



An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham

Introduction: 1. We're continuing our NEW series: **An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham**

- we made the point last week that this study isn't really so much about Abraham as it is the GOD of Abraham
- even in today's study, we'll see the hand of God at work through the failures of Abraham
- Next week we'll study Genesis 13: *Choices Have Consequences* – Abram and Lot separate; Abram manages God's blessings

2. I want to take a few moments and briefly review our study last week: *The Foundation of Our Faith*

- Gen. 1-12 emphasizes the foundation of . . .

I. God's Sovereign Plan

A. In Creation: God created man in His image and likeness – Gen. 1:26

B. The Fall: God makes a promised that the seed of the woman would 'bruise the head of the serpent' – Gen. 3:15

- > it's this promised 'seed' that we track through the Scriptures till the birth of Christ, the life of Christ, the death of Christ, and ultimately the RESURRECTION!

C. The Flood: God demonstrates His Holiness through wrath, and His Grace through the Ark and finding favor with Noah and sparing his family– Gen. 6 – 8

D. The Noahic Covenant: God promised to never destroy the earth again with water – Gen. 9—10

E. The Rebellion: God scatters man in spite of their rebellion – Gen 11:1-9

- Lesson: * When we try to make a name for ourselves and rebel against God, He ensures that we get a name—the name "confusion!" [def. of Babel]

F. The Seed: God allows Abram's wife, Sarai, to be barren (no 'seed') – Gen. 11:30

- In the midst of this effective metaphor for *hopelessness* – God reveals Himself to Abram and makes a promise in chp. 12 and reveals

II. God Gracious Choice – Gen. 12:1-3

"Now the Lord said to Abram" – this ancient near eastern nomad sheik whose original home was in the current area situated around Iraq (Gen 11 & the tower of Babel episode)

- Abram was the head of a tribal group of people bound together by family ties and gaining their living by their flocks of livestock (Gen 13:2).
 - > They carried their possession & acquired servants wherever they traveled – they traveled around to find grazing pastures for their livestock
 - > Many time these tribal groups wielded significant power/influence as they grew in wealth

- Nomads owned no property – yet God, in His grace, promised land to Abram

B. The radical nature of God's commands and promises to Abraham

> In the chaos of mankind (and the effects of the curse of sin), God reaches down to start bringing order to the mess by working in one man whom He chose!

Commands: *Go forth* [leave the area, family, etc. where he lived] and . . . *be a blessing*

Promises:

#1: I will make of you a great nation [seed]

#2: I will bless you and make your name great

#3: I will give this land

C. The Expectation God had of Abraham: Faith and Action – and that's what Abram did

> that's what God expects US to do – have FAITH and ACT on that faith – which in reality, you can't really say you have FAITH if you don't ACT on that FAITH!

III. God's Servant Responds in Faith– Gen. 12:4-9

> FAITH = believing that God KNOWS something we don't know and God can DO something that we can't do!

A. Faith leads us to obedience—Gen. 12:4 *So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him*

> without full knowledge of how God was going to accomplish this.

B. Faith leads to worship – Gen. 12:7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord . . .

Lesson: *What you do at the altar of TODAY impacts the altar of TOMORROW!

C. Faith leads to dependence – Genesis 12:8-9

- v. 8, Abram calls upon the name of the Lord = reference to their view of God – to a Jew, a name is very significant

> And God used Him to bring blessing to all of creation ultimately through Christ.

3. In all of this, we see Abraham's “adventure” or “journey” of maturing faith.

4. Today our focus is on Genesis 12:10-20 [please turn]—*When Gods People Blow It*

* **This passages emphasizes several things about Abraham (things we need to learn) and about the God of Abraham!**

❖ **Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

I. Circumstances Provide an Opportunity to Exercise Faith in God – Gen. 12:10 [READ]

Gen. 12:10. Now there was a famine in the land (Abraham discovers that the *promised* land can also quickly become a *famine* land!); **so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land** (As a nomad, this is not unusual. He would travel along the routes where his livestock could graze. This action sets up a pattern in the OT in which God uses other nations to either “save” or “discipline” [i.e. teaching them about His holiness, wrath, justice, righteousness, etc.] his people. In this case it is both!).

