

The God Who Cares

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 November 2025

Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0 : 00] Thank you, Ben and Suzanne. Beloved, we are in Genesis chapter 18,! It's been many years now since that promise.

And God is going to revisit Abraham and take care of what He has promised in many different ways. The title of my message this morning then is The God Who Cares.

The God Who Cares. And this passage will reveal many aspects of that caring to us in the life of Abraham and Sarah. So going all the way back to God's early dealings with His people and the promises He makes to them, we find a righteous God who is faithful to do what He has said.

Let's read the passage together. We're going to start in verse 1 and I will take us down through verse 15 for today. I'll try to do about half the chapter and then, Lord willing, come back next week and finish it up.

Now the Lord appeared to him, or Abraham, by the oaks of Mamre. While Abraham was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

[1 : 30] When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him. And when he saw them, he ran. He ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth.

And then he said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. Please, 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. After that you may go on since you have visited your servant. And they said, So do as you have said. So Abraham hurried in to the tent to Sarah and said, Quickly, quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour.

Knead it and make bread cakes. Abraham also ran to the herd and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant. And he hurried to prepare it.

He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared and placed it before these three men. And he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.

[2 : 38] Well, then they said to Abraham, Where is Sarah, your wife? And he responded with, There in the tent. He said, I will surely return to you this time next year.

And behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent door which was behind Abraham.

And now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age. Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself saying, After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also? And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh? Saying, Shall I indeed bear a child when I am so old? Is anything too difficult for the Lord?

At the appointed time, I will return to you at this time next year. And Sarah will have a son. Well, Sarah denied it, however, saying, I did not laugh for she was afraid.

[3 : 49] And he, capital H, said, No, but you did laugh. Alright, now we'll stop there for this. I know, we're laughing, we're giggling, we're thinking, I hope you're thinking this is so much like me.

And I don't mean just me. I mean all of us in here. Sometimes these truths take a while to sink in to our lives because we forget who we're dealing with.

Don't we? Life has a tendency to obscure, darken, and fog up who it is that we belong to and who it is that we serve.

And so it is good and gracious of God to come back and remind us not who we are so much, but who He is as He lives in us and works in our lives.

And that's what I want to deal with this morning. Now, as we begin to look into this passage together, you and I need to know and remember according to Psalm 143, what was the first thing

that it said?

[4 : 55] I will remember, I will reflect on the works of your hands of old. We need to remember something very important about our God.

and it's this. He cares, beloved. He cares. But now listen to the rest of it.

He cares for you. He made your soul and He cares for you. He gave you His Son.

That is the epitome, the height of caring from God the Father to His people. Now, in significant contrast, because you feel this contrast every single day of your life, whether it registers with you this way or not, and Abraham felt the same thing and so did Sarah, the world doesn't care for you. The devil doesn't care for you. and your own flesh, your own heart doesn't truly care for you because we're told in Scripture that even as Christians our hearts will deceive us.

[6 : 14] What do we know? What do we know? Each of these three aspects of life here, the world, the flesh, and the devil, each of these will drive you into a wasted life and ultimately into a devil's hell if you do not turn your heart to Christ.

Amen? And so it is Christ whom we worship. Each of these causing you to waste your life is about satanic deception on one side and self-deception on the other.

We need to understand what we're fighting as Christians. We're fighting self-deception, the wickedness of our own hearts, and we're also fighting satanic deception. We have a spiritual enemy that doesn't want us to do what we're doing this morning.

He doesn't want you to leave here today and make the next six days until we can come back together again and be reminded of who we are and who He is. He doesn't want you to worship God through the week.

He wants you to be depressed. He wants you to be distracted. He wants you to be despondent. He wants you to be discouraged. And you know what, folks?

[7 : 30] Your own heart does not have an answer to those realities. The more you look to yourself, the more you'll spiral down in those very things.

Now, you've lived this, haven't you? There is no hope in self. But there is great hope in our Savior. And so, that's why I'm up here not preaching Jeff to you.

I'm preaching Jesus to you. I can give you hope, but it's not mine. It's the same hope that's been given to me that I freely offer to you.

And His name is Jesus. And He is our treasure. And so, we preach Jesus. And we preach Him living a sinless life, dying a sinless death in terms of His own sin, but dying for our sins and being raised on the third day in new life.

This is the Gospel, the good news. So, I say again, these three realities, the world, the flesh, and the devil, will lead you into a wasted life and they will lead you into a devil's hell.

[8 : 37] But God. But God, which is throughout Scripture. But God what, Jeff? But God cares.

God cares. The Apostle Peter tells us to humble ourselves before the Lord and to cast all of our anxieties on Christ because, quote, He cares for you.

That's 1 Peter 5, 6, and 7. Cast all of your anxieties on Christ because He cares for you. Now, that's either true or it's not.

In our passage this morning, we see God coming to care for Abraham and Sarah in some very practical, very down-to-earth, very human-needy ways.

And God has an answer for all of this. What we see happening here in the first few verses, let me read it again to you. Now, the Lord, you should have all caps in the Lord there.

[9 : 47] The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre. We understand that those oaks have been in a number of passages previous to this. This is a special place for Abraham where he built an altar to the Lord.

So, the oaks of Mamre are a reminder to Abraham, a constant reminder that this is a place of worship. This is a place where God has met with me. This is a place where God has covenanted with me.

And so, this is literally a grove of oaks. Big, beautiful oaks there that are probably well-tended. So, it's a place of shade. It's a place of respite. This is the idea.

And they belong to this person, Mamre. While Abraham was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day here in this place, he lifted up his eyes and looked, he beheld three men standing opposite him and when he saw them, what did he do?

He ran from, he ran in the heat of the day. This 99-year-old man ran from the tent door to meet them and what did he do? He bowed himself so low to the earth that he's on his hands and knees with his face in the dirt before these men.

[10:58] Now, why in the world would he do that? He's not afraid of them in the sense of, oh no, three men have come to rob me. He has hundreds of servants he could call on in an instant.

It's not the issue. Well, what is the issue? Well, we're told in verse 3. And when he spoke, he said, notice, my Lord. And you see small, capital L, small case there, right?

