



WHO TODAY INHERITS ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL BLESSING?

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Abraham, a man of God, once lived in the city of Ur in the land of the Chaldeans in Southern Mesopotamia (**Genesis 15:7**). He was formally named Abram. He married his half sister Sarai (**Genesis 20:11-13**), and for years they were childless (**15:2**). Because Abram was a man of faith, God found him worthy for the world to be blessed through him—he was faithful, despite living among an adulterous generation.



*Now the LORD had said to Abram, "Get out of your country, from your family And from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (**Genesis 12:1-3**).*

Abram by faith obliges, and he sets off principally with his wife Sarai and nephew Lot and with their possessions (**12:5**) without knowing where he is going (**Hebrews 11:8**). His faith in Jehovah is accounted to him for righteousness (**Genesis 15:6**). God, then, changes the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah respectively, teaching us the importance of using Bible names for Bible things. In confirming His covenant with Abraham, God says:

*No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations... God also said to Abraham, "as for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her" (**Genesis 17:5, 15-16**).*

A lapse in faith, patience, and long-suffering causes Sarah to have Abraham lie with Hagar, their Egyptian slave; and Ishmael is born. The

everlasting covenant that would carry spiritual blessings, however, would be through the seed of Isaac (**Genesis 17:19-21**).

THE PROMISE IN PROGRESS

1. Abraham becomes rich soon after his call (**Genesis 13:2; 24:34-35**); many more blessings follow.
2. Blessings of land, great nations, etc., come through both Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael's descendants become the Arabs while Isaac's descendants become the Israelites. Repeatedly, God confirms the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob lineage blessings to them; for example, He speaks to Israel through Moses (**Exodus 6:2-4, 8**).
3. God punishes Gentile nations that persecute the nation of Israel; example: Amalek (**1 Samuel 15:2-3**).
4. God blesses those that do good to Israel; example: Egypt during Joseph's time (**Genesis 39:4-5**). They are punished when they mistreat the Israelites after Joseph (**Genesis 7-12**).
5. The people to whom the everlasting covenant is promised and to whom God says, "I will be their God" and "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" is through Israel.

After Abraham, Isaac receives the blessing (**Genesis 26:2-5**). After Isaac, Jacob receives the blessing (**Genesis 28:4, 13-15**). After Jacob, it is said of Judah, the priestly tribe, "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his" (**Genesis 49:10**). This prophecy undoubtedly points to Jesus (**Genesis 3:15**). "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him" (**Deuteronomy 18:15**). Jesus is that prophet.

Israel worships under the Law until Jesus, to whom the scepter belongs, comes (**Genesis 49:10; Galatians 3:23-25**):

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only

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begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:14-16).

The New Testament eliminates Ishmael's lineage. "Now to Abraham and to his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed, who is Christ' (Galatians 3:16). We also read, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

All who put their faith in Christ (John 14:1), repent of their sins (Acts 17:30-31), confess Christ as the Son of God (John 20:31; Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized (Matthew 28:18-20) inherit the blessings of Abraham (Galatians 3:14, 26-29). "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (verse 29). Those who belong to Christ are in the undenominational Church of Christ (Matthew 16:16-19; Romans 16:16-18).

LOVING OTHERS

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Some of Paul's greatest counsel to Christians comes when he writes to the Colossian brethren, addressing them as the elect of God and instructing them to "... put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:12-14).



Many renowned authors have written pages, chapters, and even entire books expounding upon each of these character traits individually. And rightfully so, as we understand how each trait exemplifies the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In transforming our own lives to reflect these holy attributes, however, it is important that we place the most emphasis on the one the inspired Apostle Paul denotes as being "above all"—and that is the characteristic of *love* (in the Greek, *Agapao*—to love, esteem, and display good will towards others).

Paul gives his reasoning for esteeming love above all, and that is it is the "bond of perfection." The word perfection (in the Greek, *teleiotes*), as used here, means *completeness*. With that understanding, this phrase implies great importance that is often underestimated.

Brotherly love is described here by Paul as the adhesive ingredient that holds the church of Jesus Christ intact so it can fulfill its earthly mission of spreading the gospel. This love towards brothers and sisters should be established in the hearts of Christians at conversion and serve as the foundation, or root, from which these other noble attributes will flow.

It is paramount that we continue to preach this message from Paul today as the brotherhood of the church is plagued with many sources of strife and dissension. In our fallen world, there will always be attempts of intrusion into the walls of peace and unity surrounding the church by liberal ideas, unprecedented circumstances, and unaccountable sin.

While confrontation is sometimes necessary in these situations to restore the sanctity of the Church of Christ, our words and actions should flow from sincere love and concern for fellow Christians, rather than from selfish ambitions or the enjoyment of proving somebody wrong. This spirit is the way Jesus intended His kingdom to operate (1 Peter 3:8-9).

A powerful word that helps us evaluate our exemplification of love as a Christian is "*how*." *How* do we listen to and answer others? Hopefully, we do so with grace, seasoning our words with salt (Colossians 4:6). *How* do we handle disagreements with others? Do we disagree with arrogance and disdain towards opposing viewpoints or with love and understanding towards brethren who may be misguided (Romans 10:1-4)? Here's a big one for preachers and public speakers: *How* do you, as a preacher, deliver sermons?

