

## Use God's Resources, Not Our Own!

Genesis 15

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I'd just ask you, do you want to know how to please God, your Creator? Do you want to know how to be right with him? Do you want to know how to end up living with him forever? Well then -- trust him; trust him, that's all. Count on him that he has taken all the difficulties that you will face in your life and all the problems that are in you yourself and he has removed them all in his son Jesus. Count on him for that. Relax in his arms knowing that he has done that and stop worrying about those things. Relax in peace of heart and mind, and that will please him.

He wants, most of all, to have a personal relationship with you that he doesn't have with any of the rest of us, because he delights to look at the little things that you're facing in your life that I don't face in mine and that the rest of us here don't face in ours. He delights to make all those right for you, personally and he wants, more than anything else, to have that kind of personal relationship with you. Will you trust him like that?

In other words, he's like any dear father; he has put billions of dollars in a bank for all the financial needs and all the debts that you will ever incur during your lifetime. He has foreseen all the sicknesses you will have, all the times of weakness, all the colds that you'll get, and he has put them into his son, Jesus. He has borne all those sicknesses and healed all those things in his son. And then he has foreseen all the problems that you are going to meet in your life, all the obstacles coming up in your domestic life, in your personal life, in your business life, and he has solved all those.

Now he asks you to believe that he has done that, and he looks down on you now, as any father would, to see his child believing him, believing that he's done all these things. He looks in to see the peace of your heart, and your piece of mind, and your quietness, and your confidence as you come into all kinds of unexpected problems and unexpected situations. He looks to see you resting in him and resting in his provision.

That's how to be right with God, loved ones; to live like that day by day, trusting and resting in him and relaxing in him. Now that's what this dear man Abraham did. Because your faith is your acceptance of his love and it's the completion of reality; because he has, in fact, done all those things. He has, in fact, foreseen every slip that you will make along the way. He has foreseen every rock you are going to stumble against. He has foreseen every dark hole that you are going to fall into. He has foreseen them all and he has already answers for all of them. He has arranged, and wants you to complete that reality, by having faith in him. And as you walk in that, you do complete the reality.

That is what Abraham did to please God when he was in his eighties -- he was in his eighties and still had no child of his own and yet God had given him a promise. You can see the promise if you look at it in Genesis 15:4, "And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.'" Even though you are eighty years of age, your own son shall be your heir. "And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.'" Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'" And

even though Abraham was eighty, he believed that the problems that existed at that time in the world, and there were many, were going to be solved somehow by the descendants that God was going to give to him personally. He believed that was going to be fulfilled in his life. And he believed that this was going to somehow be connected up with the promise that he had been told had been given to Adam, his great forefather, in the Garden of Eden. These old patriarchs grew up having the story of the Garden of Eden passed on to them by their fathers and their grandfathers, so they knew it thoroughly. It was passed forward by oral tradition, faithfully, generation after generation, and he knew the promise that had been given back there.

It's in Genesis 3:15 if you like to look at it, because it was what was in Abraham's mind when God said to him, "No, even though you are eighty, you are going to have descendants as the sand upon the seashore." "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he" that is, her seed, "shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel." Abraham was like all the others ever from the Garden of Eden days; he knew somehow or other a seed of man is going to bruise that Satan that created the chaos that we experience in our world.

So when God spoke to him and said, "Even though you are eighty, you are going to have a descendant by which I am going to bless the whole world" Abraham believed that because it was a promise that God had given to him already in his lifetime in Genesis 12:2, "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." So he knew God had promised, "I will bless you through your descendants and I will bless the world. I will bless those who bless you and him who curses you, I will curse. And by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." So Abraham knew, in some way, that "The seed that was promised to my forefather Adam is going to come through me, and it's going to be a seed that blesses the whole of mankind." And, of course, that was the faith that in Genesis 15:6 was regarded by God as righteousness itself.

Genesis 15:6, "And he believed the Lord; and he," God, "reckoned to him righteousness." You remember I mentioned the Hebrew word is "regard", a kind of a substitute of "righteousness." Many of us think real righteousness is absolute obedience to every jot and tittle of the law, so faith is a kind of substitute righteousness -- no. Faith is the original righteousness; faith is the opposite of sin, and if you are not sure of that, you will find it in Romans 14:23, "But he who has doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." Now faith and trust in God is the opposite of sin. Some of us think, "No, no, obedience is the opposite of sin" -- no. Obedience is the opposite of disobedience; but faith is the opposite of sin because sin is a heart condition. Sin is not just failing to read your Bible. Sin is not just failing to pray each day. Sin is not just committing fornication; sin is lack of deep heart trust and faith in your dear Father. That's why on past occasions, we've said sin is worry. Worry is one of the worst of sins because it's utter lack of trust; it's utter dependence on yourself and your own resources.