O-R-D. I'm going to get to that in just a moment. What we're seeing here is known as, and I'm going to put it up here on the screen for you, this is a Christophany.

A Christophany. What's a Christophany? It is a pre-incarnate Old Testament appearance of Jesus. Now, this is not a hill for me to die on. This is what I believe. It's debated, is this a theophany or a Christophany?

I'll tell you about a theophany in a moment. A Christophany, as I've defined it here on the screen, is what I believe is happening here. Christophany comes from two words, Christos and phino.

[11:59] Christos, meaning Christ, phino, as you see on the screen, to appear or to become visible, to make known or make visible. So this is Christ being made visible before He becomes the Lord Jesus Christ in the incarnation, what we know as God becoming man in Jesus as He was born of a virgin and then lived a sinless life and then went to the cross for us and was raised on the third day.

This is before He becomes that person. Jesus is God and Jesus has always existed. He was not created.

He is God and has always existed. And here, Jesus is appearing in the Old Testament before His physical birth to Mary. Christ comes to remind Abraham and Sarah of His love and His presence with them.

You remember, I've made a big deal now up to this point that Abraham and his salvation is saved exactly the way you and I are saved in the blood of the new covenant. He is saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Anybody who's saved in Scripture is saved by faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Abraham looked forward toward the cross, he didn't know that the second person of the Trinity would be what we know Jesus to be because we look over here with the New Testament written for us and we look back on that mystery explained to us.

[13:28] He's looking forward but he's trusting in God's promised deliverer. He's trusting in the one whom will be sent through His own blood.

Abraham's bloodline. He's looking for that promise. And so, he's saved in the same way that you and I are saved. What I'm saying to you here as the Lord comes to meet with Abraham and Sarah with these two angels, I believe that this is evidence of God knowing and caring.

God knows you and He cares for you. And we want to heighten that as we move through the material together. Now look at this. The first thing that we're going to deal with is this issue of God's friendship.

The issue of God's friendship as it's brought out in the text and I'll unpack this for us. We see this especially in verses 1-8 as I break it down for us. One of the things I want you to see in this is this issue of Master-Lord.

I told you I would deal with this. The friendship of the Lord-Master is seen in two ways. Before I show you that, would you turn toward the back of your Bible to the book of James 2:23?

[14:43] James 2:23 And I want to read this for you. And the Scripture was fulfilled.

Now remember, this is New Testament now looking back. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says what? What was fulfilled that the Scripture prophesied about?

And Abraham believed God. And in that faith it was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. And notice the end of verse 23.

And so, as a result of that reality of being saved by grace through faith, Abraham was called what? The friend of God. The friend of God.

And this is what we're seeing in our passage. So we have this issue of Master or Lord. The friendship of the Lord Master is seen in two ways here.

[15:45] It's coming out in this word that I'll delineate in just a few moments. The first way that we see this friendship expressed is in condescension. This is a very important theological concept for

us in Scripture because we have to understand how it is that a holy God who cannot be around sin and a God physically removed so far from us in the heavens can come to us and not only be with us but be in us.

How about that? Just let your mind rest there for just a moment. God can live in a human soul? I'm going to ask you this again.

Is there anything impossible with God? No! And so we have the miracle of the birth, the new birth that we all celebrate together.

So condescension here is to stoop. It's to descend. We condescend. Sometimes we'll use that word in a pejorative way. That's not the way it's being used here, a negative way.

This is something that's good. Now the Lord appeared to Abraham, to him by the oaks of Mamre. So God had to come to Abraham is the idea here.

[17:03] The condescension of the Lord simply refers to God coming down or stooping or descending in order to make himself known to Abraham, to us, to be with us, to live in us by grace through faith.

We don't need to blow past that in quick language, God living in us, and just move. We need to think about that. God living in us. What a radical thing.

Now all of this is rooted in the name which God used of himself if you go back into chapter 17 verse 1. Now when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am God Almighty.

You see that? I am God Almighty. I put it up there on the screen for you. Or I am El Shaddai. Shaddai means the Almighty.

So we have him coming and introducing himself to Abraham after a period of being away, speaking directly, and he says the first thing, I am God Almighty here appearing to you now.

[18:16] Now in Hebrew thought, there are two treasure troves of meaning in this name, El Shaddai. They're not immediately apparent to us. Why? Because we don't speak Hebrew.

But when uncovered, they're precious jewels of encouragement to us in our walk with the Lord. So let me give you this first meaning of this term, El Shaddai.

One meaning of El Shaddai is power and omnipotence. It highlights the reality I am God Almighty. All might.

All encompassing. I am God Almighty. Is there anything too difficult for me? Now we see this put forth in chapter 18, verse 14.

That's where he asked the question. Notice in verse 14, is there anything too difficult for the Lord? And this is being given in the way of answering the incredulity of Sarah.

[19:16] Her disbelief in all of this. Is there anything too great for me? This is a really good concept for us to think about because he is the God.

Now listen carefully, please, beloved. He is the God who overrules and overpowers nature to affect his purposes in the lives of his people.

And he is still a healing God today. He is still God Almighty today. We believe that. And very importantly, listen to this, he can and he does overcome barrenness.

He overcomes storms, drought, famine, disease, blindness, sin, etc. God overcomes what overcomes us.

Or we would have no hope, would we? Because we cannot overcome the sin that has overcome us. We cannot overcome the doubt, the discouragement, the despondency, the depression, the darkness.

[20:26] But God can and he does in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's the key, isn't it? God overcomes what overcomes us. So we are talking about how this passage reveals this truth to us in the life of Abraham and Sarah.

I am just trying to bring out of these two people's lives in this particular scenario and season the way that God is showing his friendship, his condescension to them.

And then we'll add another one of these in just a moment. Another meaning of El Shaddai, I told you there were a couple of those, another meaning of El Shaddai is that God overcomes all things both physical and spiritual in order to care for his children.

To care for his children. He provides for us despite what tries to stand between us and him. Now think about that with me. Think about the distance of the physical universe separating us from God.

