

Genesis 12:10-20 – Trials of Faith

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Trapp, Clarke, PasN, Henry, Gill, Barnes, Geneva, Calvin, Whyttock,

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: So far you have seen how Abram succeeded in spreading the odor of his faith throughout the Land of Canaan, from north to south. But even the strongest man can have challenges when he forgets that Jehovah is his Father, and gets overwhelmed by the “winds and the waves” as Peter did when walking on water. Abram was no different.

Yes, Abram was a true Patriarch族长, but there were times when he struggled with his beliefs and doubted God’s ability to keep him. What is interesting here is that God does not hide the sins of the heroes of the faith. He exposes them to show how the greatest man has sins and needs to have his sins forgiven through Jesus Christ.

Our headings are: A Trial of Hunger-Abram’s Flight, and A Trial of Truth – Abram’s Fault.

Our goals are: You would learn to daily nourish your soul with God’s promises of salvation and preservation保护 that you will fulfill all your rational duties to God and to your neighbor.

A Trial of Hunger – Abram’s Flight

10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

1. The famine 饥荒that came upon Canaan was a punishment to the wicked Canaanites, but at the same time, the famine was a trial for Abram’s faith. It was the same event, but it had two different purposes. That is not strange. There can be no doubt that the famine was controlled by God.

Psalms 107:33 He turns rivers into a wilderness, And the water springs into dry ground; 34 A fruitful land into barrenness 贫瘠地, For the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

Those who doubt God controls all things rob God of praise and frustrate themselves thinking they have to control all circumstances of their lives. Those who rest on God’s sovereignty主权 find rest.

2. Abram could not look north to the Canaanites. They would not help him. To the Canaanites, Abram was a foreigner and a worshipper of a strange God. He couldn’t look to the east, which was desert and his idolatrous崇拜偶像的 relatives. He couldn’t look to the west, which was the Mediterranean Sea. Instead of looking up to heaven, Abram looked down the road, south, to Egypt. He looked everywhere but up. He probably heard of the Nile Delta which was the first entry point into Egypt, a place known for good food...good grain and good meats. Egypt was known as the “granary 谷仓 of the world.” In fact, Egypt got its name from the black rich soil and the black waters of the Nile. (The old name was Mizraim, the 2nd son of Ham.) So instead of looking up to God and asking for help, Abram became afraid for his future and looked south. He should have known Jesus’ words.

Luke 12: 4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 "But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

With Christ in his vessel船, he should have smiled at the storm.

3. Abram’s plan was to live in Egypt temporarily (the old word is “sojourn逗留”), but that was where he got into trouble. He thought it was too difficult for God to furnish提供 a table in the desert. It is obvious that Abram didn’t read 1Peter 1:6-7. He certainly did not apply its principle.

1 Peter 1: 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved悲伤 by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

What was obvious was that Abram did not pray for help for his household but thought that he personally had to fix their troubles. He forgot the he was God’s problem now. It was up to God, his loving Father, to provide and care for him. And all he had to do was ask. Many don’t get because they don’t ask. Learn to let your Father provide for you. Don’t worry. Kids don’t. Have you ever seen a 4 year old worry about dinner?

4. Compromising had its price for Abram just like it does for many today. Some people marry a non-believer so they could immigrate to Canada. They may live and survive but usually have to compromise their spiritual values. Then they have to compromise spiritual lifestyle.

Compromising (which is from doubt) kills. Jesus illustrated what happens to the one who doubts.

Matthew 14: 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous凶猛的, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

A Trial of Truth – Abram's Fault

11 And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. 12 "Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13 "Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

1. Egyptians loved foreign women. Morality道德didn't mean as much to them as beauty. Egyptians developed things like hair-removal (for men and women) to promote beauty. They particularly loved the lighter skinned women. (Most Egyptians women were a rustic 粗野的blackish微黑的 color.) And Sarai, though over 65, kept much of her youthful beauty, keeping in mind that she did not have to suffer through child-bearing or child-rearing养育. Most mothers understand this! But the Egyptians were foolish in their love of beauty over grace, for beauty without goodness is like a gold ring in a pig's nose. Godly principles didn't matter to the Egyptians. In fact, the historian Pererius records that the Egyptians would kill in a heartbeat for a beautiful fair-skinned woman.

2. Knowing that Sarai was beautiful, Abram prepared his wife to survive in Egypt by asking her to lie to protect himself. He asked her to lie by concealing隐藏 part of the truth, for though Sarai was Abram's half sister, she was also his wife, a much closer relation.

