

The Pattern of Abraham



You and Your Household (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

I began my talk yesterday with three important pieces of advice for all of you who face this kind of situation. First, never let the devil use this means to rob you of the joy of your salvation. As long as you maintain that joy, you're a continuing challenge and testimony to the other members of your family.

Second, do not give way to discouragement. Remember, discouragement never comes from the Holy Spirit. He is not the discourager, He is the Encouager.

Third, when everything around you seems to give way, turn to the one great unfailing source on encouragement, the Scriptures. Let me remind you of the words I read yesterday from Romans 15:4:

> "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

That's a marvelous thought. Everything that was written in the Bible was written to encourage us.

Out of this source of encouragement, yesterday, we looked at the example of three men, each of whom enjoyed a salvation that included his entire family: the Philippian jailer in Acts chapter 16, Noah, and Joshua.

According to the divine order established in Scripture, a father has the privilege to choose salvation for his whole household. However, this wonderful privilege is accompanied, as always, by the most solemn responsibilities. Generally speaking, the greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility that goes with it. And certainly that's true in this case of the father's privilege of choosing salvation for himself and his household.

In my talk today I'm going to illustrate both the privileges and the responsibilities, from the pattern of Abraham, the father of all who believe. Bear that in mind, Abraham is called, in Romans chapter 4, the father of all who believe and he's set forth as a pattern for all believers that we should walk in the

steps of his faith. I'm going to turn now to an important incident in the life of Abraham recorded in Genesis 18:17-19. The background of this incident is that the Lord, with two angels, had visited Abraham in his home, had been entertained as a guest there, had given Abraham the promise of an heir through Sarah, and then the Lord and the angels were moving on to a city called Sodom, one of the wicked cities of the plain, in order to access whether Sodom was ripe for judgment as it seemed it was. And as the Lord was about to move on He said this:

> "And the Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.'"

There are certain points in that passage that are important for us to note. First of all, the Lord said, "Should I hide from Abrahama what I am going to do?" Elsewhere in Scripture Abraham is called "the friend of God." And one of the marks of friendship is we share our secrets with our friends. And so Abraham was on such terms with the Lord, that the Lord wanted to share His secrets and His plans with Abraham. That's a beautiful relationship.

And then the Lord revealed that it was His purpose that Abraham would develop into a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The Lord had sought all over the earth for a man whom he could make the ancestor of this great and mighty nation through which all other nations would be blessed. And then the Lord shows why He chose Abraham for this particular privilege and task. He says in verse 19, "For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice." Now where this translation says, "For I have chosen him" the Hebrew says literally, "I have known him." And I would rather stick to that. In other words, "I know Abraham's character, I've seen into the innermost depth of his personality, and I know that I can trust him to do what's needed for him to qualify for this blessing that I've promised him." You see, God promised him the blessing, but He promised it to him because He knew Abraham's character and He knew that Abraham would fulfill the requirements for the blessing.

Now what was it that He'd seen in Abraham that caused Him to choose him for this special privilege and honor, above all the other men of his generation? This is what He says, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; [then He adds] in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

What was God looking for in Abraham? He was looking for a father who would lay down the requirements of God for his family, and see that his family walked faithfully and obediently in the way of the Lord. There's one word that's used there that isn't a popular word today, "I know him that he will command his children and his household…" There are times when a father has to command, when he has to lay down the law and say, "This is how it will be in our family because we want the blessing of the Lord, because I want to be able to bring all the members of my family into this salvation of God."

So you see the privilege and the responsibility with Abraham went side by side. The privilege was to become the father of God's people on earth. The responsibility was to command his children and his household and to see that they walked in the way of the Lord. And the promise to Abraham was contingent upon his fulfilling this condition. And of course, as I've said already, Abraham is the father of all believers and a pattern to all of us. In other words, if we will meet God's requirements as Abraham did, then the same blessing is promised to us as was promised to Abraham.

Now I want to look at some other passages from the Old Testament which illustrate this principle, the principle that a father has the privilege of bringing his family into the salvation of God, but that with that privilege there goes the tremendous responsibility to train and instruct and discipline his family in the way of the Lord. This principle really runs all through the Bible. We will just glance at a few examples. First of all in Deuteronomy 11:18-21. Moses is instructing Israel on how they are to conduct themselves in the Promised Land and he says:

> "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the

> heavens are above the earth."

What was the requirement? The requirement was that the fathers would faithfully teach their children the Word of the Lord, the counsel of God in all ways, in all situations. And the promise was that their days would be like the days of heaven upon earth. So there's both the privilege and the responsibility side by side. And then in Psalm 112:1-2:

> "Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands. His children will be mighty in the land; each generation of the upright will be blessed."

What's the privilege? That this man's children will be mighty and each successive generation of this man's descendants will be blessed. What a tremendous privilege. But what's the responsibility? The man must fear the Lord and he must find great delight in the Lord's commands, and he must teach his children the commands in which he himself delights.

And then another verse a little further on in the Psalms, Psalm 128:1, 3-4:

> "How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. [Notice, it's everyone who fears the Lord. Then come the promises.] Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord."

What's the great requirement there? A man who fears the Lord and keeps his ways will be able to transmit that blessing to his wife and his children. and then a general word of instruction in the book of Proverbs. And there are many such instructions in the book of Proverbs. But I'll just take this one verse, Proverbs 22:6:

> "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."

That's the responsibility of the father, primarily, also, of course, jointly of the mother. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." You see, in all these Scriptures, the essential condition is that the Word of God is taught, exemplified, lived out, inculcated in every aspect of the family life. That's the responsibility. The privilege is the whole family will be blessed. The father will be able to bring his entire household into all the salvation blessings of the Lord.



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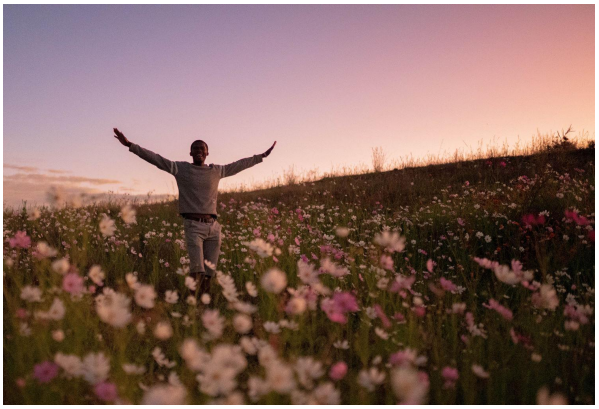

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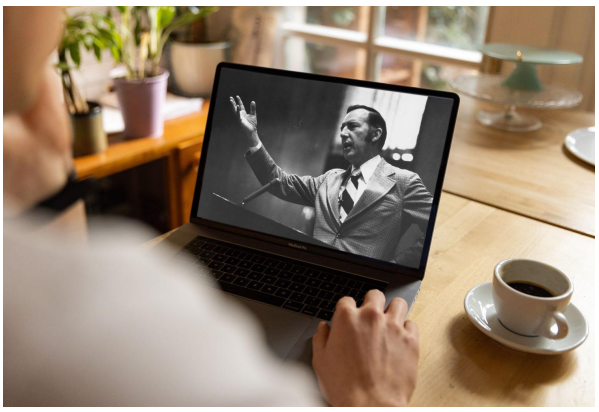

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