

February 18, 2024 – Sermon Notes

“Questions About Our Trials” Genesis 12:10-20

Prel Rmks

Text ~ Title

- (5) ... they came to the land of Canaan.
- (6) Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem ... Moreh.
- (8) ... east of Bethel ... Bethel on the west and Ai on the east;
- (9) So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

Building altars ~ calling on the name of the LORD ~ public worship

(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. (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." (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. (17) But 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 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.

INTRO

We see that this great man of faith, as he would come to be known, a man the Bible would call the friend of God – is tested by God with a great trial.

There is something here for us to see and learn about the trials that come into our lives.

**Very practical: answer some questions about our trials –
5 questions: when, what, how, who, why of**

I. The ‘When’ of Our Trials 10

When do our trials occur?

(10) Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to **dwelt sojourn – in a place not your home** there, for the famine *was* severe in the land.

- Abram had obeyed God ...
- Severe famine ... Abram had to leave ... makes no sense
- Egypt – Nile River {Mississippi River Delta – fertile land!}
- Abram gets where he thought he was going – now He has to leave

Leads us to think about when trials occur in our lives.

When will trials occur?:

1. They will occur...no one is immune. {In/coming out/about to go in}
2. When we least expect it – unexpected ... suddenly ... out of nowhere
 - least “opportune”
 - {ex: Young football player at U. of California ...}
 - **1 Peter 4:12** Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;
3. When we are obeying God – following Him ...
4. When God has planned them for our lives ...
 - There are no random events or circumstances
 - God is working all things together for our good / His glory

We don’t know when they will occur, but it really shouldn’t surprise us ...

[...]

II. The ‘What’ of Our Trials 11-12

What is the nature of our trials? At a spiritual level – what makes it a trial or a test for us, spiritually?

Anybody can go through a time of difficulty, but what is it that turns that difficulty into a spiritual trial or test?

It becomes a trial or a test when we are tempted to compromise our faith or trust in God.

It becomes a trial or test when we are tempted to act independently of God and take the reins into our own hands.

(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.**

- Abram had time to think on his way to Egypt ... walking/riding a camel
- Enough trouble already – he begins to borrow trouble from the future
- We do have to think about the future ... but ...
- Sarai was beautiful ... v. 12
 1. The issue is usually fear: fear v. faith / trust v. unbelief
 2. Are we going to believe that God has our best interest at heart
 3. Our fear goes to war against our faith – our enemy uses fear
 4. Oftentimes we aren't dressed for battle – **Ephesians 6:10-18a**

The What of Our Trials – God presents us with some event / some circumstance in life and He says:

“Are you going to trust Me in this?”

“Or are you going to give in to your doubts and fears?”

“Are you going to go through this in My strength, or are you going to begin to act independently of Me.”

III. The ‘How’ of Our Trials 13-16

How are we going to approach the trial as far as what we do?

Here’s where a trial can become a temptation.

We are tempted to jump in and take the reigns and take over.

We are tempted to launch out on our own independent of God and come up with our own schemes and plans ... Genesis: Jacob

But here we see Abram doing that very thing:

(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.” **(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.

- “Say you are my sister” 20:12
- “that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you”
 - What a guy! Man of the Year Award! {Greers parking lot ...}
 - Nevermind about what Sarai may have to go through with
 - Instead of trusting God, Abram comes up with his own scheme ..
- I don’t believe Abram intended it to play out the way it did.
 - He was right about what happened in v. 14
 - But he miscalculated, couldn’t have anticipated – v. 15
- He was enriched by Pharaoh – v. 16
 1. There’s a verse that goes here: **Psalm 46:10** – “Be still, and know that I am God ...”
 2. There’s far too little Psalm 46:10 in our lives
 3. Let me hasten to say ... there are times we must act, that God would have us take action – ex.: going to Egypt

But here, instead of trusting God, Abram comes up with his own scheme. And he tells a half truth, which is no truth, which is a lie by omission. And his trial went from bad to worse.

The How of Our Trials – how are we going to approach what we do? Are we going to try to fly the plane solo? That’s what we often tend to do ...

IV. The 'Who' of Our Trials ¹⁷

The who of our trials is not us.

The Who of Our Trials is God!

Our trial are intended to show us what God will do.

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

We see here that our God is a God who intervenes.

Abram failed Sarai. But God didn't fail her.

And he didn't fail Abram. He was true to those promises He made in v. 2

Our God is a God who intervenes. He's a God who strikes. He's a God who goes to war for His people, when they can't go to war for themselves.

Psalm 46

Abram failed the test of his faith with his lying and selfish scheming.

But God didn't fail Abram.

Our trials are intended to demonstrate God's glory, not our glory.

Ex.: Some great difficulty ... how do we get through it?

Even in life's events and circumstances, God intervenes to give us the strength and the peace, and even joy in the midst of the trial – and it's a great testimony to the world – not about us, but about Him.

He is the Who of Our trials.

V. The ‘Why’ of Our Trials 18-20

Why is it that a believer’s life is so filled with trials?

(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.

- Somehow Pharaoh knew he was struck by God because of Sarai. v. 18
 - v. 19 – God protected Sarai’s purity.
 - Pharaoh gave Abram an escort out of the country.
1. Abram had a lot of time to think as he journey back toward Canaan.
 - No doubt he was ashamed of himself.
 - But if he was smart, and Abram was smart:

“What was this all about?”

“Why did God allow me to go through this?”

“What did I learn about myself?”

2. What he learned was that lesson that we all must learn – over and over again – we can trust our God. Our faith needs to grow.

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, **(3)** knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

(4) But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

1 Peter 4:12-14 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

(13) but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

(14) If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

That’s the ‘why’ of our trials – that we might be sanctified – made more like Jesus, and so God might be glorified in us and through us.

Conclusion

On one occasion the apostles were gathered around the Lord and they said to him: "Lord, increase our faith." He answered that prayer. But it wasn't an easy road they walked to get there. And neither is it for us.

When I think about trials, I think about a couple of hymns:

Trials dark on every hand and we cannot understand
All the way that God would lead us to His blessed Promised Land
But He'll guide us with His eye, and we'll follow till we die,
And we'll understand it better by and by.

(Chorus)

By and by, when the morning comes, When the saints of God are
gathered home,
We will tell the story, how we've overcome,
And we'll understand it better by and by.

Turn: #364 – How Firm a Foundation

God sometimes uses the trials of life to get the attention of an unbeliever and draw them to Himself ...