

A Lesson for Abram to Learn (Part 3)

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[0 : 00] Abraham has been sojourning through Canaan as God has instructed him, not able to take possession!

Abraham has been sojourning in the region of the land and settles there for a little while and places to raise his cattle to feed them. Then all of a sudden something happens. Have you ever had dreams that you're pursuing and all of a sudden something changes that? Yeah, that's kind of what happens with Abraham here. A famine hits the land of Canaan.

So do that because my fear is that they'll see you as such a beautiful woman and they'll want to take you for themselves. And for that to happen, they'll have to kill me if they know you're my wife. So she agrees to that, no doubt. And so they figure out everything is just as it needs to be then. They're ready to go. The famine has come. Human logic says we need to go somewhere where there's food to eat, where there's corn, grain.

And so Egypt is the nearest place for them to go. And so into the land of Egypt they go. Now, remember something here. We've mentioned this before.

[2 : 05] Up to this point, Abram seems to be, from what we read, what we see, very content to follow what God has said to him to do, even directing him as he has through the land of Canaan.

He's got confidence in the Lord. He's got confidence in the security that God provides for him. So he's just following what God says. Now, all of a sudden, something happens to change that confidence, if you will, or that direction. He now goes on his own wisdom, if you will. Dangerous thing for us to do.

But he goes on his own wisdom in what seems to be the natural, logical thing for them to do. So he goes into Egypt, as we have seen to this point.

All right. Now, think of something just a moment. When you stop and think about the scheme that has been laid by Abram and Sarai, what does that tell you about Abram's trust in the Lord?

It hasn't grown a whole lot yet, has it? Yeah. And so that's a good picture for us here. Just a moment. Now, verses 10 through 14, let's read that, and that's what we're picking up again tonight.

[3 : 28] We've been through this, but we're going to move on with it here in just a minute. Verse 10 of Genesis chapter 12. There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was grievous in the land.

It came to pass, when he was come near into Egypt, that he said to his wife, Behold, now I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon. Therefore it shall come to pass when the Egyptians shall see thee, and they shall say, This is his wife, and they will kill me.

But they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee.

And it came to pass that when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. And so the picture is that they've now gone into Egypt.

But because of the scheme, we see evidence here that something's different in Abram. Now realize something as well with me. We've mentioned it before, but let me remind you.

[4 : 36] What was God's promise to Abram when he sends him into Canaan? What was his promise to Abram? That land will be the possession and inheritance for his descendants, his seed.

All right? So God has made that promise. He's promised to bless him, to multiply his number, and then, of course, make of him that great nation.

Recognize that those promises all stem on the thought of Abram being in that land of inheritance.

All right? All right? The land of Canaan. That's the place of God's provision, the place of God's blessing for Abram. Now, that hasn't quite soaked in yet to Abram.

He goes on into Canaan. So recognize, he takes upon himself to go on into the land of Canaan.

[5 : 41] So, we call that self-effort. All right? He takes upon himself his own wisdom, self-effort, now to make provision for he and his wife in the land of Egypt.

Got to recognize here. I don't see a whole lot of confidence in Abram at this point. I mean, after all, the scheme that he makes with his wife kind of shows that.

You've probably recognized as well as I have through your life as a believer. That self-effort always has a way of stealing our confidence in the Lord's leadership and the Lord's guidance and protection for us.

Amen? Yeah. Have you ever done anything? Yeah. Now, I mean, it may be good stuff, but you've taken it upon yourself to do it because you thought it was a good thing to do.

And you launched out to do that, but all of a sudden, for some reason, you're not quite so confident about that. And you don't really know whether or not God's really in this thing or not.

[6 : 58] And that's what self-effort does for us. Now, so, we've got to have confidence in the Lord and what he wants to do.

Now, that's a good statement to make, and it's a true statement. My question for us in that statement is this. Where does our true deep-seated confidence in God come from?

I know the promises of God, and I've been through trials, and I can say, God, I know the promises you've made, even in the midst of trials, but I'm having a problem here.

Because I still find myself in self-effort. The thing that really, in our lives, develops confidence in God, complete trust in him, and confidence in that, is our personal, intimate fellowship and walk with him.