This physical separation that we know. He's in the heavens and we're here. But that's not an issue for the Lord at all. Now look, listen now, this is good theology what I'm saying to you here.

[21 : 40] So I want you to be able to put this in your spiritual belt for when you face these things in the seasons of life. Alright? We cannot get to God. Right? Who has the answer about how to get to God?

He's there. I'm here. Oh, help me. You know. How do we get to God? There is a name. That's right. Who said it? Jesus. That's right.

We get to God through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't find God. That's bad theology. God, I'm so glad I found You. Listen, you weren't even looking for Him.

Alright? God found you. You were lost in your sin but God never lost track of you. He made your soul and He knew everything.

He saw everything. He came to you at your worst and He saved you in His Son. You didn't have to get a spiritual bath before you came to the Lord. He found you in your sin and He saved you and now we are indebted to Him for eternity, aren't we?

[22 : 43] It's one of the reasons that we bow down like Abraham in the dirt and put our face to the dust because He is worthy. He is worthy. We should never get over that and I don't want us to miss that in what we're seeing here in this example.

We are separated from God physically in the universe. We are separated from God by our sin and God had to do something about that in order to bring us near.

The word that we use theologically is reconciliation. To reconcile. To bring together. To bring near. And He did that in His Son.

He comes to us, God does, and He draws us near to Him. He is a nurturer. He is a benevolent Father. Now please, beloved, don't let the world, the flesh, and the devil lie to you about God's goodness and care because they all will.

The events and seasons of life will lie to you about God being good, God being a nurturer, God being benevolent and kind.

[23 : 56] Your own heart will lie to you. Why will it do that? Because of the pain. What does the pain do? What does pain typically do? Pain typically makes us draw in.

And much of our resources are given toward trying to alleviate the pain. Emotional pain. Whatever it is. Physical. You let something go wrong in your body.

Listen. You let one tooth act up and you're on the phone. Oh, please, please. I know I don't have an appointment. Please get me in.

I'm dying over here. I'm not being melodramatic. I actually did that with my dentist not too long ago. I had two of them. Two of them. Ugh.

Just one thing. Let your pinky toe get broken. This is the reality of who we are. We're weak.

[24 : 58] Now listen. Caring for us as His children means that God comes to us in order to reassure and comfort. Because that's what we need.

And we need it constantly. It's not a one-off deal. It's not once a week. And He does this, listen, so that we might live fruitfully with Him.

Jeff, wait a minute. You didn't say so that we'll be happy. No, I didn't. You didn't say so that we will have some sense of satisfaction in life. No, I didn't say that.

I can't say what the Bible doesn't say. I said that God comes to reassure and comfort you so that you will then live fruitfully in Him.

And this is seen especially in verses 1-8 where the Lord came to Abraham. Why did He do that? He could have done this any way He wanted, but He physically came to talk to Abraham and reassure him.

[26 : 05] Caring for us as His children also means that God disciplines us. You hearing me? He disciplines us. He corrects us to keep us in close fellowship with Him.

We see this especially in verses 13-15 where the Lord is going to speak to Sarah's issue that she's holding in her heart. Now keep in mind, I'll get to this in a minute, but I've got to do it right now.

Abraham is sitting out here. They're under the oaks. His tent's right there. And he's out in front and he's standing back and he's watching these men eat and he's there for their every beck and call and right behind him hidden by the tent door is Sarah.

Right? And so she hears all this and it's all within herself, but when God speaks, He speaks, He knows.

Do you think God asked where's your wife because He didn't know where she was? No. This is all for Sarah. This is for Sarah. Her heart's weak. She's beaten down.

[27 : 14] Decades of barrenness have taken its toll on her because I've told you in the past, this is very shameful for a woman not to have children in this generation, this culture. And she's worn that and it's worn her down.

What a good and gracious God to come to her like this. Alright, so why does God discipline us?

Why does He correct us? Why does He speak into our lives just like this?

And sometimes He speaks into our lives in ways that we're like, wow, you know, I didn't even tell anybody that was going on with me. But God knows. Why does He do that? So that we might bear greater spiritual fruit in our faith relationship with Him.

You see, God puts a premium on spiritual walking, spiritual life. We tend to get involved in the issue, the problem, the stuff going on, and it sucks us into the vortex of earthliness.

Earthliness. And so we need a spiritual perspective to pull us not just out of the issue, but out of ourselves so that we can begin to remember who this God is.

[28 : 26] And that can make all the difference in the perspective we have in what we're facing.

Now, we're blessed with these same benefits of God's goodness toward us in our covenant with Jesus Christ.

God's made some promises to us and He doesn't wench on His promises. In fact, I can say it this way. I'll put it up here. God condescends to us.

God cares for us. God corrects us in Christ. God comes to you to love you and to live in you. What a miracle.

This is a miracle of His grace. We have so many examples. I just clicked up here. Hebrews 2, 5-8.

Let's just jump there real quickly and I'll try to refrain from camping out here.

We'll see how that goes. Hebrews 2, beginning in verse 5. For God did not subject to angels the world to come.

[29 : 28] He didn't give the angels subject over the world to come concerning which we're speaking. But one has testified somewhere saying this, What is man that you remember him? I think that's Psalm 8.

Or the son of man that you are concerned about him. You have made him for a little while lower than the angels. You've crowned him with glory and honor. You've appointed him over all the works of your hands.

You have put all things in subjection under man's feet. In other words, we saw in Genesis 1, 2, 3, God made this whole planet for us. For in subjecting all things to him, to man, he left nothing that is not subject to him.

But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him, to mankind. What am I saying? Why did I come here? Why does God even bother with mankind?

God made mankind to rule over his creation. And what did mankind do? Mankind failed to rule well because of self and sin. That's the reality.

[30 : 32] But now notice verse 9. But we do see him. Him. Who was made for a little while lower than the angels. Namely, Jesus.

Because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. This is God's answer, folks.

His answer to our dilemma and our failure is Jesus Christ the Lord. And that makes all the difference in the world. In Christ, God has shown his great love for us by sending Jesus to humble himself to taste death for everyone.

