

Abram: When Faith Falters

Genesis 12:1-20

12 The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people & your father’s household to the land I will show you.

2 “I will make you into a great nation, & I will bless you; I will make your name great, & you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, & whoever curses you I will curse; & all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; & Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated & the people they had acquired in Harran, & they set out for the land of Canaan, & they arrived there.

6 Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram & said, “To your offspring^[c] I will give this land.” So, he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel & pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west & Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD & called on the name of the LORD.

9 Then Abram set out & continued toward the Negev.

Abram in Egypt

10 Now there was a famine in the land, & Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. ¹¹ As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. ¹³ Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake & my life will be spared because of you.”

14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. ¹⁵ And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, & she was taken into his palace. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well for her sake, & Abram acquired sheep & cattle, male & female donkeys, male & female servants, & camels.

17 But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh & his household because of Abram’s wife Sarai. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her & go!” ²⁰ Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, & they sent him on his way, with his wife & everything he had.

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Genesis 12:1-20

I. The Setting.

A. The Call

1. The call of Abram is both significant & extraordinary.
2. God tells Abram to leave his home & go to a land he doesn't know.
3. Verse 1 reads: *"Go from your country, your people & your father's household to the land I will show you."*
4. God's command to "go forth" is both emotional & geographical for Abram.
5. In leaving Ur, his country of origin, Abram abandons his home, birthplace, family, friends, the security of his father's house & even an inheritance.
6. In Hebrew, God's command here carries a weight of urgency.
7. "Go forth, go by yourself, do not hesitate- but go immediately!"
8. Abram's departure & the abandonment of his old life was abrupt.
9. Comparable this to Jesus's call to the disciples in Matt. 4:20.
10. They immediately left their nets to follow him.
11. In taking Abram out from the nations, God commissioned him & his descendants after him (the Jewish people) to be a blessing to the entire world (Gen.12:2).
12. In calling Abram away from Ur & all that he knew, God commissioned him & his descendants to "be holy" or "set apart" for his use.
13. This defines the Abrahamic calling in which the responsibility of Israel-& the Messianic Jew today-is to be a light to the nations so that salvation might spread to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6).
14. Initially, there were no Jews until God called Abram, a Hebrew, to be the physical father of the Jewish people & spiritual father of both Jews & Christians.

B. Abram Had Been Called From Ur Through Haran.

1. Abram is often held up as a poster boy for faith.
2. His obedience affected the history of the world.
3. His decision to follow God set into motion the development of the nation that God would eventually use as his own when he visited earth, himself.
4. The early stages of Abram's life show us how he almost never succeeded.
5. Abram was given a command & had a choice to make.
6. His decision was between setting out with his family & belongings for parts unknown or staying right where he was.
7. He had to decide between the security of what he already had & the uncertainty of traveling under God's direction
8. All he had to go on was God's promise to guide & bless him.
9. Abram could hardly have been expected to visualize how much of the future was resting on his decision of whether to go or stay.

10. In Acts 7:2 Stephen, in his defence, tells how *“the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham,”*
11. So, although he went out not knowing where he was going, he went out knowing well with Whom he went.
12. Think of the twofold revelation he had received.
13. A revelation of both the person & the purpose of God.
14. The conditions of God’s purpose were made clear.
15. The consequent blessing would be certain.
16. He had to leave the place he lived in & the people there, & go out alone.
17. But he almost failed.
18. Abram had made an important reservation, a “just to be on the safe side”.
19. In Genesis 12:4 we are told, *“So Abram left... & Lot went with him.”*
20. The reservation was deliberate because the terms had been clear.
21. He was to *“leave his country, his people, & his father’s house.”*
22. What was he doing, taking Lot then?
23. How often we are tempted to do exactly this.
24. This proved to be disastrous.
25. The early stages of Abram’s career were marked by muddle & misery.
26. *“The way of transgressors is hard”* says the Bible.
27. The way is made deliberately hard to turn us from it.
28. God seems to say less & less to Abram when he builds his altars.
29. Until he seems to have nothing to say at all.
30. Instead of blessing he ran into trouble with a famine on his hands.
31. We have to read on to the next chapter to see he found restoration.
32. He was given another chance.
33. There was trouble between Abram’s herdsman & Lot’s.
34. God seems to have ordered the circumstances to give Abram the chance to do what he should have done long before.
35. It was really not practical or possible for things to go on the way they were.
36. In his choice we see the saving of the whole purpose of God for this man.
37. And through this man for the whole world.
38. I wonder if God held His breath as He waited.
39. Waited to see if Abram would take the 2nd chance given to him.
40. Fortunately, Abram did take it.
41. God must have been pleased when He heard the words were spoken at last.
42. The words that God had waited to hear for so long.
43. In Genesis 13:9 we see the words: *“Let’s separate company,”*
44. Lot goes his way & Abram goes God’s way.
45. Immediately communion with God is restored.
46. Gen 13:14-18 we have what God now can say to His obedient servant.
47. *¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Look around from where you are, to the north & south, to the east & west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you & your offspring^[a] forever. ¹⁶ I will*

make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length & breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you. ¹⁸ So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD.

C. Abram Was In The Place Of God's Choosing.

1. Had settled down in Palestine when things begin to happen.
2. Famine strikes.
3. Shows that trouble can come even when we are in God's will
4. Not everything bad is punishment.
5. And so, he went on to Egypt.
6. This was a common practice in this era.
7. Though it was a debatable solution.
8. As it showed, the decision proved to be disastrous.

II. The Sin

D. Abram's Fear.

1. Attractiveness of Sarah (65 years old).
2. Cultural situation in Egypt saw beauty in older woman.
3. Abram tried to find a solution in a lie, or at least only a half-truth.
4. Risked the dissolution of God's promise.
5. Puts Sarah's honour on the line for self.
6. How often do we do the same thing? Put ourselves before others?

E. Abram's Sin.

1. His sin was simply not trusting in God's ability to keep His promises.
2. This was really a failure of faith.
3. What did Abram's sin do?
4. It grieved God.
5. Sin always grieves God (Eph. 4:30 – *Do not grieve The Holy Spirit*).
6. It cost Abram his testimony.
7. Sin always costs lost testimony.
8. God intervened to deliver Pharaoh from the consequences of the actions.
9. Pharaoh reproached him because of what he had done.
10. God intervenes to maintain His purposes.
11. This triggered a chain of events that would cost Abram a lot later on.
12. Abram's sin weakened his own faith.
13. He failed God later by doing the same thing (Gen. 20).
14. Did so a second time in spite of first experience.
15. Once sin occurs, the second time is much simpler.
16. Sinful patterns are easy to establish.
17. What was the result of Abram's sin?