Yeah? Yeah? When we fail to have that confidence and trust in him, then we've got to do a good check here and say, wait a minute, let me look at myself here.

[8 : 17] Am I really having that type of intimacy consistently with God to be able to trust him?

All right? Think about that a moment. Can I put you all on the spot? I don't care for you, Cameron. I'm going to. You seem to have really good, solid confidence in your relationship, right?

Yes. Why can you have that kind of confidence? Oh, knowledge of each other. Where does that knowledge come from? Yeah.

Experience in the relationship. You know when not to say anything to her. She knows not when to say anything to you. Because you know each other's expressions.

You know each other's feelings. You can sense that because you've been together for so long. And so, look at that picture, if you will. That's a great example in our personal relationships.

[9 : 21] Why should it be any different in our relationship with the Lord that would work to give us that type of confidence that would free us from any attempt of self-effort in anything we do.

But preacher? I thought the Bible says God helps those that help themselves. Show me chapter and verse. It doesn't say that.

Amen. It teaches total, complete trust and confidence in the Lord. It is a growing process.

But it's a process that should never change and never quit. This is a new experience for Abram. All right? His relationship to the Lord was brand new.

I mean, in essence. So, he's learning these things. And boy, does he ever learn that lesson. Now, so, he goes into Egypt on his own accord without any direction from the Lord.

[10 : 28] And that's his chief problem here. Now, there's a principle. I love the fact that if we really yield to the Lord the best we know how at the time, that God gives us a little bit of slack here.

All right? And he uses that for a learning process, learning exercise for us. And he does that for Abram here. So, there's a couple of things here that Abram, a principle that Abram needs to learn. And he does. But it's a principle that you and I need to learn as well. And this is the principle. When God calls somebody to follow him, his intent is that they follow him completely.

No matter what the circumstances. Amen? Yeah. No matter what the circumstance may be.

Trust me. Follow me. Learn how to trust God completely. No matter what the circumstance may be. That's an imperative in the Christian life.

[11 : 44] And the thing we have to recognize is God has a strong desire. A strong desire to show us. They're very characteristic that he has. Look at 2nd Chronicles chapter 16.

2nd Chronicles chapter 16. And verse 9. God has a desire to prove himself faithful and capable.

No matter what the circumstance may be. This is out of the King James rendering. For the eyes of the Lord. That's the eyes of Jehovah. Run to and fro throughout the whole earth.

To show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect or blameless toward him. Oh.

What a statement. Amen? God has that innate desire to show himself strong to his people. And we need to recognize that.

[12:47] So, when we do, we could take a look at those circumstances that arise. That make us inclined toward self-effort. To see those differently.

To see those as means by which God desires to show himself strong to us. Amen? Amen? After all, he is the Lord of hosts.

He's Jehovah of hosts. Host as the arrangement of a mighty army under his control. He has at his disposal everything he needs.

To meet any circumstance, any situation, in any life of his people. Amen? That's who we have. That reminded me of a passage where it says, Cast all your cares upon him, for he careth for you.

1 Peter. You know what that means? When he says, cast all your cares, here's what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean, okay, I've got a difficult situation here today.

[13:59] So, I'm going to cast those upon the Lord. Lord, Lord, I've got this situation. You know what this situation is. And I just ask you to do, in my heart and life, and in the situation, what needs to be done to free me from this or to get me through that.

That sounds good and noble. God likes to do that. But that's not what it means. It means, cast all your cares. Not just the present day ones.

But the ones in the future. Lord, here I am. And I just, I know who you are. You show me somewhat of your characteristics, your attributes, so I know somewhat of what you are.

So, Lord, you've told me to just cast them all to you. All my problems. All my cares. So, I do that right now.

I cast them upon you. And here's the key. I cast them upon you for you to take those. And I just leave them with you.

[15:15] Past, present, and future. You don't bear take them back. But that's what that means. All those things that trouble us and bother us, we are to cast them to the Lord, even for the future.

So that when those things arise, all you've got to do is, I've already given those to the Lord. So, I'm just going to walk right through them. Continue on. Let God do with them what He wants to.