- this wasn't the last famine that would hit this area:

- ❖ **Genesis 26:1** Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham (referring to Gen. 12). So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

Note: There were famines during the time of Ruth (Ruth 1:1), David (2 Sam. 21:1); Elisha (2 Kings 4:38)

- remember last week, the major points were the Sovereignty of God, the Grace of God, and the FAITH of that we need to exercise in God
- so, God in His sovereignty allowed the curse of sin to advance to the point of a famine –
 - > Q: *For what purpose?* To bring glory to His name as people depend on Him and trust Him through it all, and to teach His man some lessons about life
 - > when people die, it is evidence that God's word is true ("don't eat of the tree . . . for the day you eat, you will surely die" – Gen. 2:17)

Point: The effects of the curse of sin on creation brings *chaos* into the picture *again* – yet God's plan is still in motion – He's in control!

Lesson: * **Behind of the scenes of every circumstance is an occasion to bring glory to God!**

- > it just depends on how you RESPOND to those circumstances – with faith or with doubt? With hope or discouragement? With obedience or rebellion?

Input: What opportunities/circumstances have you faced where you were able to bring glory to God . . . or you blew it, and had to ask forgiveness?

- if we don't see God in the trial // circumstance // opportunity then we're going to see how . . .

II. Wrong Thinking Leads to Wrong Actions – 12:11-13

- that's exactly what happened in Abraham's life – his wrong *thinking* led to wrong choices

Gen. 12:11. It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife (Sarai = princess – later her name would be changed to Sarah = noble woman), **"See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman** (that was his evaluation of her, we'll see a few verses later, that Abraham wasn't the only person who thought she was beautiful);

[this is where Abram's wrong thinking enters into the picture – he becomes selfish and self-centered] **12. and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."**

- Remember God's promise was that Abraham would be a great nation: Abraham lived with barren Sara for probably 60 years!
 - > Abraham's thinking: *she could not be the means* through which God would make him a great nation (cf. his thinking in 15:3)
 - > . . . so it must be through "ME" – Abraham's perspective is drastically narrow!
- To Abraham, Sarah is somewhat "dispensable" at this point – so he allows Sarah to be given as a wife to Pharaoh. Meanwhile he preserves his own life.

Note: We see Abraham's commendable faith in trying to believe the promise of God; yet, he takes matters into his own hands as to HOW he envisions God's promises being fulfilled. He is manifesting the behavior of: *"Lord I believe, help my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:24)]

- this action proves the point of :

❖ **Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is.**

- this was an opportunity for Abraham to demonstrate his faith in God – and He blew it!

Lesson: * His wrong theology (understanding of Who God is and what He can do) produced a fear in his heart that led to non-glorifying choices/conduct!

- Ironically, as God is in the process of *saving* Abraham's life from the famine by his trip to Egypt, Abraham does not see God in all this and will view the power of Pharaoh to take his life greater than the power of God to save his life.

Bottom Line: He feared man more than he feared God – and he put more stock in his own thinking than giving God the benefit of the doubt and trusting Him to work out the details!

> our responsibility is to do the RIGHT thing, not the EASY thing!

- God, as He usually does (Rom. 8:28) is using this situation to mature Abraham's faith

- Remember, Abraham is on the journey of faith // along the way, as Abraham walks with God, he experiences many failures [like you and me!]

> Yet, God uses these failures as 'stepping stones' to teach Abraham and to mature his faith!