3. And Abram, the godly sheep of God's flock, jumped in to the slough泥沼of the pigs. The good apple tree started bearing apples with worms. It was a sin – a grievous痛苦sin. Instead of risking his life to keep his wife alive, he asked his wife to risk her life to protect his. (See what happens when you take your eyes off of the Lord! See what happens when you doubt God's power and compromise!) The one who would not risk his life for the life of his wife is not worthy to have a wife. Abram became like the chameleon,变色龙who would change his colors to save his life. But men should rather die than lie, for even white lies have consequences. So consider whether you are telling your children to lie that he is younger so you get in somewhere at a cheaper price, or whether you lie to avoid shame. It is wrong and it will hurt your family. There are consequences.

14 So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. 15 The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. 16 He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

4. So after the Egyptians saw the light-skinned and beautiful Sarai, she was taken to Pharaoh. They hoped that Pharaoh would marry her later when he made sure she had no diseases. These princes were more interested in what would bring them in favor with Pharaoh, rather than what was morally right before God. And if Pharaoh didn't want her (he had the first right of rejection as king) then one of them could have her as a wife.) Now Pharaoh treated her well, and even treated her "brother" well giving him many animals. But what horrible things that could have happened here! This could have compromised the line of promise. Thank God for his sovereign (over)rule of man!

5. And consider how wrong Sarai was also. This was an unbiblical不按照《圣经》的submission屈从, and a

breaking of the 9th command. Abram bore the bigger guilt because he was the head of the covenant family, but Sarai was not an innocent bystander 旁观者. These were horrible sins of fear of man and expediency – doing what was convenient. This is like those who argue: “Let’s not go to worship so we can spend time with the lost and maybe we will get them to join us in the future.” Or “if we go to the bar and drink people will trust us.” But God not only ordains the goals, but he also ordains the means to that end. Theology and methodology are both controlled by God.

17 But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

6. The Lord plagued Pharaoh's house...not by little punishments...but by severe plagues. Aberrant pleasures often lead to deadly plagues 瘟疫. And Pharaoh's household suffered. The Jews believed they were some kind of ulcers 溃疡.

Pharaoh did not make a covenant with his eyes as Job did, but looked lustfully 好色的 at the woman. And Pharaoh's ignorance was not innocence. Though he was technically innocent of the crime, he was still considered guilty because he should have searched out who he had in his house! Aren't you responsible if you have stolen property?

18 And 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'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way." 20 So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

7. Recognizing by Divine revelation what he had done, Pharaoh challenged Abram to his lie. The pagan Pharaoh rebuked the godly Abram for his deception 欺骗...and the sin of exposing his wife to danger. And this was another part of God's sovereignty...even overruling man's sins to protect the line of promise.

Psalm 105:14 He permitted no one to do them wrong; Yes, He rebuked 责难 kings for their sakes, But look how close Abram nearly caused Pharaoh to commit adultery with a daughter of God! How severe would have been his punishment! So God wanted to humiliate Abram...like Jonah had to be rebuked by the ship's captain for running away from God.

8. Pharaoh then sent Abram away...but God prevented him from taking back the animals he gave to Abram. Pharaoh also made sure his men would not harm Abram and his family. God made Abram richer out of his promise to keep the line of promise open for Christ to come. God did not keep Abram alive because of Abram's own righteousness. Abram received what he did not earn! God over-ruled again for the good of his saints and to keep his promise!

1 Peter 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

This rich exodus 大批离去 of Abram from Egypt was a type of what would happen about 430 years later when Moses would lead God's people out in that remarkable way with great riches.

Conclusion:

You saw today that no one is above sin. Abram was a remarkable man of faith who left his family and friends and moved to a new country with many adversaries 对手 around. Abram walked from north to south, spreading the odor of faith. Today you saw him taking his eyes off of the Lord and sinking, and as he sank he pulled his wife in with him, exposing her and his whole household to disgrace, danger, death. He doubted God would provide food for him in Canaan. Then when he went to Egypt he thought that God could not protect him there. So he lied. Yet God preserved him...and even made him thrive... This clearly showed that Abram's saving was by God...God alone...by grace alone. Abram was just a receiver of grace.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: 1. The sins of the saints are written down for your admonition 告诫, not for your admiration 崇拜. And they are sins...unlike what the Moslems believe. 2. Look what happens when the head of the family sins...see how it affects the entire family. 3. Look at what happens when you abandon the place of your calling because of weak faith. 4. Look at what happens – how you can teach your children to lie or otherwise break God's law when your faith is weak...how you can drag them away from church...how you tell them that their education is more important...because you need an education to survive...instead of telling them they need to be faithful to the Lord to survive. Look at what happens. 5. You must keep your eyes on Jesus and keep drawing from him. Let his word daily strengthen your soul. Remember, he is your Lord. He is your keeper. He didn't save and then left you. He is always near. He is an ever-present help in trouble!

Finally, if you have been longing for good spiritual waters...and true spiritual bread that truly nourish your soul...only Jesus Christ has them. Ask him to nourish your soul...to remove yours sins...to make you one of his own...His body was broken and his blood was shed for you!