Faith is faith in God and trust in his provision; obedience is only valuable when it springs from faith. Do you see that legalistic obedience can be just as sinful as disobedience; because you can have some person obeying a set of laws just as independent of God as a person who disobeys the same set of laws. Obedience is a blessing to God when it springs from faith; disobedience is a curse against God because it springs from distrust and lack of faith in him.

That's why James said what he did in James 2:18-24. "But some will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You

believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe -- and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness'; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."

You see; its works that express your trust and confidence in God. Some of us get an idea that the faith God regards as righteousness is this little mental ascent to John 3:16. Or it's some kind of evangelical belief that Jesus died for my sins, therefore I'm saved, so we get caught in a kind of mental ascent to a concept. That's not faith. Faith is a deep trust in your dear personal Father that is present in your life, day by day and moment by moment and shows itself in works like no tranquilizers, no wrinkled foreheads, no worry, no anxiety, no defending yourself, no trying to get all the money you possibly can from everybody else. That's the way works complete your faith; they're faith works. That's so different, you can see, from what so many of us believe. We believe, "Oh, faith is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that I am saved. So I have that faith, and now I leave that faith over there and I go over here and I have to do some good work. I have to bring other people to Jesus, I have to save the world, I have to pray everyday and read the Bible." It's terrible -- I mean it's a mockery.

God is not concerned with that kind of playing games. He says, "I am your dear Father; I have you in my arms. Believe me, I can see further than your own father ever could see. Believe me that I have seen everything that will happen to you in this life. Believe me that I have put it all in my son; it's all finished, it's all dealt with. Now rest and relax in me. I will tell you what to do as you go along through life, but trust me. Put your trust in me." Genesis 15 is such an important chapter because it is God completing the covenant of faith with Abraham, the covenant that Adam broke apart in the Garden of Eden when he said, "I'm going to put my faith in the resources of this world, and my own resources to manipulate the resources of this world, to meet my needs." And of course that brought a complete disruption between us and God.

That's where we find strain, loved ones. That's why we have strain. That's why we have tension headaches and that's why we're doing all kinds of things to try to meet our needs. That's why our lives are filled often with fuss and with embarrassment and with rushing and with all kinds of resourceful acts; because we're not lying in our Father's arms and trusting him. Now you know fine well that this does not mean you do nothing, but it does mean you act constantly out of a heart of peace. It does mean you go to work, not because you need the money, because you know your Father is going to supply that, but you go to work to glorify your Father in heaven. It means you do everything out of a deep trust and confidence that your Father has already met all your needs. Now that's what makes you right with God. That's what brings a deep peace in your heart.

However, Abraham was the same as you and me; he had been trained the other way. We're no fools -- we have been brought up in a kind of work ethic, and so was I in Ireland. We have been brought up by parents who, in good faith say "If you don't work for your living and you don't earn your money by the sweat of your brow, and you don't get out there and do something and look after yourself, there's nobody else that will look after you" so we went at it with that kind of attitude and there was nothing actually wrong in that direction. But we fell into the same pattern as all the other people in the world; we became enslaved to the money that we got from our job, and we began to be enslaved to the employer who gave us our job, and we began to be enslaved by the company that owned the employer. So we gradually got enmeshed in all kinds of self trust and dependencies that come

ahead of God and we need to be undeceived from all those things as did Abraham.

He needed to be educated into faith and so do we. We need to grow in faith -- we need to grow and develop in our faith. Now without a willingness to depend upon God, of course, the education won't do you any good, but even if you have that willingness, if you don't have the education, you will never be delivered from all the seductive deceptions that Satan has brought you into in the way of all kinds of unconscious dependencies. That's the story of our lives and if you want to know what God is trying to do with your life, that's what he is trying to do; he is trying to wean you away, during this lifetime, from dependence on the world and on its people and on its circumstances and its things and he's trying to bring you into complete dependence on himself. So that when this life ends -- because that's the last part of our probation; there's no opportunity to learn to trust God after this life ends, but when this life ends, you will be at a place where you are lying in the Father's arms.

