

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM, PART 1

~ WHEN A BLESSING BECOMES A CURSE ~

The following study is based on *Hebrews 11:8-10*, “8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

In order for us to understand these few verses, we must go back to the story itself in Genesis when God first came to Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-4

1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

When God first comes to Abraham, it is not apparent that He makes it clear where Abraham should go. However we know that at least God pushed him in a certain direction. God just simply said in verse 1 “unto a land that I will shew thee.” Let’s keep reading.

Genesis 12:5-6

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. 6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

Today as we read this, we know that Canaan was the land of promise that was to be given to Abraham and his descendants, but at the time when Abraham first arrived there, he was not aware that this was the promised land. It was only after this that God revealed this to Abraham.

1. How do we know that God had not revealed it to Abraham yet?

- **Genesis 12:7**
And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.
- So it is only 7 verses later after God first comes to Abraham that He makes it known to him what would be the land of promise - it would be the land of Canaan. Abraham has no clue at the very beginning. God tells Abraham to leave and Abraham simply says "OK God." And so Abraham begins to pack up all his belongings from his house in the land of Haran. And over time, his friends notice what he's doing and so they stop by for a visit. You can imagine how the conversation goes:
 - Friends: So Abraham, what are you doing?
 - Abraham: I'm packing up all my things to leave.
 - Friends: To leave? Why? Where are you doing?
 - Abraham: God told me to leave. He told me He's going to show me land that I will inherit and call mine one day.
 - Friends: Ok... So where are you going?
- What would be Abraham's response to that question? Where are you going Abraham?
 - Abraham: I don't know. All I know is God told me go, so I'm going. He told me that He was going to bless me and that through me I would be a blessing to the whole world.

2. **What would you be thinking at this point if you were Abraham's friend?**

- Are you sure that God was the one to tell you to leave?
- Are you sure God would tell you to go somewhere and not let you know exactly where?
- If you're his friend, you're probably thinking that Abraham has gone crazy isn't it?
- Seems weird doesn't it? But God really did operate that way. He asked Abraham to leave his home and He didn't tell him where to go. And moreover, when his friends asked him where, he was at a loss to explain the where. Remember, faith is really that radical sometimes. Faith must make us to depend on the word of God and the word of God ALONE! - Romans 10:17.

When God came to Abraham at the beginning of Genesis 12, there are three parts to all that God says:

1. A command.
2. A promise.
3. A blessing.

What was the command? Leave your country, your family, your father's house.

What was the promise? I will make of you a great nation and make your name great.

What was the blessing? I will bless you, and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

God didn't just ask Abraham to obey without any reason. God gave that command and also gave the reason why - so that he could be a blessing to the whole earth!

3. Why would God ask Abraham to leave his home, his family and his country though?

- It was a familiar surrounding. It was where his family was. It was a civilization that was much more advanced than Canaan. Haran and Ur was the place where God could probably not bless him unless he got out.
- Abraham was basically being called out to live a missionary life.
- Hebrews 11:9 says that he would dwell in tabernacles. The fact that the Bible would state such a life would probably indicate that his house in Haran was probably a much more permanent structure and they weren't living that way before he left.
- It was a downgrade. And Abraham's faith would be severely tested.
- But why leave?
 - It was a test to see if Abraham would trust God's word or not.
 - There didn't seem to be any apparent reason.
 - Abraham could have reasoned why? But we don't see that God came back with a reason why at all. But what we do read is that Abraham believed that word and acted upon it.
- How old was Abraham when God asked him to leave? Genesis 12:4 says he was 75 years old. If you are young it might be easier to leave without much thought. But Abraham was already considered an old man and settled. But yet God still asks him to pack up and leave.
- Maybe some of us have to leave our home, our place of comfort, our families before God can bless us. And it may seem to be a downgrade in life compared to what you had before. It may not make sense to everyone else why you are doing it. Sometimes you cannot explain it to others except simply that God asked you to go.
- Sometimes we want to be a blessing to everyone else and be a good witness first to them. But remember, God wants to bless us first before we can be a blessing to others. And unless we receive that blessing, we cannot be that good influence on others.
- This blessing was dependent on Abraham being obedient to the command of God - he had to leave his home country.