To address this question quite frankly, a member of the Lord's church should never have to fear inviting someone to hear a gospel preacher because of the preacher's sarcasm and cold-hearted attitude. It is true that God's word instructs us to be accountable and to address problems of sin when they arise. In addition, it also instructs us on *how* to do so. We should never approach the sins of others with an attitude of haughtiness and self-righteousness—rather, it should be with compassion and empathy while remembering our own sins as well (John 8:7; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

There's an old saying that still rings true. "Love restores reason—not the other way around."

Let us always attempt to restore reason, regain unity, and rid the church of bitter feelings and divisive rhetoric by approaching and receiving one another in the spirit of brotherly love. "Honor all people. **Love the brotherhood.** Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17).



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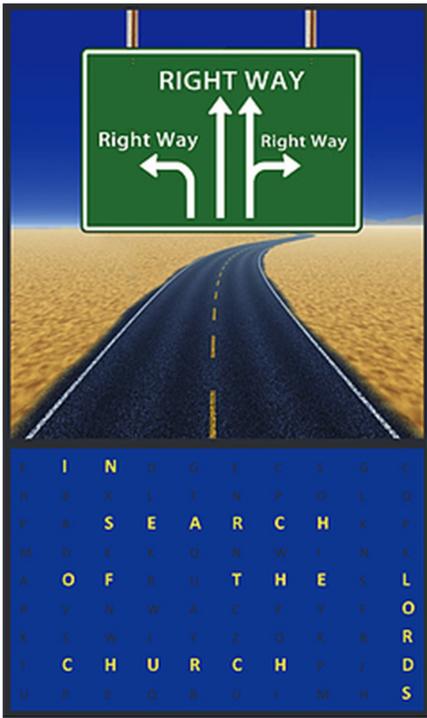
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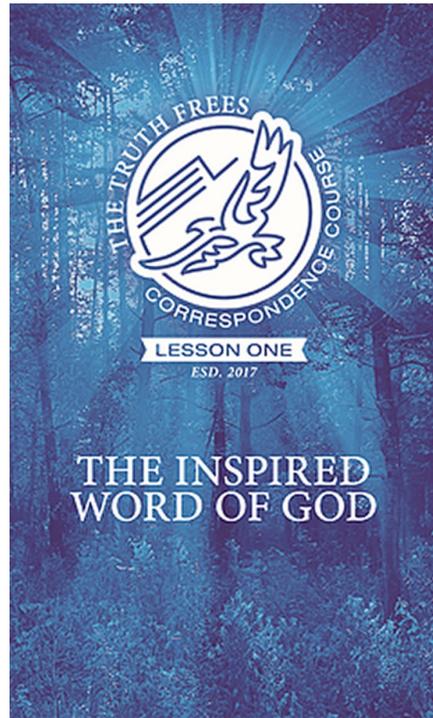
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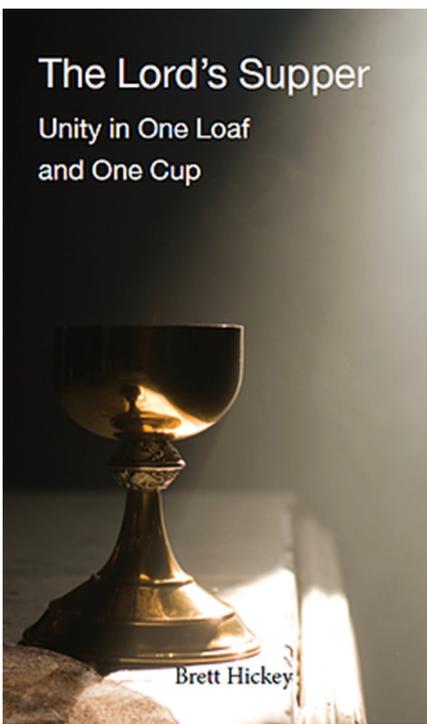
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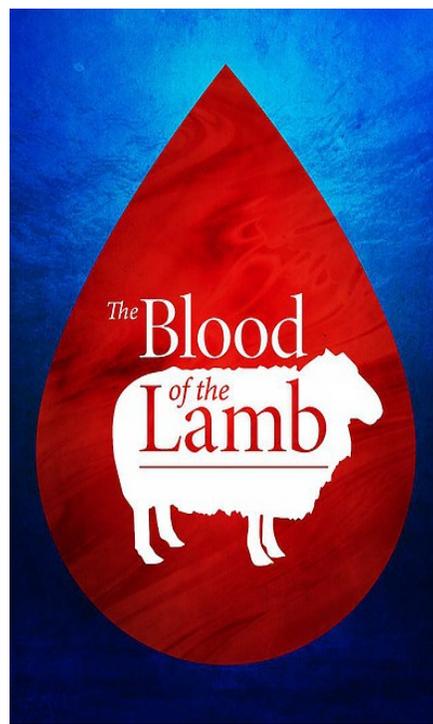
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