So Abraham had to be educated and you remember the first step in his education was in Genesis 12:1. That was the first thing God tried to do to separate him from the people that he had been brought up among them and there was a reason for that. Genesis 12:1, "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'" God told him to leave his relatives for a reason, and you find that in Joshua 24:2, because his relatives had certain attitudes that were absolutely contrary to trust in God himself as their Father. "And Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.'" That was why: Abraham's parents served other gods -- they depended on other things, and that's why God had to separate Abraham from his people and his parents.

And the first step is that with us; he has to separate us, in some way, from the world -- he has to separate us from dependency on the world. God is probably continuing to do that with many of us here and that's why he gradually divides us from the things that we think we can't do without. Then the second step was in Genesis 13:10-13, "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw that the Jordan valley was well watered, everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan valley, and Lot journeyed east; thus they separated from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan." God had to separate Abraham from Lot and from the whole attitude that Lot had which was God plus the world; "I take God, I depend on God, but I would also like to grab the best bits of the world for myself too."

And God normally has to go onto that with us; he separates us from the world then he separates us from the kind of bluff dualism that enters our life after we're born of God, when he has to try and separate us from getting a little of the world as an insurance policy. I don't know how much of that works in your mind, but it is subtle. We feel, yes, we will give everything to Jesus, but we do have this little thing in our back pocket that we can pull out just in case things get rougher for us than we envision. And God, if he's going to do anything with a man or woman has to separate them from that kind of compromise. So God had to educate Abraham and by that time, he had brought him to the place where he could complete the covenant of faith with him.

That meant that Abraham was back in the position that Adam had been before the fall in the Garden of Eden -- that's where God had brought Abraham to; he had brought him back to that position. The only reason he was able to do that was because he had put all of Abraham and all the wrong developments in his personality into his son, Jesus, and had slain him in the lamb before the foundation of the

world. That's why God was able to bring Abraham right back to that spot that Adam was in before the fall, so it was very appropriate that the promise that God gave to Abraham was then tied up with the manifestation of that lamb of God. Do you see that; the lamb was slain before the foundation of the world, and Abraham and all his perverted personality was slain with him, so God now had to manifest that lamb in the world here and the only way he was going to do that was through Abraham's seed.

So it's interesting that the promise that was given to Abraham was tied up with the very person who enabled him to be forgiven and brought back to the place where Adam was before the fall. And that's why the promise of a seed is so important in Abraham's life. Do you realize that? It's not just the number of the seed -- it's not a joke of "sand on the seashore of children." It's not just a joke that you can have all kinds of strong people who will become a mighty nation, but it is that "you're going to have a people whom I will be able to educate to know why my son is being born on earth among them." That's why the promise of seed was so vital to God and why it was such a big thing in Abraham's life.

It's interesting; if you go through his life, you don't know much about his life, in a sense, but you constantly have this hammered in -- the promise that God gave him that he would have seed; that he would have children, that he would have offspring and the purpose of that was so that those offspring would bring about Jesus into the world as a human being. So that was the whole center of Abraham's life. That's why you get in Genesis 15:5 "And he brought him outside and said 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'" And that was the confirmation of Genesis 13:16 where he said "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your descendants also can be counted." And it was confirmation again of Genesis 12:2, "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

That was a promise that God had given to Abraham and that Abraham had believed God for and God, therefore, regarded as righteous.

Now here we come to the problem in Genesis 16:1, "Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children." And that was the problem; the promise was Genesis 15:5, "He brought him outside and said 'Look toward heaven and number the stars if you are able to number them.'" Then he said to him, 'So should your descendants be.'" Then you go to verse 1 of Chapter 16, "Now Sarai, Abraham's wife bore him no children." The physical facts were just against it, so Abraham struggled with that; God had promised him his own son, but he looked at Sarai and he knew she was actually seventy-six -- she was ten years younger than him, and she was seventy-six at this time and she bore no children. So the visible fact of this seemed to contradict the promise of God.

