Abraham's fearful lack of Faith

("Abraham lied to Save his Skin")

Genesis 12:10-20

4/26/1998

Introduction:

- ***Beware: The opposite of faith is fear and fear results in a trap!***

I. ***Abraham's fearful lack of faith led him to…***
LEAVE THE PROMISED LAND AND GO DOWN TO EGYPT (v.10)

II. ***Abraham's fearful lack of faith led him to…***
LIE ABOUT HIS WIFE AND SAY "SHE IS MY SISTER" (v. 11-13)

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BRING DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES ON A PEOPLE HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A GOOD TESTIMONY TO (v.17-20)

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Introduction:

One important feature of the Bible (which sets this Book apart from most other ancient literature and gives it evidence of divine inspiration) is its relentless willingness to show the faults of even its greatest heroes.

Had men authored this Book, he no doubt would have sugar-coated the heroes of it and not exposed their weak, sinful depravity.

Since the Bible displays God's perspective of man and not man's perspective of man, it reveals the sins of even its mightiest spiritual giants. Such as: Moses (striking the rock when God told him to speak to it); David (committing adultery then seeking to cover it up); Peter (denying the Lord Jesus Christ and even blundering to the point of needing rebuke by Paul).

Abraham, the friend of God, noted for his great faith, reveals a defect in his trust in God in the second half of this chapter. In 12:1-9, we find a man who takes giant steps of faith, leaving Ur of the Chaldees and traveling to a foreign land, worshipping God as he goes. Now in vv. 10-21, we find a man stumbling due to fear and lack of faith.

This reminds us to "take heed lest we fall."

Fear traps and enslaves (Prov. 29:25 - The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe).

- ***Beware: The opposite of faith is fear and fear results in a trap!***

I. ***Abraham's fearful lack of faith led him to…***
LEAVE THE PROMISED LAND AND GO DOWN TO EGYPT (v.10)

"Tests often follow triumphs."

Although Abraham perhaps never experienced a famine in Ur, ironically he does so now in "the Promised Land." No one ever said that the life of the believer was

without trials. However, "Instead of remaining in the land and trusting the Lord to help him, Abraham went 'down into Egypt' (Gen. 12:10). In the Bible, Egypt is a symbol of the world system and its bondage, while the land of Israel is a picture of the inheritance of blessing God has for you (Deut. 11:10-12). When to Egypt, they went down. Spiritually speaking, 'going down to Egypt' means doubting God's promises and running to the world for help (SEE Num. 11, 14; Isa. 30:1-2; 31:1; and Jer. 42:13ff)." (Wiersbe, p. 23).

In times of testing, "the important question is not, 'How can I get out of this?' but 'What can I get out of this?' (cp. James 1:1-12)." (Wiersbe, p. 23).

Beware: One bad decision will often lead to another one. Abraham's flight to Egypt apparently prepared the way for his lie. It seems that God wanted Abraham to stay at Bethel ("*the house of God")* (12:8) since this was the place Abraham would return to after his fiasco in Egypt (14:3-4).

II. ***Abraham's fearful lack of faith led him to…***
LIE ABOUT HIS WIFE AND SAY "SHE IS MY SISTER" (v. 11-13)

v. 11
When you run away from one test, you will soon face another . . . if Abraham found the circumstances of Canaan to be hard, he would find the people of Egypt to be even more difficult (Wiersbe, p. 23-24).

"**"I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon" –** Abraham knew he had married a good-looking woman, so much so that when she was 65 years old, she appeared to e in the prime of her life. The youthfulness was probably due to the fact that the life span of the patriarchs was twice that of people today (Ryrie note).

Abraham knew that Sarah at 65 could still "turn heads." That's one problem of marrying an extraordinarily beautiful woman. The benefit of having the supposed luxury of the beautiful spouse brings with it the detriment of others wanting what belongs to you.

v. 12
Abraham feared that when the Egyptians took one look at Sarah, their lust for her would lead them to do away with her man so that they could take her. "Fatal attractions" have always existed.

Does God ever make a promise He cannot keep? Would He promise to bless Abraham (12:3) and then allow him to be killed so someone could seize his wife? Would God promise to make Abraham a great nation (12:2) and then allow him to be murdered without even having fathered a child yet? NO!

"Say…Thou art my sister" – This in fact was a half-truth, for Sarah was Abraham's half sister (Gen. 20;12 – same father, but different mothers).

Incidentally, prior to the Mosaic law (which would not come for five more centuries), the marriage of relatives was not prohibited by God.

A half truth is a whole lie. Abraham's intent was to deceive, to lead others to believe that Sarah was only a sister and not his wife.

Lying is a serious matter; God's people must always tell the truth.

"Well with <u>me</u>…<u>my soul</u> shall live" – The human tendency in all of us is to "save our own skin." The motive behind most every lie is self-preservation or self-benefit. Sinful humanity, due to a lack of faith in God's ability to bless truth, tells lies to save face, save skin, or to save for ourselves some monetary or tangible benefit.

"As for the husband, Abraham should have thought first of his wife and not of himself (I Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:25, 28-29). In fact, he never should have taken his wife there in the first place! A husband out of the will of God can bring untold trouble to his wife and family" (Wiersbe, p. 25).

The only time it is justifiable for a wife to disobey her husband is if that husband was to require her to do something sinful. Sarah is the perfect example of a submissive wife (I Pet. 3:5-6); however, here was an occasion for her to graciously "put her foot down" and refuse to go along with Abraham's plan.

III. *Abraham's fearful lack of faith led him to…* JEOPARDIZE HIS WIFE'S PURITY AND HER POSITION AS THE ANCESTRESS OF GOD'S PROMISES OF BLESSING (v.14-16)

Because of fear, Abraham jeopardized the ancestress! He put Sarah in a position which would have jeopardized God's promises from being fulfilled.