And we follow Jesus in that same humility. You don't find Jesus looking up into the heavens in God the Father and saying, this isn't fair! What did I ever do to deserve this?

What did I say? Did I not speak the truth? What did I do? Did I not love them every moment and second of every day I was with them?

[31 : 38] What did I think? Did I not think the best? And then minister? And I get this? Doesn't that shock you to hear that?

That's not Jesus, is it? No. He humbled himself before God the Father and received the cross willingly. And he did that for you.

Now, does God care about you? Folks, whatever you're facing in life, if you don't come back and root yourself right here, the world, the flesh, and the devil is going to make havoc with your heart.

And if you allow that, it will spiral you down into things you don't want to even think about, much less say and live about God.

There are many, many, many things you and I see. Jeff, why are you preaching this? Well, the first reason I'm preaching this is because the next chapter after 17 was 18. Okay?

[32 : 40] It's pretty simple. I'm not a complicated guy in my preaching. The next reason that I'm preaching it like this is because I know you. Pastor Greg and I know you.

We're in your lives. We know that you're facing hardship. We know that you're struggling. Some of you are struggling with some very significant things. And so we bring this to you in love as your shepherds and we say to you, look to Jesus.

Look to Jesus. And don't let the world, the flesh, and the devil pull you away from a good God doing a good thing for His glory. Don't do that. Hang in there.

Lock arms together. Fellowship together. Come alongside of each other. Build each other up in the faith. Follow your pastors as we follow Jesus.

And point you to Him. I want you to know this. There's the second one. Hebrews 2.9 But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

[33 : 43] We cannot get used to that. And we can't let that be passe to us. That's Romans 5.8 God is our Master, but He's also our Friend.

Jesus is our Friend. He has shown His friendship to Abraham by coming to Him. He has shown His friendship to us by coming to us in the person of His Holy Son, the Lord Jesus.

And then very quickly, the second way that we see God's friendship demonstrated in this passage is by His congeniality. I know we don't use that word a lot, but it works well in this passage.

Congeniality. What are we talking about? This is a warm intimacy. It's warmly intimate. So this is a friendship that has deepened in time.

The seasons of time have served to deepen this. It's agreeable. It's favorable. You see this quote here by Matthew Henry. See? The appearance of God to Abraham seems to have had in it more of freedom and familiarity and less of grandeur and majesty.

[34 : 52] See? God condescended. He came to Abraham and stood with him and ate. Ate a meal. He let Abraham serve him.

The God of the universe appears to Abraham as a man. It's just an incredible humility, an incredible love on the part of the Lord. He finds us.

God finds us. God meets us where we are. Isn't it wonderful that God doesn't stand back all grumpy and judgmental like we do sometimes and give us the silent treatment?

Well, I'll tell you what. When you get your attitude cleaned up, we'll talk. Now, how about that? You know.

Nope. Talk to the hand. He doesn't. You know what He does? He chases you down. Doesn't He?

[35 : 53] Am I exaggerating? He chases you down because He cares about you and He loves you. He loves you so much He will not leave you to yourself.

He isn't leaving Abraham and Sarah to themselves. He's coming to them. I do this ridiculous stuff to show you how ridiculous we can be sometime and how ungrateful because I want you to repent.

Greg and I join you as human beings and as men in our need to repent. But this is the way the Lord deals with us. The God of the universe appears to Him.

He finds us and meets us where we are. Now, this visit, this visit from the Lord is the sharing of fellowship and the covenant love of God. So, friendship and fellowship are the marks of this meal that these men are taking in right now as the Lord honors Abraham by sitting at Abraham's table.

And as Abraham honors the Lord by standing in watchful anticipation as God's servant. Abraham is very attentive. He's watching every move these men make. Any detail of need does not escape.

[37 : 13] He is Johnny on the spot. He moves right in to make sure these men are carefully served and attended to. Does that speak volumes to us about living the Christian life? How many of us are living spiritually attentive to serving the Lord and honoring God in this way?

The meal is God's way of saying, Abraham, I love you. I've made you my friend. I've come to reassure you and your wife Sarah that I will bless you with the child that I promised you years and years ago.

It's time now. In the fulfillment of my time, this is the time and I will do for you all that I've promised. Now, God dealt with the children of Israel in the same reassuring way.

And I'm just going to put these up here. I was going to turn to them. I don't have time. Exodus 24, 3 through 11. It speaks of God's faithfulness in having a meal with the people.

And that is just amazing to me. And in that passage, I think that is a theophany. A theophany. What is that? I put it up on the screen. A theophany is an appearing of God the Father.

[38 : 28] So here you have the first person of the Trinity. They had a meal in the presence of God in that passage in Exodus to share in the fellowship of God's covenant with them. I'll have to let you go look at the passage.

I just don't have time to read it out right now. Then in Leviticus 3 and in Leviticus 7, verses 11 through 21, I've chosen those passages because this speaks of Israel being at peace with God and so making peace offerings with the Lord, symbolized by what?

The sharing of a meal. So we have God's faithfulness being displayed in Exodus. Have a meal with me. There's a faithfulness and a friendship here through this meal.

That's the symbol of this. There's also in Leviticus, we have this issue of peace. You're at peace with me. Let's have a meal together. Now, as I say those things, I hope that that's sounding a little bit familiar to you.

Why you say that, Jeff? Well, look, let me give you this quote from one commentator about this. A meal then in this passage in Leviticus, a meal to be eaten by the congregation in the sanctuary as a celebration of the Lord's provisions for them in His blessings.

[39 : 49] It was a meal that brought people together who shared one thing, peace with God. Now, does that sound familiar to you?

When do we do that? When do we fulfill that? What do we call it? The what? The Lord's table. Communion. The Lord's Supper. These are different ways to talk about this. Right? We're taking a meal together in the sanctuary in celebration of the fact that God gave His Son to bring us into peace with Him.

And we do this through His body and His blood. Right? This is the same thing. Let me give you a couple of passages for that. You see that in John 6, 48-58, and Matthew 26, 26-28.

