

This is the life you get to live. This is the privilege that you're called to beyond this existence. Oh my goodness folks, the very, very, very highest and best is still waiting for you in heaven.

[56 : 42] This can't even touch it. But while you're here, you get to live in the goodness of Almighty God because you were chosen. Why did He choose you?

So that in the ages to come, God might show the surpassing riches of His grace and kindness toward you in Jesus Christ. That's why. we were created and chosen for God's purposes to be worked out in us for His greater glory.

So Jeff's life goes beyond Jeff. My life is to be lived out displaying the glory of God's character as I live. As people see the kindness of Jesus in me, it brings glory to Jesus.

As people hear the goodness and the patience, the long suffering of Jesus in me, those people are blessed even from a distance as Jesus works that through my life as an instrument of goodness to other people.

Look, Abraham was favored by God. Abraham was created and chosen for a special purpose just as we are chosen to that same special purpose and a big part of Abraham's encouragement and faithfulness is in knowing not only that he was chosen but also to what purpose he was chosen.

[58 : 02] To what purpose? If you've ever had someone look at you and say, I don't know my purpose. I've lost touch with why I don't even know anymore why I'm here.

I seem to be a failure. I seem to be forgotten. That is such a heart-rending thing to hear from folks, particularly Christians. But this is why I shared the introduction with you.

We are tempted toward these things and we don't stop to think what those kinds of thoughts say about God. We don't think about what we're saying about the Lord as his people when we talk like that.

God's forgotten me. God's passed me by. I don't feel like I have any purpose anymore. It's so wonderful for God to make known to you, that he chose you.

But listen, that he chose you to fulfill a purpose much greater than yourself. A purpose which will go on living and being fulfilled in the many believers you invest in and that you serve the Lord over in the course of your life.

[59 : 10] God is using you to bless other people in ways you don't even know. But don't let that make you apathetic and make you pat yourself on the back so that you just kind of get into cruise mode.

What that should do is open your eyes to this wonderful blessing and beauty of getting up every morning knowing that God has a purpose to use me in blessing the lives of other people.

And in many instances just as I try to live for the Lord, I'm just trying to live for Jesus, I don't have all this figured out, I'm just trying to live for the Lord. In the process of living for the Lord, other people are going to be blessed in the Lord.

God has to know it. But that doesn't discount it because this is what you're called to.

Fred, you've got a higher purpose, brother. Your higher purpose is to live for Jesus every day so that God uses your life to bless other people through you.

[60 : 10] And in many instances, brother, you'll never even know it happens, but it's happening because he tells us it is. Abraham's not going to know all the millions of people that are going to be blessed, like me.

I am blessed because Abraham was faithful. He never knew Jeff would even be born.

Look, I have chosen him. Abraham's purpose is for God to use him to bless people, from the many nations of the world, just as God promised.

And it was a purpose with two parts. The first is that God would use Abraham in a way that God would help Abraham. What does the text say?

Let me read the way it says. For I have chosen him in verse 19. Now, why? What is the purpose that he gives right away? He could have said a number of things. I have chosen him so that.

[61 : 14] But notice what verse 9. He may command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.

And why? Why did I choose him to do that particular thing? So that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what he spoke about him.

So that God will keep his promises. Why did God choose Abraham? Abraham? Well, a big, big reason that God chose Abraham was so that God could use Abraham to bless Sarah and bless the children that are going to come and the different servants in the household.

All the people that are connected to Abraham's life are going to be blessed by how God uses Abraham in their lives. And that just gets multiplied.

Folks, you are being used in a higher heavenly purpose for the glories of Almighty God. It goes beyond your job, but it involves your job. It goes beyond your role as a husband, but it includes your role as a husband, a wife, a whatever.

[62 : 23] None of that gets wasted. It's all purposeful. It's all meaningful. Can you go on a vacation to the glory of God? Or do you compartmentalize and say, oh, I'm on vacation?

Of course you can. You can go on a vacation to the glory of God. Everything about your life is to the glory of God.

It should be. The second part, God would show his faithfulness by keeping his promise to do all that he promised Abraham he'd do. And here's why.

God would involve Abraham in teaching others that God himself is faithful. So God's not just using Abraham to bless other people through Abraham's faithfulness.

No, it doesn't stop there. Now God is also using Abraham's faithfulness to show other people that God himself is faithful to keep his promises. So Jeff Jackson's life becomes an example, becomes a testimony, becomes proof or evidence that God keeps his promises.

[63 : 31] God works his will in the lives of his people. And so people look at your life and say, I don't get you. And you say, I know you don't get me. That's because the explanation for my life is beyond you.

It's J-E-S-U-S and until you come to him you'll never understand how he works and what he does and why he does it. What you're confused about in my life is Jesus.

It's a person. Can I tell you about him? And you're there. That's where you want to be. How do you do this?

How did you go through this? You seem to stay so focused. Or they see you and they say, boy, the other day when I saw you, you just looked so beaten down in those moments and you were talking like, man, yeah, I know, I know, I know.

Well, you're so different today. What happened? I mean, did you get a raise or what? No, no. I just got before the Lord, got my heart right with the Lord and I reminded myself of who's in charge.

[64 : 34] And now I have a lot of hope. I wavered a little bit. So, wow, you know God like that? Yeah. Are you thinking you might want to know Him like that?

And you're there. You see, everything about life brings us to that place because we're making it about God and His ways. I'll put this up here.

By choosing Abraham and giving him spiritual purpose in life beyond himself, God would involve Abraham in teaching others to be faithful to God, that God Himself is faithful.

That's what I've been talking to you about. Alright, now I'm going to stop there. I have three more to go and I want to give them to you so bad but I'm going to stop there and this is the next one that we'll deal with because God wants us to teach His ways to others.

And that's a more brief one but it's right here in the text where He tells him, I want him to command his kids. I want him to build his entire household on what I'm doing in his life in the way of righteousness and justice and goodness.

[65 : 42] I want people to see that I have created the family. The family is my design and families are used by me for my purposes to bless people in life.

And so I'll pick it up there and we'll just see how far we get with it in the rest. Thank you for your kind attention and I think it's obvious I'm feeling a lot better than I felt in the last couple of months and so as I realized that I was like oh I prayed for you and I said Lord you lit some jets and I hope I don't just part their hair with all this you know but God is so good isn't he?

He is so faithful and bringing us together. I want to remind you again before I pray for us and we sing again I want to remind you please beloved to stay tuned this week for what might happen next weekend as we anticipate some the possibility of some adverse weather conditions and please don't forget about Wednesday night as we gather for our Wednesday night grace gathering and go through the book by D.A.

Carson together through Philippians and then guys if I'm right this next Saturday is the men's breakfast here at the church nine o'clock sharp we'll sit down at nine o'clock and get a bite to eat we'll give you about seven and a half minutes to eat before we start and we'll see see where we go with all of that to God be the glory will you join me in prayer well father these elements and principles that we've looked into this morning as they reflect your goodness in working in our lives Lord we're so thankful we get to be in on heavenly certainties we get to be involved in propositional truths objective objective truths that you have fixed in the universe and that can't be undone and we get to stand on those and live our lives by those things so thank you for involving us by choosing us to be people by saving us and now God by helping us to persevere in saving faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ I pray that you would keep us faithful as we look to you and as you challenge us toward the next step of our obedience what does that look like for us to take the next step in trusting you to use us in ways far beyond anything we could conceive of help us to sell out to Jesus and to love you with all of our heart mind soul and strength and to love each other as we love ourselves in Jesus name we pray amen