Actually, do you see -- Sarah was still alive and so they didn't actually contradict the promise of God. What did contradict the promise of God was the way we normally expect the natural world to operate -- isn't that right? That is what contradicted the promise of God. It wasn't actually a simple fact; the mum was still there and she was still able, by a miracle, to have children, but Abraham was put off by the normal way things work in this world, and I think we need to see that. When God gives you a promise, don't be discouraged from believing that promise because you are looking at the industry averages, and the industry averages for women is certainly not a child at seventy-six. Every time you look at the industry averages, or every time you look at what is the norm in this fallen world, you are looking at a world outside Jesus. God's promises are given to you inside Jesus. God's promises are all based on the fact that he has reconciled the world to himself in Jesus. God's promises are all based on the fact that he has crucified the world in Jesus and remade it, so God is giving you a promise in this Christ world over here, and you are looking at

this fallen world over here and saying, "Well, it's not the kind of thing that happens." And God is trying to say, "Yes, of course not; my promise can't be made real over there -- that world is finished. That's why I destroyed it in Jesus. But over here, in him, I have a world that will work exactly as I intended it too originally. And it's in that world that my promise is going to be made real to you."

So, loved ones, it is good to see that Abraham had really no need to doubt just because the visible facts, and normally, in your own situation and my own situation, we say it's the visible facts that contradict, but it is not. Really, the visible fact, in fact, in many situations we come into like financial problems and difficulties, we know that many of those have worked themselves out just by the right timing on other occasions. Many of the situations we've gotten into with jobs and job applications, we know that other people have actually had those work out quite apart from God because the whole thing has fallen together in the right place. So normally it's not the visible facts themselves that discourage us from believing God; it's because we allow Satan to get hold of our minds and say, "But this doesn't normally happen this way. It might, on an odd occasion, by chance, work out this way, but it doesn't normally." And God is of saying, "Of course it doesn't -- that's why I have given you this promise; because I have put this all into my son and I have rearranged it. That's why it's going to work this way. So don't look at the fallen world and think it's going to work the way my risen world works." But, of course, Abraham didn't do that and you know that. The rest of the verse goes, "She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar; and Sarai said to Abram, 'Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai."

Now the promise had not been given to Sarai so the wee soul doesn't deserve our condemnation. The promise was given to Abram; it was him that had received the promise. God had told him, "No, it won't be that slave -- it will be your own son" so Abraham knew that. And really, he had no excuse, loved ones -- you have to walk by the promises that God gives you personally; that's what God is after. He's after a personal relationship between you and himself, and there's no point in you coming to me or coming to somebody else and saying, "Well, can you confirm this promise that God has given to me?" We probably won't be able to. You have to walk by the promise that God has given to you. I don't know how many husbands or wives are in this situation. It could be with close friends and even with people who live in houses together or even with elders, as elders that work together. I think it's very easy for us to almost want to listen to the other person because it takes us off the tricky situation. I don't know how many husbands find themselves in that position or how many wives, but you see that there was something of Sarai in Abram; that's why he went with her. He really was anxious, in a way, to go that route that seemed more definite and more tied to the natural functions and the natural laws that he had observed taking place in this world.

And so, loved ones, it's very important that you stay with the promises that God has given you and that you don't shake from them. If you said to me, "Well, brother, what if God does not fulfill them?" Well then you learn. You will be educated by God -- he will tell you where you have misunderstood or where you have gone wrong, but at least you will grow further in your relationship with him. But if he gives you a promise, and then you speak to even one, "I dare not trust the sweetest frame, only lean on Jesus' name." Even if you trust the sweetest friend, even if you go to the dearest person, the most spiritual person you know and you try to find from them what they think, immediately you do that, you are diluting the word of God to you and you are prostituting God's promise to you, and you are falling into the same trap as Abram who listened to Sarai. Now in fairness to Sarai, the promise was not given to her. She was never called out to look at the stars; she had never had that glorious vision of the stars and the word of God in her heart.

So it is with you and me, you see, often in quiet moments in our bedrooms, we do have quiet assurances from God and those are precious. Now when you go to somebody else who has not had that quiet assurance, you are only going to get one answer from them and actually your act of unbelief is not even in the listening to them and it's not in the following their advice, your act of unbelief is the very going to this other person and saying, "What do you think?" Because they didn't hear the voice, and Jesus said, "My sheep know my voice." You will know Jesus' voice and it doesn't matter how you describe it to somebody else, they won't know it just because you have described it to them, you alone know it, and that's a single lonely road you have to walk with your God. Now Abraham, of course, didn't. And the reason he didn't was he had developed a problem, in the old days. It was back in Genesis 12:11. And, of course, it was a problem of self-management and manipulation and controlling things himself by the strength of his own right arm.