You will find references there about this very issue. Again, just don't have time to go and read them. But I want you to have them for the tape and also for your notes.

[40 : 52] So what we've been talking about is condescension and congeniality. The friendship of God, the fellowship of God, being seen in Abraham and Sarah's life as God condescends to come to them and speak to them in His promise keeping.

Because He's already made the promise, now this is Him keeping it. Now there are also two ways this text shows us God's friendship and how it instructs our hearts to strengthen and grow in our faith.

The condescension, the congeniality, brings us to this place. Response. God isn't doing this in a vacuum. There's a response expected in this.

Abraham needs to respond to what these men are bringing to him in the way of this news. And we're to show our friendship to God also. How do we do that? Abraham offers us a wonderful example of how a servant of the Lord responds in friendship with God.

Once again, I want to remind us these are responses of our worshiping hearts to God as given by example in Abraham and Sarah's life. But I want you to realize these example of our worshiping hearts, the world, the flesh, and the devil work to corrupt our hearts' worship to God.

[42 : 10] Huh? Now the world, the flesh, and the devil cannot steal your salvation from you. Ben mentioned this when we sang the first song, Blessed Assurance. Right? You cannot lose your salvation.

But what the world, the flesh, and the devil can do is discourage you as a worshiper of God. God. And all He has to do is get your eyes on yourself.

That's not hard to do. We love talking about ourselves, thinking about ourselves. And so, the cross helps us get over ourselves. We can only do that in the Lord.

Again, folks, God cares. But we need to think about ourselves and these seasons of life through the perspective of God's caring. We need to let God's caring define the parameters of how we understand our suffering.

If I try to step outside of God's perspective of caring for me, I'd get into dangerous territory because now it's the world, the flesh, and the devil speaking into my life.

[43 : 14] And in my suffering, I'm particularly vulnerable to those things. So I need to stay over here and line up with the cross and the gospel and I need to remind myself, listen, Jeff, God's caring and His goodness.

They need to define the parameters and the ditches and all of that in terms of what I need to know and understand and move out in in the way of God's caring for me as I suffer or I'm going to get in big trouble here.

Are you with me? Now, you see why pastors would tell you this because we care about your souls, beloved. You are the dear ones of Almighty God and He cares for you.

And so we want to make sure that we are ministering to you in a way that gives you the hope that only Jesus Christ can bring. We're bringing you the same hope we live in.

We're appealing to you in the same way that we feel the gospel appeals to us as pastors. Why? Because we're men. We're men. And in this case, we're each married men.

[44 : 15] We have the responsibility of bearing the weight of the spiritual life of our wives and our kids. That's on us. Men, from the conference, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness because you have people watching your life and depending on you.

This is what I'm talking about with a worshiping heart. Now, what are we mentioning in the way of this then? Responses of our worshiping heart. It begins with this. It begins with being a humble servant.

This is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Humility is a gift of the Holy Spirit that can be nurtured in your life. Notice in the text, Abraham addresses these men with, O Lord.

So this is the small case, right? O Lord. The word that Scripture employs here suggests to me that Abraham knew it was the Lord. Okay, why?

Why? Well, here it is up on the screen. It's the word Adonai. It comes from the root word Adon. Now listen to this. Adon means superior, master, owner.

[45 : 26] Scripture uses Adon, the root word for Adonai, to refer to man primarily and at times, many fewer times, to God. But now notice this word, Adonai.

Adonai is an intensified, emphatic, plural form of the word Adon. Why is that important, Jeff? Well, again, we're unpacking this because we don't speak Hebrew.

We wouldn't see this immediately apparent in the text. But here it is. Adonai, intensified, emphatic, plural form of the word Adon. The Old Testament uses Adonai more than 300 times in this form in our text.

and it always refers to God every time. And there that is up on the screen for you. So this is a slam dunk.

Grammatically and syntactically, this is a slam dunk. I think this word demonstrates Abraham's closeness and familiarity with God. Abraham knew his God. It underscores an element of covenant friendship that we're meant to see between God and Abraham.

[46 : 35] Now the question is this, beloved. What effect is this friendship to have on us? What example is being left for us in this interchange between Abraham and Sarah and these three men, particularly the Lord?

Well, here's the answer. It brings us close to God. It brings us close to God. And this makes us all the more eager to do all we can in our service to Him.

So look, up on the screen, our closeness to God, our intimacy with the Lord helps us recognize His presence and work in our life and in the lives of other people. And Abraham shows us this.

Look, it's the heat of the day. Notice our text. It's the heat of the day, the text says. But there's nothing that's too much for this 99-year-old man as he, notice, runs to meet his guests.

Then the text tells us he hurried into the tent to get Sarah busy. So there's some urgency here, you see. Then he runs out of the tent and runs to the herd, wherever it is.

[47 : 43] I see this old guy, you know, with his skirt thing lifted up and he's hoofing it, trying to get to the herd and he's sweating, he's thirsty, it's hot. Why do you think the Bible tells us it's the heat of the day?

Because it emphasizes the urgency of this man in his worship. In his worship. And I think, you know what, bro? If a 99-year-old Hebrew can foot it like this in his worship for the Lord, what's that tell this old boy right here?

So you won't hear me talking, complaining about my age no more, you know, that kind of thing. Very convicting. It's a closeness to God. He hurries into the tent, he runs to the herd, and then

Abraham himself chooses a calf.

We're going to have young calf here, steak stuff. And he hurried back to prepare all of this with his own hands. You see that in verse 8.

Look at verse 8. Abraham took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared. You see that? He might have given it to the servant to get it ready, but then Abraham prepared it all.

[48 : 52] Personally. And folks, the whole point here, this is worship. Every act of this is worship. So here is the fear of the Lord in action.

This is the awe of God put into human form and action. Then Abraham personally served all of this to the men himself. Then he stepped back and stood in quiet humility, sweating, thirsty.

He assumed a position which would allow him to watchfully tend to any little detail of their need.

Now doesn't that speak volumes to us in our worship? How attentive am I when I come before the Lord in my own prayer life at home?