[LOOK INTO THE FUTURE: By Gen 22, Abraham is mature in faith. When Abraham is confronted with a seemingly impossible command of God in Gen 22, Abraham is no longer limited in his perspective of God's power and abilities. He would come to believe through the adventure of faith that God could even raise somebody from the dead to fulfill His promises—Heb 11:19.

❖ **Hebrews 11:19 He [Abraham] considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.**

Lesson: * We're on an adventure of faith – a maturing faith!

> just like the Jesus' disciples in the NT – they were on the same spiritual journey—a *maturing of faith*. God works the same way in us today! We should not be surprised!]

III. Sometimes God Blesses in Spite of Our Faith, Not Because of It

Gen. 12:14. It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15. Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house (This is highly ironic that out of all the Egyptian women available in the Egyptian Empire, that the leader of Egypt would want Sarah! You have to tie this back to v. 12 – basically, Abraham was right – she was *beautiful*! And it was the custom of the culture to see a woman and take her into one's house – multiple wives was a common thing, but not a *godly* thing – cf. Gen. 2:23-24!

- now you might expect the next verse to read something like . . . “AND GOD JUDGED ABRAHAM FOR PUTTING HIS WIFE IN THAT SITUATION!”

Gen. 12:16. Therefore he [Pharaoh] treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels. (The wealth of a nation is being brought to Abraham. God is blessing Abraham despite his narrow view of God.

Lesson: * This is a testimony to God's faithfulness, not Abraham's!

IV. God Exposes Our Lack of Faith – Gen. 12:17 - 20

- here is yet another attempt at man to work things out on his own – RESULT: Chaos!

A. Our faith (or lack of it) Impacts Others: Example: Pharaoh & his house

Gen. 12:17 But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

- A narrow view of God results in hurt to others (Sarah – imagine what she was thinking right about now, and Pharaoh's house)

Gen. 12:18 Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 "Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go."
(God knew precisely how He intended to fulfill His promises to Abraham, and that was through Sarah's barrenness. Abraham does not get it at this point. However, despite this, God was not going to let Abraham's narrow view deter His plan. Therefore He "forces" Sarah back to Abraham at the urging of the plague stricken Pharaoh)

- we don't need to take a lot of time and talk about '*plagues*'

> notice the 's' – that means multiple plagues – all sorts of plagues ranging from leprosy to any type of disease or disaster – remember the 10 plagues of Egypt!

B. Integrity triumphed over unbelief

Gen. 12:20 Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him. (Notice that Pharaoh could have killed Abraham for his deception. But Pharaoh sent him out with all his possessions and wealth gained in Egypt.)

- here is a pagan acting with more integrity than the one who believes in God!

C. God teaches Abraham a few 'lessons' of faith

- ✓ God is faithful even when we are not
- ✓ God is sovereign in His plan and controls the power of blessing and cursing
- ✓ God meets us in the state of our imperfect knowledge of Him and immature faith in Him and takes us on the journey of *maturing* faith.
- ✓ God is to be feared, not man
- ✓ God has plans beyond what we can conceive of right now—Believe Him!!
- ✓ God loves us enough to discipline us to mature us! Do not resist His discipline! (cf. Hebrews 12)

Lesson: * God is GRACIOUS (giving us what we *DO NOT* deserve) and MERCIFUL (withholding what we *DO* deserve).

Conclusion:

1. Abraham ultimately gained a greater knowledge about God, and he gained experiential glimpses of how God could do what He said He would do in Gen 12:1-7.

Example: Gen. 18:14 – God has to ask Abraham a question:

❖ **Genesis 18:14** "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

2. With that new knowledge and expanded view of God, Abraham goes back up to the promise land and worships again....He responds rightly in faith/belief/worship!

Cf. Gen. 13-1-4 – esp. v. 4

- ❖ Genesis 13: 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Study Notes
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Lesson: * His wrong theology (understanding of Who God is and what He can do) produced a fear in his heart that led to _____ choices/conduct!

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B. _____ triumphed over _____

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3. Lesson(s) for you:

