

Session 2

October 24, 2021

CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF FEAR

Genesis 12:10-13; 17-13:4

It's a shame that Abraham, our shining example of unconditional faith, so quickly tarnished himself. But that's exactly what happened in the second half of Genesis 12. Unfortunately, most of us know what that's like. So often, as soon as things get challenging, we fall back to fear and doubt. Remember: it's easy to have faith when things are going well. But it's in the difficult times that we really *need* faith. As Abraham continues his journey, we see his faith falter...and then recover. The drama is played out in three scenes.

Indiscretion (vv. 10-16). Not long after sojourning into Canaan, Abraham's newly found faith was tested. Fearing for the wellbeing of his family and household, Abraham does what any responsible head-of-the-house would do: he left the drought-stricken region that depended on seasonal rains to find food in the well-watered, fertile silt of the Nile valley. While many commentators yield to the sovereign hand of God in this drama, the emphasis is not on *God's directions*, but on *Abraham's decisions*. The altars built to worship Yahweh earlier in the chapter were apparently forgotten. Once on the road to reason, the concept of faith was forgotten as well. And somewhere along the journey, Abraham's concern for his family deteriorated into concern for saving himself. While it is true that his wife Sarah was indeed a half-sister (see Gen. 20:12), the story contrived by Abraham was one of pure self-preservation. Imagine the shallowness of a man willing to sacrifice his wife to another man's harem in order to save his own hide! Notice not only what Abraham *did* but notice what he *didn't do*: there is no altar-building on this leg of the journey; no prayer; no seeking God; no faith in the One who called him thus far. Abraham took total control, and the result was disastrous. Pharaoh gave him riches and wealth...but it cost Abraham his wife! For reflection: *Think of the plot that Abraham came up with. How many "wrongs" can you identify in Abraham's plan?*

Intervention (vv. 17-20). God is faithful to His promises, even when we are not. So to counter the reckless decisions of Abraham (that might essentially nullify the covenant promise of a son born to his wife Sarah), God intervened (v. 17). While details are few, the illnesses (literally *strikes*) that fell upon Pharaoh's household were discerned to be divine retribution. Most likely, Sarah herself was questioned and revealed the deception contrived by Abraham to keep him safe. How ironic that this pagan king had more integrity than God's chosen! Once he understood what had happened, he quickly moved to expel Abraham and all that pertained to him (v. 20). For reflection: *Do you think God was somehow "required" to rescue Abraham and Sarah from their dilemma? Why did He do it?*

Restoration (13:1-4). These four verses are brief, but descriptive. Each reveals a characteristic of Abraham's journey back to God. He had led his family "down to Egypt" (12:10). Now he was leading them back "up" (13:1). In verse 1, he *returns* to the promised land, taking with him his household and their newly acquired possessions. In verse 2, he is *enriched*. Here, the term used for rich is the word for *heavy*. While the Bible has much to say about the risks of riches, when properly managed, wealth can demonstrate God's blessings. Unfortunately, their abundant wealth would soon become a source of division (see 13:5ff). In verse 3, there is a *revisiting*, as

Abraham leads his family back deliberately “by stages” through the places they had already been. And in verse 4, there is *restoration*, as Abraham finds the site of his original altar, and once again calls upon the name of the Lord. While the language seems to indicate the altar itself was no longer standing, the living God who called him no doubt met him there. For reflection: *Can you think of ways that you “botched up” God’s plan? How did He intervene? Did you learn your lesson?*