

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #32

Genesis 12:10-20

Abram is taking his first steps as a relatively young believer. He was willing to completely believe God and obey Him, but he has had to face some very difficult things in his young spiritual life – 1) He had to leave Ur (11:31); 2) He had to bury his father (11:32); 3) He had to leave his country, relatives and father's home (12: 1); 4) He reached the land that was supposed to be his and it was filled with Canaanites (12:6-7); 5) He had to move again from Shechem, to near Bethel, to the Negev (12:6, 8, 9). Abram had a faith that trusted the word of God, as someone said - 'a faith that cannot be tested is a faith that cannot be trusted.' This has not been smooth sailing, but Abram remained faithful and obedient. But as we come to this text, we discover that Abram was a normal sinful man. He moves from trusting and praying to his own scheming.

GOD IS ALWAYS SOVEREIGNLY PROTECTING HIS FAITHFUL PEOPLE WHO FOLLOW HIM EVEN WHEN THEY FAIL AND DO THINGS IMPROPER.

You cannot walk away from this text without a remarkable glimpse of the sovereignty of God.

NARRATIVE SEGMENT #1 - The fear of Abram. 12:10-13

The primary fear that Abram had was the fear of losing his life. Commentators are divided as to whether this was motivated by a good motive or bad motive. Some believe it was a bad thing because he was willing to sacrifice the honor of Sarai, his wife, rather than lose his own life. Others believe it was a good thing because Abram had such a high regard for God's will and knew the Blessed One was destined to come through his lineage, therefore he wanted to preserve his life.

Fear Circumstance #1 - The possibility of losing life through a famine. 12:10

There are three times in Genesis when a famine affected God's people - 12:10; 26:1; 41:56. A critical word in verse 10 is the Hebrew word "sojourn", which literally means to turn away from one country and visit another of a different language. The word carries with it the idea of temporal residency, as a short visit. Abraham never intended to stay in Egypt, he intended to temporarily visit Egypt as a stranger until the famine subsided then go back to God's promised land. **Abraham made a decision to go to Egypt, "without consulting God"** (Davis, p. 176).

Fear Circumstance #2 - The possibility of losing life through a beautiful wife. 12:11-13

The fact that Sarai is a beautiful woman is stressed twice in this context - 12:11, 14. The word beautiful means that Sarai was so beautiful that she shined bright when compared to others. What is totally amazing about this is that she is dazzling when she is 65 years old. She is 10 years younger than Abram (17:17), and we know Abram is 75 (12:4). Sarai was so beautiful that Abram feared the Egyptians would steal her and this was not some imaginative fear of a love-struck delusional dreamer, this was a real possibility.

There are various situational moments in Scripture, when God's people stretched or bent the truth - Isaac (Genesis 26:6-10); Rachel (Genesis 31:33-35); Egyptian Midwives (Exodus 1:15-22); Rahab (Joshua 2:4-5); Michal (I Samuel 19:14) and David (I Samuel 21:1-5, 8, 9). This has caused some to take the position that the moral nature of a lie must be determined by the situation. However, what we also may observe is that the Bible is always truth oriented and time and time again the emphasis is that God honors and blesses truth. In this context, Abram stretched the truth. The situation was brought on by the fact that Abram did not consult God before he went down to Egypt.

NARRATIVE SEGMENT #2 - The action of the Egyptians. 12:14-16

(Action #1) - The Egyptians see a beautiful woman. 12:14-15a

In this Egyptian culture, a beautiful glamorous woman meant more than someone's life.

(Action #2) - The princes report to Pharaoh. 12:15b

The princes knew Pharaoh would want this woman in his harem.

(Action #3) – Pharaoh takes the beautiful woman. 12:15c

Abram had his life, but didn't have his wife.

(Action #4) - Pharaoh rewards Abram. 12:16

Here you begin to see an amazing moving of the sovereignty of God. Even though Abram has made some wrong decisions, God is protecting and prospering him.

NARRATIVE SEGMENT #3 - The action of the LORD. 12:17

According to Josephus, God sent serious illness to Pharaoh and many seditious problems started to arise in his kingdom and he also says that Pharaoh's priests informed Pharaoh that these plagues were in fact from God because he had taken Abram's wife (Josephus, p. 33). If this is true, God is even demonstrating His sovereignty over that which is demonic.

NARRATIVE SEGMENT #4 - The action of Pharaoh. 12:18-20

The parallel similarities between Abram's life and Israel's history are amazing:

- 1) Both moved because of a famine (12:10; 47:13);
- 2) Both ended up in Egypt because of a famine (12:10; 47:27);
- 3) Both faced the execution of males and the preservation of females (12:12; Exodus 1:22);
- 4) Both were delivered by plagues sent directly from God (12:17; Exodus 7:14-11:10);
- 5) Both left Egypt with an abundance of wealth (12:16; Exodus 12:35-36);
- 6) Both were delivered from the Egyptians (12:19; Exodus 15);
- 7) Both ended up in the Negev (Genesis 13:1; Numbers 13:17-22).

There was one major difference - Abram in the big picture remained faithful to God and Israel didn't.

God is sovereignly working behind the scenes to protect and bless those who are faithful to Him. Those who are intent on following God and obeying God may be absolutely certain that "all things are working together for good."