Genesis 12:11, "When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, 'I know you are a woman beautiful to behold; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say 'This is his wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.'" It was that old human ingenuity to save himself and defend himself. Now, in fairness to him, he had got rid of the saving himself -- the motive of that -- in Genesis 13:9 when Lot and his own herdsman were fighting. Genesis 13:9, "Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left." So he had lost the selfish motive; he was no longer trying to save his own skin even if he had to sacrifice his wife to the Egyptians. So he had lost that selfish motive. He said to Lot, "Good, you take that land, I'll take this. I don't care; I'm trusting God. He gave me the right land." See, he had lost that selfish motive, but the life, the energy, the soulfulness, the strength of the right arm, the strength of the flesh was still in him. He was still filled with that natural strength, that soulful strength that would enable him to achieve God's purposes by his own power, and that's why he fell into this trap. He thought, "Well, now God is going to give me a son. It's vital he give me a son. I know, in some way it's connected up with the promise made to Adam, and he has promised me. Three times he's promised me a son, and this seems quite a good idea of Sarai's -- it's my own wife telling me. I mean, last time it was me telling her, getting her into trouble, but now it's Sarai ready to make the sacrifice, so it seems to me this is very reasonable to do."

And, loved ones, it's always that; it's the natural strength, it's the human ingenuity, it's the strength of the flesh, it's the knowledge of good and evil, it's using our own ideas of how we can bring this about. And it's no way to fulfill God's will in your life. No way can you fulfill God's will by your own ingenuity and your own strength. You need to wait upon him and wait for his promise.

Oh, there's a great verse, I don't know how many of the English poets you know -- they are dear to me because they have such truth in them -- but John Milton is a very famous one, and he has a sonnet on his blindness -- he went blind, actually, and wrote his greatest works after he was blind. And this one begins "When I consider how my light is spent, ere half my days in this dark world and wide." And then he goes on and says, "God doth not need either man's work or his own gifts. Who best bear his mild yolk, they serve him best. His state is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed, and post o'er land and ocean without rest; they also serve who only stand and wait." We all know that last line, but the early lines are so good; "God doth not need either man's work or his own gifts." God doesn't need Abraham and Sarah to devise some system with Hagar to bring about the birth of the noble human being who was going to eventually produce the son of God on earth. God does not need

that. God doth not need either man's work or his own gifts. "They who best bear his mild yolk, they serve him best. His state is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed, and post o're land and ocean without rest."

Loved ones, God doesn't need our silly little efforts to bring about his will. He needs us to trust him and believe him and not to resort to things that are obviously wrong. And, of course, you can bet that Abraham knew in his conscience that it was wrong -- he knew he had behaved despicably towards Sarah and handing her over to the Egyptian king. He knew that this was not right, whether there was a law against fornication or adultery or not, he had the law written in his conscience. He had that law that was given to that noble primeval religion in the early days in the Garden of Eden and he knew it was wrong and his conscience pricked him, and yet he went on and did it.

So you see it there in Genesis 16:2, "And Sarai said to Abram, 'Behold now, the Lord has prevented from bearing children; go in to my maid; and may be I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abraham had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to Abram, her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar and she conceived." It's, of course, the same with every soulish act; everything that comes by our own strength and our own resourcefulness and our own ingenuity and our own strong right arm and our own arm of the flesh -- it always brings disruption and chaos; it never brings peace and rest. Every time you get into what God wants you to do and you try to bring it about yourself instead of waiting upon him in faith and doing what he tells you to do, disruption and chaos and strife results in it. Of course you see it there, "And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, 'May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my maid to your embrace, and when she saw she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me! But Abram said to Sarai, 'Behold, the maid is in your power; do to her as you please.' Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her." So Abraham was off track again; trying to bring about God's will, but not by faith in God's power.

I think it's very important in the whole realms of your own finances and your marriage, with your marriage plans, or your marriage hopes, or your present marriage situation, or in the realm of your jobs, or your profession or your career, or your education, or in the realm of your family, or in the realm of evangelism in the neighborhood or on campus; it's very important that we wait long enough to get God's mind on those things and that we go by his power and his strength. His power will achieve in a moment what all our clever resourcefulness will only mess up and confuse. So it is vital, loved ones -- God's will by God's power, not God's will by your power: God's will by God's power. That's his plan.

