

GOD'S GREAT CALL TO ABRAM, (THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT, PART 1): THE CALL TO A LIFE OF SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD GENESIS 12:01

Introduction

There was the call of God to Abram, the call to live a life of separation. God called Abram to the most difficult task a person can ever face: that of changing his life, of completely turning around and forsaking everything in this world he loves and finds dear. God called Abram to leave and forever separate himself from...

- his country
- his relatives
- his father's house, the family's possessions and property
- the love, care, support, security and approval of the people he knew and held dear

Why? Why would God call Abram to give up the very things that mean so much to a person? For this very reason: the people and things of the world apparently meant too much to Abram. Abram was putting his world and family before God, putting their love, security, possessions and approval before God.

How do we know this? Because this was God's second call to Abram. He had not followed through with God's first call. Remember, Abram and his family were now living in Haran. They had left Ur of the Chaldees some years before when God first called Abram (Gen 11:31-32). God's first call issued at Ur is unquestionable. Scripture is clear about this:

=> Stephen, in his great sermon right before his martyrdom, declared that God first called Abram in Ur:

Acts 7:2-3 To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia [Ur of the Chaldeans], before he lived in Harran. 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.'

=> God Himself reminded Abram of the first call:

Gen 15:7 He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

=> Nehemiah referred to the first call:

Neh 9:7 "You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham.

The second call is now issued while Abram is in Haran. This is seen in two facts:

First, the Hebrew text reads, "The LORD said to Abram," not "had said." The past perfect tense "had said" used by some translations is most likely an attempt to make this call the same as the call issued at Ur, an attempt to reconcile this passage with Acts 7:2. But as stated, the Hebrew text points strongly to two calls, the first being given in Ur of the Chaldees, and the second now being issued in Haran.

Second, the Hebrew word *and* or *now* (waw) is connecting and adding to the events of Abram's life in Ur (Gen 11:31-32) not repeating the events. A different experience in Abram's life is now being given, not an old experience recovered. The first call is not being explained; a second call is being issued.

The point is this: apparently Abram did not go all the way with God, not when God first called him. Abram started out following the promises of God when he left Ur to begin his journey, but he stopped in Haran, far short of the promised land. Why? Was his reason legitimate or was he distracted by some worldly attraction or greed?

- => Did Terah, Abram's father, become ill? Abram had remained in Haran for at least five years. Thus it is unlikely that an illness of Terah's had kept Abram in Haran. It is possible, but most unlikely, that Terah would have been ill for five years. (Mathew Henry. *Mathew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 1. p. 83).
- => Did Abram backslide, lose his zeal and commitment in following after God and His promises?
- => Did some business opportunity arise in Haran that attracted Abram, and he gave in to the temptation of greed?
- => Did Terah and the immediate family put pressure on Abram to remain in Haran?

Abram's reason for stopping in Haran is not stated; therefore, we cannot be absolutely sure why he remained in Haran. But based upon the threefold demand of God for separation, the weight seems to be that Abram had backslid, that he had lost sight of God's call to separation. God was apparently striking at the very things that had distracted Abram from God's call, striking at the very things that had led Abram to backslide and forsake the promised land. This is the subject of this great passage: *God's Great Call to Abram (the Abrahamic Covenant, Part 1): The Call to a Life of Separation from the World*, Genesis 12:1.

- I. The call to separate from his country (v. 1).
- II. The call to separate from his relatives (v. 1).
- III. The call to separate from his father's house (v. 1).

I. *Genesis 12:01 The Call to Separate From his Country*

Abram was to leave and separate from his country. A person's country means...

- the land where he was born, lives or holds citizenship
- the land of his own people and language
- the land of his own culture and environment

- the land of his own society and community
- the land of his own government and laws

A person's own country usually means the land of his own people, the people he looks like, talks like and acts like. Abram was being called to leave his old country and forever separate from it: to separate himself from the people, culture, environment, behaviour, and language of his past. Why would God demand of Abram such a thing as *separation*? Because the people of his world had become...

- isolators
- covetous
- false worshippers
- lawless
- ungodly
- wicked
- immoral

The people of Abram's world had forsaken and denied the only living and true God. They were self-sufficient and humanistic, living only for this world and its pleasures and possessions.

It was impossible, totally impossible, to live for God and for the world at the same time. The ways of this world — its flesh, lusts, pleasure, possessions and greed — did just what the ways of the world always do: corrupt men. Consequently, God had no choice: God had to demand that Abram live a life of separation, that he separate from the worldliness of his country.

Abram was being called to a new life, to start life all over again, to seek after a new country — the promised land — that God would show him (see note, Gen 12:1c).