Someone once defined faith in these terms: "Faith is living without scheming. . . when you find yourself scheming in order to escape problems with people, beware: worse trouble is coming!" (Wiersbe, p. 24).

v. 14

While Abraham referred to Sarah as "fair," (v. 11), the Egyptians thought she was "very fair." It is noteworthy to observe that because Sarah was barren (childless), she didn't have that added reason to lose her youthful figure.

v. 15
"The woman was taken into Pharaoh's house" – She was under consideration to be added to Pharaoh's harem.

v. 16
Abraham was given dowry gifts in exchange for Sarah. Perhaps this was added to his wealth of livestock and was never taken away, since he would eventually leave Egypt with "all that he had." (12:20b).

IV. *Abraham's fearful lack of faith led him to…* BRING DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES ON A PEOPLE HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A GOOD TESTIMONY TO (v.17-20)

v. 17
God protects His own. He mercifully takes special care of those people He intends to use to do a great work for Him. No doubt the Psalmist recalled this incident (of God sending plagues on Egypt) when he said: He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes" (Ps. 105:14).

God protects His own; He is able to take care of you and your children. We need not fear, for the sovereign Lord of the Universe watches over those who belong to Him; He even goes so far as to specially sanctify those who are related to someone who is related to Him (I Cor. 7:14).

"Plagued. . . with great plagues" – Exactly what God did to them we do not know; one thing is evident, the plagues were some sort of physical affliction. Perhaps an affliction which would have prevented Pharaoh or anyone from sexually defiling Sarah.

Don't interpret this passage to justify sin in your life. Don't assume that just because God mercifully delivered Abraham unscathed that He will do the same for you and bail you out if you sin against Him.

"There were times in the experience of the nation of Israel, however, when God did not deliver His people from their predicaments, especially if their sin had been prolonged and rebellious. For this reason the expositor must be careful in wording the point—God at times may deliver His people, but He may not. In this passage the predicament was such that, if there was to be any deliverance, any way out, the Lord would have to provide it. And He did because His word was at stake." (Ross, p. 277).

This passage reveals God's opinion regarding the sanctify of marriage. The sexual purity of Sarah was endangered but God graciously intervened. God is still 100%

against fornication and adultery, and God is still 100% against divorce. Reason: He is 100 % for sexual purity and 100% for the permanence of marriage.

v. 18
Without any verbal revelation, Pharaoh got the message. You don't need an audible voice from Heaven to tell you that you are doing wrong; God uses the inevitable consequences of our sin and the hardships of life to get our attention.

The truth eventually and inevitably gets out. One reason why it doesn't pay to lie, is because the truth always eventually becomes known. And when it does, we find ourselves in a bigger hole than we were in the first place.

v. 18-19
"What is this. . . why didst thou not tell me. . . why saidst thou" – What a rebuke to be interrogated by a lost heathen! You know you did wrong when even a lost man rebukes you.

Abraham to a degree <u>lost his testimony</u> to Pharaoh by lying. What kind of testimony do you have with the unsaved? What is your reputation in the secular world?

v. 20
But did Abraham really get out of Egypt richer and better off? No.

His great wealth and abundance would become a cause for strife and division (3:6); his nephew Lot would be bitten by Egypt's materialism and this would pave the way for his move to Sodom (13:10f). His wife's Egyptian-acquired maid Hagar would later produce marital tensions, strife, and ultimately a son whose descendents would become a perpetual thorn in Israel's side.

Conclusion:

Whenever we, due to lack of faith, sin against God, two consequences often result:

1) our giving in to temptation will make it easier to give in the next time (Abraham would lie again before Abimelech in Gen. 20:1-18).

2) your children will often tend to follow in your steps and repeat the exact same errors you have made (EX: Isaac would lie about Rebekah – Gen. 26:1-11)

Sin has a tendency to repeat itself:

God will often use circumstances or people to get us back to where we ought to be. Evidently, it was not God's desire for Abraham to leave Canaan land.

Why should we be truthful?
Because God is truth (Deut.32:4; Is.65:16), we must:

1. Love the truth -
The closer we get to God the more we will love what He loves & hate what He hates. If you love the truth, you will hate lying.
Prov. 8:7 - "For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abonomination to my lips."
We are to "buy the truth and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23); we are to "love the truth" (Zech. 8:19).

2. Always tell the truth -
Is a lie ever justified? No. Situation ethics is wrong ethics. Rahab's lie was wrong even though her motive was right (Josh. 2) God commends her faith, never her lie (James 2).
Eph. 4:15 - "Speak the truth in love."
God's truthfulness never ends (Ps. 100:5, 117:2); neither should ours.

3. Tell the truth, no matter what the cost -
EX: Peter's lying in his denial - Mt. 26:69-74.
God hates lying - Zech. 8:16, 17.

4. Tell the truth, even when others do not want to hear it -
Gal. 4:16 - "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"
Preachers Note: Gal.1:10

5. Tell the truth to your children -
Is. 38:19 - "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth."

6. Live your life according to the truth - Ps. 86:11
"I will walk in thy truth" -- II Jn. 4; III Jn. 4.

7. Keep your word -
Do what you say you will do.

8. Be sincere (genuine, not a hypocrite)
Josh. 24:14 - "Now therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth."
I Sam. 12:24 - Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you."
Ps. 51:6 - "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts."
Jn. 4:24 - Worship in "spirit and in truth."

9. Our church must uphold the truth.
We are the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15).

An important lesson: “Don’t leave your altar” No matter how rough life gets.