Ah, there's another aspect of that. Those situations and characteristics may be a learning, a classroom experience for you.

To learn a new principle about the Lord and how that relates to your life. All right? Yeah. Yeah. He's eternal.

Right? He doesn't run on a 24-hour clock. When I think about that, I always think, I don't know what you think about Bill Gothard. Years ago, he did well. But I'll never forget, in a pastor's meeting he had one time, he told this story about when he was young in ministry.

[16:25] And, you know, like most young ministers do, struggle. And he had an old Volkswagen bus. Just run down, but he was running, you know. He'd go from one place, speaking engagement, to another.

And all of a sudden, that thing broke down on the side of the road. He said, hey, I had to pull over. And he pulled over.

And he was praying about that. And he was looking around. And all of a sudden, he looked up.

Here comes a great big old truck headed right for that Volkswagen bus.

You know what he did? He said, Lord, there's a truck about to hit your bus. You know, just casually and without any fear and trepidation.

Lord, there's a truck about to hit your bus. Yeah. And I don't remember if it, it seems like it did hit the bus. But it did. So, it was God's bus. He'll deal with it. Amen.

[17:24] So, that's the situation. And that's the type of confidence that we need to have in the Lord. He desires to prove himself strong to his people.

So, allowing God to develop that complete trust in our heart and our lives is imperative for us. I've read this before to some of the classes I've taught.

But you've probably forgotten. And it's always fun to hear. Amen. Some of you haven't heard. But this is a story that I got out of Charles Swindoll's book, Living Beyond the Level of Mediocrity.

This is what he says in this story. He said, I once heard W.A. Criswell, the longtime pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, tell a story about an evangelist who loved to hunt.

He said, As best I recall, the man bought two pups that were top-notch bird dogs, two setters. He said he kept them in his large backyard where he trained them.

[18 : 28] One morning, an ornery, little, vicious-looking bulldog came shuffling and snorting down the alley. He crawled under the fence into the backyard where the setters spent their days.

It was easy to see that he meant business. The evangelist's first impulse was to take the setters and lock them in the basement so they wouldn't tear up that little bulldog.

But he decided he would just let the creature learn a lesson that he would never forget. Naturally, they got into a scuffle in the backyard. Those two setters and that bulldog went round and round and round, and there were growls and yips as bulldog hair flew everywhere.

The little critter finally had enough, so he squeezed under the fence and took off. All the rest of that day, he whined and licked his sores. Interestingly, the next day, about the same time, here came that same ornery little bulldog back under the fence and after those setters.

Once again, those two bird dogs beat the stuffing out of that little bow-legged animal and would have chewed him up if he hadn't retreated down the alley. Would you believe, the very next day, he was back.

[19 : 45] Same time, same station, same results. Once again, after the bulldog had had all he could take, he crawled back under the fence and found his way home to lick his wounds.

Then the time came when the evangelist had to leave for a revival meeting. He would be gone for several weeks. When he came back, he said, I asked my wife what had happened.

She said, Honey, you just won't believe what has happened. Every day, at the same time every morning, that little bulldog came back in the backyard and fought with our two setters.

He never missed a day. And I want you to know it has come to the point that when our setters simply hear that bulldog snorting down the alley and spot him squeezing under the fence, they immediately start whining and run down into our basement.

That little old bulldog struts around our backyard now just like he owns it. Now that's what you call persistence and determination.

[20 : 52] Staying at it, hanging tough with the dog discipline. When you get whipped or when you win, the secret is staying at it. Amen? Amen. That's what you call bulldog determination.

Yeah, yeah. That's the kind of determination we need to have in our walk with the Lord. Staying with it no matter what the circumstances. Having confidence in Him that He knows.

And there's the key. He knows us. He knows our circumstances. Nothing takes Him by surprise. So He's able and willing and wanting, desiring to meet the need of our lives and do with it what He wants to through our lives.

That's what we need to key on is that. So, got to be careful here to not blame Abram because again it's a new experience for him.

He's never been here before. So, his spiritual maturity, that journey of spiritual maturity for him is just beginning. So, there's lessons to be learned.