The way I speak to the Lord? How attentive am I in my worship to the Lord? How attentive am I to God? Right? Because we can get so attentive to the problem and God kind of fades into the...

He's out of focus. He's back in the background and we're trying to get past the problem to bring Him into focus. Now, how attentive are you when you come in here on the Lord's Day for doing this?

[49 : 55] How attentive are you spiritually? How ready are you for your heart to pay attention to God and offer worship to God even as you listen and receive the Word with joy and become not just a hearer only but a doer as well?

This is the challenge. We also have in this humility a hospitable servant. Now, I won't say a lot here. It's just this. Abraham took...

And this is important. Here there is. Abraham took a what's mine is yours attitude because he knows this is all God's. My herd, my family, my tent, these oaks, this is all God's.

What's mine is yours. So, do you have that same attitude with God about your life? You say, Jeff, I think I do. Oh, wait a minute. Hold on. Do you have that attitude?

What's mine is yours about your money? Is it your money? Is it his money? What about your kids? Are they your kids or are they God's?

[51 : 05] Be careful. What about your stuff? Is it your stuff or his stuff? What about your goals and aspirations? How well do they line up with God's will?

Look, how open handed are you about your life so that if the Lord came and made clear to you through His people and through other means that you needed to sell everything that you own and go do this?

You would say, yes, Lord, without understanding all the details, without being able to explain everything. Do you live like that? Lord, I got too much stuff.

I got a great job. I'm making some good money. And you want me to go do what? With who? When? I don't know if that would ever happen.

I'm just asking if you live with that kind of heart before the Lord. Right? Are you humble? Are you available? Do you have a hospitable heart toward the Lord first and then to others?

[52 : 13] Abraham took, listen to the way I say this now, put it up here on the screen, Abraham took the blessings he had received from God and simply used them to serve the Lord.

What you've given me, I give back in service to you, Lord. It's the least I can do because you never give junk. When I give it back to you, I'm not giving you junk.

You see how that works? This is all God. This is how Greg and I are instructing our church family. We've done this for a decade together, Pastor Greg and I.

At least we're trying. What God had blessed Abraham with, He blessed God with. Whether it's money or stuff or resources or herds or tents or oaks or calling or kids or hear this, the lack of them. These two people have wanted children for decades. Sarah is 89 years old, about to be 90 and she still doesn't have a child because God closed her womb.

[53 : 22] She's 89 years old, folks. Her husband's 99. And so that's what we're about to see. It's our privilege to serve the Lord this way and others because He purchased that with His blood.

hospitality is our privilege as well as our responsibility. Alright, so let me just put this up here to seal it up and move on. The meal simply set the tone for what God wanted to say.

God has a message of hope, reassurance, comfort, peace to offer this couple but listen, especially Sarah. Now I want to zero in on that. For some reason, the Lord, Satan seems to delight in trying to find ways to tempt the women in our lives.

I think one of the reasons He does this for those of us who are married is because He knows how absolutely discouraging it can be to husbands to see their wives suffer. He'll do it with your children too.

You need to remember that your children and your wife or your husband never suffer outside the will of God. Now you might not be able to get your mind around that but the Scripture speaks to that in volumes.

[54 : 39] Don't let Satan use that against you because he will. He will exploit you in that vulnerability and he will corrupt your worship. And we need to be careful about this.

Very, very careful. Now he's going to speak to Sarah. So we've seen God show His friendship and now we see God do this. He shows His faithfulness in verses 9-15.

We've talked about how these men have come, what Abraham's doing to serve them, what they're saying to him, go ahead, do all that you said. Now he's done that. And then we come to verse 9.

Then they said to Abraham, where is Sarah, your wife? Oh, she's there in the tent. Well, I'll surely return to you this time next year and behold.

Behold is an exclamation statement. And behold! And take notice! Listen up! Sarah, your wife, will have a son. That's verse 10.

[55 : 40] Well, Sarah's listening at the tent door which was behind Abraham. And Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age. Sarah was past childbearing. What are we supposed to do with this?

Well, I want to show you Hebrews 11-11. Please go to Hebrews 11-11. Now here's where it's going to start getting really good.

I mean, it's all good, but here's where I... At this point, I just about rocketed out of my seat. So, Hebrews 11-11. By faith, even Sarah herself received ability to conceive even beyond the proper time of life since she considered Him, God, faithful who had promised.

That doesn't sound like the woman standing behind the tent door, does it? Look at here. She's in the hall of faith. Wow! Well, what's that all about?

This is where the Lord is taking Sarah. Now, here's where it starts to get really, really good. This is where God is taking her, but she isn't there yet. Right now, standing behind the tent door, this is not the same woman that we're reading about here.

[57 : 03] It's about to be. And as we did with friendship, we're going to look at faithfulness first from God's dealings with Abraham and Sarah following this meal. So, God demonstrated faithfulness by his, first of all, confirmation in verses 9 through 12.

He's confirming that she's going to have a child this time next year and they're going to revisit Abraham at that particular time. And in verse 11, Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age. Sarah was past childbearing and she laughed. Now, this is within herself, within, to herself, saying, after I've become old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord, being old also? What's that all about?

Alright, listen, this scene is indicative of the custom of the day. With someone of Abraham's prominence and social stature, it was customary for his wife to be secluded from the male guests. This is not, ladies, don't see this as some kind of demotion or some kind of degradation on the female. No, this is how this culture showed respect and honored what we might call decorum or modesty.

[58 : 21] This was as much about protecting Sarah or protecting the women that these men were responsible for as much as honoring the men.

So the men are going to have guy talk. They're going to have guy speak now kind of stuff. And the woman is cordoned off from all of that as an attitude of respect as much for her as anybody.

So that's the culture. And we still see this go on today in many households. You used to see in Victorian society, and I'm not saying they got it from here, it's just endemic to human nature, you used to see in Victorian society the meal would end and the guys would retreat into the room for brandy and cigars, and the ladies would go into another because you know, being around that nasty smoke, and God knows what these men are going to talk about, these ladies don't need to be a part of that, right?

