

The Call within a Call' (Gen 12:1-3)



1. God's Three-Fold Blessing on Abraham

God's call on Abraham can be encapsulated in His three-fold blessings on Abraham. This call required Abraham to leave everything behind that was familiar and comfortable, and follow God's call to a land He **will** show him! (Gen 12:1-3)

- a. God will bless Abraham and make his name great (Abraham).
- b. God will make a great nation out of Abraham (Abraham's descendants).
- c. God will make Abraham a source of His blessing to the nations (i.e., a vehicle of God's blessing to the earth).

Question: Is this the highest of God's call on Abraham?

2. God's Hidden Agenda

Did God have a 'hidden agenda' when He called Abraham? (What was in it for God?)

- a. This hidden calling was so sacred, so holy, that it is not stated outright at the beginning of Abraham's journey. It could only unfold in time if Abraham walked with God in ever-increasing intimacy. God was seeking friendship among men! Not among angels, cherubim, seraphim! This is the highest call of all!
- b. In the end, God did get out of Abraham what He was after! 'A friend of God.' Abraham was the only person in the Old Testament to be called God's friend! It is one thing for me to say I am a friend of God. It is another thing for God to say, 'Abraham is My friend.'
- c. 2 Chr 20:9 – 'Abraham, Your friend forever.'

Is 41:8 – God's covenant faithfulness to Israel, the children of Abraham God's friend!

James 2:23 – Abraham's righteousness before God opened the way for something deeper – friendship with God!

3. How about in the New Testament in Jesus' Ministry?

- a. Mark 3:13-19 – The Twelve Apostles were chosen as sent ones to reproduce the ministry of Jesus:
(1) preach, (2) heal, (3) cast out demons.
- b. However, even before being 'sent out,' the Twelve were chosen 'to be with Jesus' in a veiled invitation to friends of the Lord Jesus. The 'relational call' to be with Jesus was hidden within the 'functional call' to preach, heal, and cast out demons.
- c. Jesus didn't entrust himself to anyone at the beginning of His ministry. He knew what was in them, including the Twelve. '*Friendship of Jesus was not yet on offer.*' (John 2:24-25). However, near the end of His ministry on earth, Jesus invites the Twelve apostles into the circle of His personal 'friendship' (John 15:15). What changed?

The disciples' insecurity, ambition, and hidden agendas gave way to 'deep love' for Jesus. Now Jesus was ready to face the cross. He invites the Twelve into personal friendship with Him, then Jesus introduces to them His 'best friend' - the Holy Spirit! But not before.

- d. **Illustration:** If you are the owner of a large corporation, everyone will be nice to you because you are powerful. But you are actually looking for true friends, but you will not tell anyone. You will observe carefully. Some people would be gifted and work hard to prove themselves, but not very many would actually aim at a personal relationship with you. They would mostly aim at promotion.

In time a few may rise to become *more than a great employee or worker, and be your personal friend.* Character, honesty, and trust develop over time slowly. It will be foolish to rush this process. It takes time you spend together. You know that *deep friendship is developed when you can give yourself to your friend and not withhold anything from him!*

4. The Unfolding of Abraham's Call

God's 'call within the call' unfolds in Abraham's life very slowly over his entire life's journey through victory, failures, setbacks, frustration, and years of waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises.

- a. Abraham's journey of faith started in Gen 12:1-3. Abraham's frustration and pain are evident in Gen 15:1 when God says to Abraham, *'Do not be afraid Abraham. I am your exceedingly great reward.'* This is the first hint of an invitation to a personal friendship with God. Abraham doesn't yet understand this and he replies, *'Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless...'* (Gen 15:2)
- b. Throughout his life, Abraham built four altars (places of worship). Each altar was a breakthrough in Abraham's walk with God to a higher walk. Each altar represented the cross and death to self.
 - (i) Trust and obedience at Bethel/Ai (Gen 12:8), failure and restoration at Bethel/Ai (Gen 13:4) – came after the loss of Abraham's homeland.
 - (ii) Separation and dependence on God, and revelation at Hebron (Gen 13:18) – came after the loss of Abraham's nephew, Lot (lit. veil).
 - (iii) God's comfort by granting peace and favour with Abimelech at Beersheba (Gen 21:33) – came after the loss of Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar.
 - (iv) Total surrender and worship at Moriah/Zion (Gen 22:9).
- c. Abraham's greatest breakthrough came toward the end of his life in Gen 22. It is the final altar Abraham built for God when God called him to sacrifice Isaac – Abraham's joy and laughter, his sunshine. Isaac was the culmination of Abraham's faith in God and it took 25 years to receive him.
- d. The word 'worship' appears first in Gen 22:5. It is the total giving of ourselves to God without any reservation. It required 3 days-journey for Abraham. He could have turned back any time. But Abraham journeyed on to Mt Moriah (v4).
- e. Abraham and Isaac walk together with 'wood' on Isaac's back, and the fire and knife in Abraham's hand (v6). Abraham says to the servants, 'We will come back to you' (v5). He had faith and trust in the character of God. *'By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac...concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.'* (Heb 11:17-19). Abraham knew God personally and therefore he had unshakable faith that obedience to God's voice never leads to darkness, defeat, and death, but always leads to resurrection life – because God is life.
- f. Abraham laid the wood he split in the morning on Isaac's back as they go. Note the affection between the father and the son, *'My father'* and *'Here I am, my son.'* (22:7-8). *'Look, the fire, and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?'* *'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.'* Then they walked on without further words. What were they thinking inside? Can you hear Abraham's heart breaking?
- g. Gen 22 shows the 'wounded heart' of the Father. (C.f. Luke 15:11-32). When Abraham and Isaac were going up Mt Moriah with wood on Isaac's back, what did the Father see looking down from heaven? (C.f. Rev 13:8). When Abraham was taking his son Isaac to the altar at Mt Moriah, whose heart was breaking in heaven? Whose breaking heart was Abraham sharing? Whose heart was Abraham ministering to?

From this point, God calls Abraham 'My friend forever.'

5. Prophetic Word – Psalm 24:1-6

- a. Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? (Ps 24:3) Abraham's final destination in his journey of faith toward God was Mt Moriah, 'the Holy of holies.' It is the heavenly Zion and the throne of God (Heb 12:22-24). Admission to this place requires holy character! But who can qualify? No one on their own merit. *'This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face.'* (Ps. 24:6)
- b. Why 'Generation of Jacob'? Jacob is the last of the patriarchs. He was particularly full of moral imperfection, and a deceiver and a supplanter by name. Jacob had two natures within him – Jacob and

Israel. Yet out of that mighty struggle, Jacob's faith, his 'desire for God's highest' won over his fleshly nature and he became 'prince with God'!

At the end time, a 'generation of Jacob' will seek God's face! Note Jacob's trouble (Jer 30:7). Can you see a 'limping generation of Jacobs' journeying up the holy hill of Zion? Just as Jacob limped after his encounter with God as at Jabbok river? What happens next? The glory of God breaks into our land! (c.f. Ps. 24:7-10)

- c. 'Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.' (Ps 50:5) At the end of time, God is separating the godly and the wicked. *'If I were hungry, I would not tell you.'* God is not hungry for religious rituals. Then what is He hungry for? *'Gathering of God's true saints who walk with Him on earth.'* True worshippers. Or dare I say, *'True friends of God!'* *God is raising up a generation of godly ones who will walk with God like Enoch walked with God.*