4. So Abraham left his country, family, and home. He fulfilled the command from God. So next we should be expecting the promise to come in fulfilment right?

- The promise was that God would make of him a great nation and make him great and bless him. But the other part of the promise was that he would also be a blessing.

- That is the reason why God wants to bless us, so that we can be a blessing to everyone else around us!

- *Genesis 12:8*

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

- A small lesson here: Abraham loved the Lord and always built an altar wherever he went and whenever he stopped and lived.
 - God was his first priority.
 - Abraham already had a deep relationship with God at this time. But that relationship would be tested.
- Let's continue reading in *Genesis 12:9-10*, "9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south. 10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land."
 - The promise was not fulfilled. He had to leave that promised country because of a famine.
 - Abraham might have been disappointed but he wasn't. He just continued to trust God and follow His guidance.

5. **Abraham had to leave the land of promise and went down to Egypt. What happened?**

- *Genesis 12:11-13*

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: 12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

- He asked Sarai to lie about her being his wife. Abraham was not ready to be the inheritor of God's promises yet. It was God that brought Abraham out of Ur, and lead him all the way to Canaan. It was God's providence to lead Abraham to Egypt and allow him to be tested in his faith and he failed.

- *Genesis 12:14-20*

14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. 15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. 17 And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. 18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? 19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I

might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. 20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

- As a result God plagued Pharaoh's house and he ended up sending Abraham away from Egypt.
- It seems that God blessed Abraham because he lied. But remember, that blessing wasn't from God. The riches were given to Abraham because Pharaoh favoured his "sister".
- Had Abraham been faithful, maybe God would have blessed him even more!
- Don't think that riches are always a blessing. Sometimes riches can become a curse. It changes our character.

6. Was the promise that God gave to him at the beginning fulfilled?

- He became great - had much substance.
- But that wasn't the whole promise.
- As a result of him being blessed did he become a blessing?
- Absolutely not!
- God plagued Pharaoh's house because of Abraham instead of blessing him!
- *Genesis 12:20*
And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.
 - Pharaoh sent Abraham away from his country because Abraham was NOT a blessing to him.
 - He gave him riches and cattle because he was trying to buy Abraham's favour at the beginning before he found out that Sarah was his wife and not his sister.
- Christian's can actually become a curse to the world instead of a blessing when we disobey and distrust God.
- We can actually make God look worse rather than good when we choose to lie and steal and cheat.

Needless to say, Abraham still had much to grow in faith.

- He had left his country, which was a great step in faith.
- But God showed him that he still had more room to grow.

This also highlights the grace of God.

- Even though we have momentary lapses in our faith, God does not cast us off.
- There is not a single perfect person on this earth.
- When you commit your life to Christ, you're not going to be perfect forever.
- Sometimes God orchestrates events to show you where you still have to grow.

- It was God that sent the famine.
- It was probably God that asked Abraham to go down to Egypt.
- And then God stood back to see what Abraham would do.

But there is something that we can learn to conclude this study about Abraham.

- *Gen 13:1-4*
1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. 2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; 4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.
- In spite of what he had done, after leaving Egypt, Abraham came back to the altar of God and called upon God.
- Many of us focus on verse 2 where it says he was very rich. But that didn't deter Abraham from his first focus.
- The first thing he probably did was confess his sin and then renewed his commitment to God at that original altar that he built.
- It was a reminder of what he had left behind and why he was here in the land of Canaan.

So here is Abraham, the father of faith as he is known for! Yet we see his mistakes and we can take comfort in them - not to excuse our own wrongdoing. But that we might know that God still loves us when we sin and make mistakes. And if we will turn back to God with our whole heart, He will heal, He will help, and He will continue the work that He has begun in each of us.