And then you look at the guys and go clean it up, dudes, come on. But that's just me. I don't like cigars, so. Anyway, I digress.

Let me move on to what's going on here with these people. All of this was a sign of courtesy and respect shown by the host and his household and by the guests as they responded to their hosts.

[59 : 43] So now we come to the question, where is Sarah, your wife? And that focuses the conversation on who? Sarah. And likely it had the effect of drawing Sarah into what was about to be said.

Can you see her almost falling outside the tent door when she heard her name mentioned? Yeah, me too. She didn't expect that. Where's Sarah, your wife? I think it made her more attentive and I think it ensured that she would hear the confirmation of verse 10 very clearly.

So this question reveals the heart and purpose of the visit. Now you're getting to the heart of this passage. It's as if the Lord is saying, I have something to say to her, Abraham.

I have something to minister to your wife. So everybody is abiding by the pleasantries of the day.

They're upholding the customs of the day while at the same time, the Lord is really talking to Sarah for her benefit.

In other words, Sarah needs to hear this word from the Lord. It is especially meant for her. Where's your wife, Sarah?

[60 : 57] Oh, she's in the tent. You know, that's what we're supposed to do. They knew where she was. And so she indeed heard what was said. But she couldn't get past verse 11 right now.

Look at verse 11 with me. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age, and Sarah was past childbearing. That's what she's thinking. But where she needs to get is past 11 and 12 and on to what happens.

The result of her lack of faith was verse 12. Sarah laughed within herself. After I've become old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also.

Well, despite Sarah, God has come to meet with these people to assure them that what He promises will come to pass in their lives. love.

So the Lord isn't overcome by Sarah's lack of trust. Do you notice that? The text doesn't say anything about these men because they know that she laughed within herself. They know her heart.

[62 : 01] And yet these men, in their love and in their kindness and their graciousness, they don't recoil from that and get up and say, we're insulted. How dare your wife laugh?

And Abraham go, sorry guys, I didn't hear anybody laugh. What are you talking about? That didn't happen. They know what happened. They know what's going on in her heart.

And yet they stay right with it, don't they? They've come to serve. They've come to minister. And that's exactly what's happening as they now confront. Folks, listen, this is what I'm saying up here on the screen.

God is being faithful and God is showing His great compassion on a woman who has suffered humiliation her entire life. her entire life.

Now the tragedy here is that Sarah is in the right place to hear God's truth in a physical sense, but her heart was not prepared to hear God's truth with faith in the spiritual sense.

[63 : 00] And we all can understand that. We're all in different seasons of life where in this season I've proven very receptive to the truth and I'm obeying the truth and then I find myself in another season where I'm struggling with the truth, I'm not as receptive as I was, I'm trying to do something about that.

You see, don't you love it that the Bible gives you these raw realities of how people live and function? They're just like us. And so the Lord sticks with this.

Now look, according to the great mercy and grace of God with which He loves His children, He doesn't leave Sarah to her lack. He doesn't allow her to live in that lack.

He could have. They could have got up and left and said, fine, you don't want to trust us, you don't want to believe us, we're out of here. That's not what they did. So God is also demonstrating His faithfulness by His confrontation.

Not only His confirmation, hey, Sarah's going to have a baby this time next year, when we come back and visit you, you'll have a son. But now confrontation, verses 13 through 15, and the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh?

[64 : 13] Now remember, Abraham did not hear her laugh, did he? She laughed within herself. And the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh, saying, shall I indeed bear a child when I am so old?

Is anything too difficult for the Lord? Once again, He confirms, at the appointed time, that is, God's time, that is, the time that it takes for a woman to bear a child, grow and bear a child.

I will return to you at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son. Sarah, look at verse 15, she denied it, however, saying, I didn't laugh, and here, you know, it's the rule of the measure of half truth, or, well, she didn't laugh out loud, but she laughed within her heart toward the Lord. And then, we have this addition in the text in verse 15, and she did this because she was afraid. Did what? Laugh? No, she denied it. She denied it because she was afraid. And he said, no, but you did laugh. Now, folks, do you see that fear? That's what I'm talking about. Do you see when we step outside of the gospel, when we step outside of believing and allowing the caring and goodness of God to define the perspective, what happens? [65 : 35] She laughed within her heart, and now what happens? She's afraid because she's wrong. And Satan wants to use that fear against you. He wants to lock you up in that fear because that fear will keep you distant.

You won't want to draw near to the Lord in prayer and confession and in repentance. You're afraid. I'm afraid to bring this to God. I'm afraid to deal with this. I'm afraid to go to this person. I'm afraid to tie this up in the will of the Lord. I'm afraid of what they might say, what they might do, what might happen. You see what I'm saying? And doesn't it get convoluted? And that's when hopefully you reach out to a mature Christian that you trust, that will help walk you through this and get you past the fog of the emotion and the fear and all that, speak truth into your life like being spoken here, and now you can respond. Okay, you with me? don't let me lose you. I'm almost done. Stay with me. I know I'm piling it on, but there's a good reason for that. All right, so confrontation in these verses. it is this truth, it is this promise from God which will lead Sarah out of the humiliation and into God's honor and blessing.

[66 : 53] And right now, she can't even grasp that. But she needs to lay hold of it by faith. God is showing himself faithful.

The only right response is for Sarah, for his children, to look to him as God Almighty. I am God Almighty. Is there anything impossible for me? God will bring Sarah along in strengthening her faith. Boy, beloved, I'm glad you just stay tuned in because as I end, I want you to hear these wonderful truths that come out of this. Listen, listen, God will bring Sarah along in strengthening her faith. He will. Now, imagine this. Imagine if God left you where you are now and pulled back and there was no more growing for you.

And you had to live the next whatever years of your life right where you are right now. That's all you had. Or let me do one better. Imagine if God had left you where you were two years ago in your spiritual life.

[68 : 06] if he just left you there. He doesn't do that. He comes to you as a father and he grows you. He challenges you.