Thought 1. The life of separation — separation from the world — is not a heartless demand of God. It is simply the demand that we separate from the ungodly, immoral and covetous ways of this world. This world is notoriously wicked in the sight of God and should be to us.

Acts 2:40 *With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."*

Rom 12:2 *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty.*

Eph 5:11 *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

Isa 52:11 *Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you [the ministers of God] who carry the articles of the LORD's house.*

II. **Genesis 12:01 The Call to Separate From his Relatives**

Abram was to separate from his relatives. Relatives means parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and cousins — all the people within a family who are related by blood. Most persons have a close bond with a few family members and relatives, and there is always pain and emptiness when that bond is broken. Family and relatives — especially in the ancient world — provided love, care, acceptance, support, responsibility, training, education and security for one another. This would have been true with Abram and his family and close relatives. It must have been very difficult for Abram to leave and forever separate himself from his loved ones. Yet this was exactly what God demanded of Abram.

But again, why? Why would God demand that Abram separate himself from his family and relatives? Because the people in Abram's day were living immoral and wicked lives, and the family had been heavily influenced by their neighbours: the family had given itself over to the worldliness of their day. Abram's family had become...

- idolaters
- covetous
- false worshippers
- lawless
- ungodly
- wicked
- immoral

Imagine! Abram's family had even become idolaters, worshippers of false religion. They had rejected the only living and true God, worshipping the man-made religion of their day. (See notes, Gen 11:27; 11:27-28; 11:29.)

This was the reason God called Abram to leave and separate from his family and relatives. This was why God called Abram to turn away from his old life and begin a new life...

- a life that would be totally separated from the world and its pleasures and possessions
- a life that would be totally separated to God, totally committed to God, and that would diligently seek after God and His promises

Thought 1. The life of separation — separation from family and relatives — is not a heartless demand of God. It is simply the demand that we be totally separated to God, that we put God first in our lives, even before family, relatives, and friends.

Mat 22:37-38 *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment."*

Mat 10:37 “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Mat 8:21 Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Deut 6:5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Deut 10:12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

III. *Genesis 12:01 The Call to Separate From his Father's House*

Abram was to separate from his father's house, that is, from both the immediate family and the family's holdings, their property and possessions. Remember: Abram's father, Terah, had just died; therefore Abram was to inherit a part of the property and possessions of Terah. Scripture does not say what the inheritance was, but the land or property of the household must have been great. Nevertheless, God demanded that Abram leave and separate from his father's household, its property and possessions.

Why would God not want Abram around his family, their property and possessions? Because the family had become heavily influenced and enslaved by the greed of this world, the lust for worldly...

- possessions
- influence
- comfort
- recognition
- furnishings
- honour
- property
- position
- power

Greed — the lust for more and more — arouses the human heart and flesh. Abram and his family had apparently become enslaved by the possessions of this world, the lust for more and more. Their minds and hearts were given over to seeking the things of this world, not the things of God. Consequently, God had to demand that Abram break away from his family, that he be totally separated from those who were enslaved by the greed for more and more. Abram had to get away from his family and their holdings, get away from the worldly influence of those who were always seeking after the possessions of this world.

Thought 1. The life of separation — separation from one's house, from one's immediate family, and from the family's possessions — is not a heartless demand of God. A person is often ruined by the worldly influence and greed of family members. Worldliness and greed will destroy us. Therefore, when God calls us to turn away from the worldliness and greed of family members, it is not a heartless demand.

=> It is simply the demand that we focus our minds and hearts first of all upon God.

Mat 22:37-38 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”

=> It is simply the demand that we put God first in our lives, before family members, even before father or mother.

Mat 10:37 *“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”*

=> It is simply the demand that we seek God first, seek Him even before food, shelter and clothing.

Mat 6:33 *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

=> It is simply the demand that we focus our attention and affections on things above, lasting things, not on things of the earth, things that are temporary.

Col 3:2 *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

=> It is simply the demand that we not trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God.

1 Tim 6:17 *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*

Luke 14: 33 *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

=> It is simply the demand that we exchange the riches of this world for the treasures of heaven.

Mark 10:21-22 *Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

Phil 3:8 *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

Thought 2. Note one other significant fact: the Hebrew actually reads: “Go for yourself” or “Leave for yourself.” God was calling Abram to leave and get away from his old life *for himself*, that is, for his own benefit, good and welfare. Abram would reap enormous results if he separated himself from the ungodly of this world. It was for his welfare, profit, gain and advantage that God was demanding a life of separation from the ungodly of the world. So it is with everyone of us.

Mat 6:33 *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

Col 3:2-4 *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Mark 10:28-30 *Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — along with persecutions — and in the age to come eternal life."*

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

Jude 1:21 *Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. ■*