Now God was gracious, of course, and he is gracious to us; "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace we have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" "even when we were dead through our trespasses" "that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." [Ephesians 2:5-7] So God did all that. And in Psalm 103, he says, "He does not deal with us according to our sins, or reward us according to our iniquities." So he graciously keeps on keeping on, saying, "I'm trustworthy, I'm trustworthy, I'm trustworthy. You haven't messed it up finally; I can still be trusted. Trust me, trust me." And he says that right up to the edge of the grave for each one of us, you see. That's why no man should ever doubt that he has forgiven his sins; because the Father is saying that, whispering that to him right up to the edge of the grave.

Once you are into the grave, then that's it; then comes death and then comes the judgment. But right up to that moment, whatever you do, whatever things you mess up, however you miss God's way, he is still coming towards you saying, "Trust me, trust me." So the Father was still doing that; he kept on working; he took this disaster that had taken place and he started to work it into the council of his will, and that's what he does with you. He's so gracious; I don't know how many of you think you have messed it up, but God immediately is working it into the council of his will. He's immediately trying to work it into his plan for your life and he's coming at you again; "Now trust me, trust me. Because it's the trusting that is precious. It's not actually the flawless life that is precious. It's not actually the life that goes perfectly so that it's precious, it's the heart. God can get a heart in you that wholly, fully trusts him so that at the end of this life, you go straight into his arms. That's his purpose achieved in your life, so that's what he always did.

He always starts with the afflicted, the poor little ones. That's the way he showed himself, you remember, not to Mary, his mother, but he showed himself to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection. So it is here that the angel of the Lord came to the poor little afflicted one whom they despised; Hagar, who had been turned out. Verse 7, "The angel of Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, 'Hagar, maid of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?' She said, 'I am fleeing from my mistress, Sarai.' The angel of the Lord said to her, 'Return to your mistress and submit to her.'"

That's always right, you see; God is always saying that, "No, you submit. It doesn't matter what the other person does wrong, you do your submission, that's your trust in me. Then verse 10, "The angel of the Lord also said to her, 'I will so greatly multiply your descendants that they cannot be numbered for multitude.' And the angel of the Lord said to her, 'Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord has given heed to your affliction.'" And then of course God had to work it into the council of his will, so he did say this; "He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." And you will see later in history how God used that to highlight what he had done among the Israelites themselves for Jesus. "So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'Thou art a God of seeing'; for she said, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?' Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered."

It's interesting; if you look in verse 10, "The angel of the Lord also said to her, 'I will so greatly multiply your descendants that they cannot be numbered for multitude.'" And that's of course the very word that God had used; "I will do that; I will multiply your descendants, Abram." And then you see in verse 13, "So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'Thou art a God of seeing'; for she said, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?'" Well, no, she hasn't; I mean, that's impossible -- anybody that looked on God would die, you remember and that is the fact of life. So who had she seen; because she said, "Have I really seen God (with a capital 'G') and remained alive after seeing him?" Of course, there's only one she could have seen. You can see that in John 1:18, it's that dear person himself, "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." That's who the angel of the Lord was. That's the only thing that makes sense of all that passage there; it was Jesus who came to her like he came to Mary Magdalene on resurrection day, and as he comes to you, when you are afflicted. He comes to you and speaks to you himself. Then in verse 15, "And Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram."

In your own life, trust the Father; you don't need to use your own resources to help God out. Trust what God has told you and wait upon him and wait for it. Do what he tells you and don't try to help him. Often he is saying, "Don't help me -- just trust me; I do not need your help. I can bring these things about by my own power, but I do need you to do what I tell you to do. I need you to live in deep trust and peace of heart with me in every situation that you come into this coming week, and you will have many of them. You will have different situations this week at work and at home and at school and God is looking to see a heart of peace. That's what gives him joy. I pray that you will give him that joy because he is a dear Father, he owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and he has no intent of letting you down.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, you really know that deep down in our hearts, we have seen these dear men like Abraham over years and centuries, constantly finding that you were truthful and that you kept your promises.

Father, we follow this man, Abram, he is now eighty-six years of age and you still are lovingly working everything into the plan that you have for his life. And Father, we know what came about, so Lord; we know that you knew that this was going to happen all the time. And then, Father, we realize that you can read the book of our lives and you can see that you have already brought it all about. That's what Jesus meant when he said it's finished; everything is done that needs to be done in our lives. We have no need to live in fear of the future or apprehension of next week or worry about our marriage or be in trouble about our insurance policies.

Father, you are our Father. You will direct us faithfully what to do and we can depend upon you for guidance and for power to fulfill your guidance. Lord, we thank you for that.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and throughout the coming week. Amen.