He corrects you. He disciplines you. He loves you to himself. He speaks the truth into your life. He brings you to where he wants you to be. Sometimes maybe kicking and screaming but nonetheless. I've told you before I'm so grateful for how the Bible doesn't gloss over or omit these human frailties of walking with the Lord. So this part of the passage ends with some descriptions of the physical and spiritual frailties or weaknesses of Abraham and Sarah.

And again I'm so glad the Lord includes this because I get this. Notice what it says in verse 12 again. She laughed within herself saying after I have become notice her own descriptions old shall I have pleasure my Lord being old also.

What does all this mean? Look up here on the screen. These are the descriptions of the physical frailties, spiritual frailties that they're facing. And the first one is old.

[69 : 20] The term old here is exactly what you would think. It means used up, worn out, used up completely. As you grow older you will feel this. So she's putting a spin on all this and it shows how superficially she understood what was involved in God's promise.

She's focused on physical weakness. Her eyes are on what is right in front of her. She's not living by faith but she's living by sight. So in verse 12 you also see this issue of pleasure that she uses. You see that? Well I know pleasure. That can also translate delight. Hence sexual delight. I think she's referring to physical intimacy between her and her husband.

So in addition to all the other obstacles she and Abraham were not enjoying physical intimacy at an advanced age. And so in Sarah's mind she's thinking this. I've got a lot of marks against me.

And not the least of which Abraham and I are not together in that way anymore. So there's no possibility that that's going to happen. Is anything impossible with God?

[70 : 26] So barrenness her womb being closed by the Lord being beyond childbearing age anyway way beyond menopause Abraham's advanced age and an absence of intimacy between them all combined to eat away at Sarah's faith and leave it weak.

You see how she's focused on the problem? She's focused on the earthly stuff? I understand that. This is the second issue that we see in a servant's response to the faithfulness of God.

The first dealt with our physical weakness. We're frail creatures. We live with real limitations as we face the issues of life. But now we see how frail and limited our faith can become and what the Lord in His faithfulness does to help us in our weakness as He grows to show His power in our lives. We see this unbelief. Now folks, I have to explain this in terms of Sarah's response. This is a weak faith, not a complete absence of it. She believes in the Lord and trusts the Lord, but this is a weak faith due to the things I just described.

So this is an anemic faith resulting from the circumstances she's living in, living by sight, from a shallow spiritual understanding. In other words, she's being very earthly minded instead of heavenly minded.

[71 : 49] Isn't this a temptation? See how real and raw this is. She believes in God and she honors her husband. That's clear. She offers submissive service to her husband and his guests.

She keeps her place in the tent as the custom of the day demanded of her and she respectfully refers to Abraham as her Lord. So in these other ways, she's not sinning.

But this is in essence a weak faith as she deals with this reality about her own body and the promise of God. So she laughs within herself, but the God who sees into her heart and from whom no secret thing is hidden hears that laugh within her heart.

You see, he knows her heart better than she does. So what it does is it shocks and scares her when the Lord confronts her. She's hiding.

Remember, she's hiding. And she's not letting all of this get out. She's holding it in. That's not good. That is not good in her relationship with God or with her husband.

[72 : 54] And so God's going to bring it to light. Why does he do that? Because he loves her. Even though it hurts her and it shocks her. It isn't pleasant. It's a bit embarrassing, a bit humiliating, but just as she has seen Abraham do when he was afraid, what does she do?

She lies. When Abraham was afraid, she saw him lie to save his own skin. Remember that? And now she's afraid and she lies. But here's where we're confronted with the most loving thing the Lord said and did in his visit.

That's why, hang in there with me. This is the best thing right here. God said this, and you wouldn't think of this. What did he say? No, but you did laugh. You say, Jeff, that's the most loving thing. I thought maybe telling her that the promise was going to be fulfilled was the most loving thing. Well, yeah, but he had to go further. Because that's not where Sarah is. She's not standing in the promise, is she?

So he has to lovingly discipline and confront her with the truth. He speaks the truth in love. No, but you did laugh. Sarah, you're lying. You're lying to yourself. You did laugh.

[73 : 59] And that reveals something about your heart. It was a direct address to her from God. And folks, it changed her life at 89 years old.

She didn't get saved. What it did was catapult her faith into a depth with God she would treasure for her remaining years. And that's why Hebrews 11, 11 says what it does.

That's why she's in the hall of faith. Because God brought her to where she needed to be. Isn't that wonderful? That's encouraging to me, to this old boy. By faith, even Sarah herself received ability to conceive.

Did you see the way that started? By faith. She got there. Even beyond the proper time of life since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Boy, I wanted to weep reading that.

Sarah considered God faithful who had promised. Well, she's not there in this passage, but she's going to get there. God's going to bring her there. And so here's my conclusion, folks.

[75 : 05] Here's what I want you to see. God doesn't leave you where you are because He loves you. He disciplines you, which is His design by specific circumstances to show you His goodness.

A goodness you will treasure in your heart in your remaining years. So don't grow hard in your hardships and don't waste your privilege to know the greater depths of God's caring for you.

The world, the flesh, and the devil will want to rob you of that. But God wants you to live in His goodness and He wants you to define your season of suffering by His caring for you.

To get outside of that is very dangerous. Beloved, we have a responsibility and a privilege to speak into others' lives and to come alongside and bear the burdens when we see our brothers and sisters suffering in these ways.

Because we don't want them to be vulnerable to Satan's lies, to self-deception, and to the world's nonsense. All the world would speak into your life during that time to tell you how to sort it out is nonsense.

[76 : 19] Alright, will you join me in prayer? Father God, we have really loaded it up from this passage and we've only done half of it. Your word is so rich, so deep, so true, so wonderful as we unpack it verse by verse to try and understand what you're telling us through the lives of the people of the Scriptures.

And so thank you for Abraham, thank you for Sarah, thank you for what you have done in their lives in the past to bring them where you wanted them to be, to see the fulfillment of your promise so that they could see that you are a God who cares.

You are a God who is faithful and keeps your promises. You are a God who brings your people where you need and want them to be in their walk with you. Thank you for trusting us, Lord, with these treasures of the truth and thank you for the Holy Spirit who helps us take these truths into our lives that we might worship you in spirit and truth.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. Amen.