[22 : 03] And I guess really don't you think that's the best road to spiritual maturity? Is to learn through those circumstances. So, because it's a journey for us.

It's a journey of learning experiences, having successes. Yeah. when we're successful in being obedient to the Lord and Him accomplishing through us what He wants to.

But we also recognize there are failures as well. Amen. What's the cause of failures in that journey of experiences? What's the cause of those failures?

Well, we label as failures. failures. When we don't sense that what God probably had desired has not been completed, though we tried.

What's the cause of it? Pride, self-will, self-effort. Follow our own choices. Coming to understand what the will of God is in that circumstance, in that means.

[23 : 10] Patience is good. What's the other thing we haven't hit yet? Have you ever thought about the idea that God just allows you to fail?

Sure. I started to say He wants you to fail. And it could be that. Wants you or allows you to fail in what that is? Because allowing us to fail shows us our weaknesses and our inabilities and shows us then that we really do need to learn how to totally submit to Him and His control within our lives.

So He can use us to that degree. Amen? Young preachers are proud about that. Amen? Amen?

Yeah. Yeah. Like a young guy used to say, yeah, we're just going to charge hell with a water pistol and go for it.

Yeah. Preacher friend of ours said, yeah, that's the ignorance on fire. Amen? Yeah. Just doing things the way we think it's right to do.

But those weaknesses, those failures that we see drive us to our knees and lead us to say to the Lord God, I need you to teach me.

[24 : 37] Teach me how to yield in submission to the Spirit of God and let Him control my life. You got it down?

All right. I expect you to live that way now. Now, when you look at the circumstances, I think we mentioned this before, but when you look at the circumstances that Abram's about to face here, it's reasonable, easy to understand why he comes up with a scheme that he did with his wife Sarah. All right? The society in which Abram finds himself in, in Egypt, is a place where the rule of law is uncertain.

You don't know what people are going to do, what they're thinking. Their passions have become uncontrolled. And so, you know, it's kind of like what you see on TV, the old Wild West movies. You know, if you don't like a guy, you just shoot him. Yeah. And that kind of thing. So, that's the kind of atmosphere that Abram's going to go into here in Egypt.

[25 : 48] So, we can understand what he does here. But again, the biggest mistake that Abram made was not waiting for God's direction with the famine.

He goes into Egypt himself without getting God's approval or direction to do that. And in so doing, he leaves the land of promise. So, he's not totally committed himself to trusting God even in the midst of the famine.

He hasn't recognized yet that God not only is able but would provide for him in Canaan in the famine.

Amen? In the famine. I've met a few people professed believers that when real hardships and difficulties came to their life for the first time, they couldn't believe it.

They could, why did this happen to me? I kind of shook my head and said, why shouldn't it? I didn't say that, but I thought that.

[27 : 17] Yeah. But they couldn't believe that this happened to me. No hardships before in their lives. They didn't know how to deal with that. And I'm thinking to myself, where's the grace of God here?

Where's their trust in him? Where's their confidence in him? And the knowledge that he will take you through these difficulties and these hardships. But he does. Now, some of the greatest spiritual experiences can come to us through those times of famine.

Yeah, whatever kind of famine it may be. And we learn more and more about what God wants to do. God wants to teach Abraham that even in this land of promise, this inheritance, time can be and could be and now are difficult.

But that in the midst of that, human effort is not sufficient here. But that God can and God desires to and God will meet the need that they have and work on their behalf because he has the ability to overcome anything in anyone that stands in the way of our satisfying his will.

Amen? Yeah. Yeah. So, his effort was not of faith. It was of sight.

[28 : 59] And the just shall live by faith. God will have to have been in the world Abraham thought all this was going to work out. By his scheme, I'll never know.

But only by the grace of God it did, right? Amen? But what a learning experience and we'll look at that more next week. All right, let's pray together. Father, again, thank you for your loving kindness and for your goodness and your grace to us and again for the privilege of being back together this evening to study your word.

And Father, again, thank you for what you've allowed us to see this evening. And I do pray that you will work in us a recognition of our own lives and how we're going through circumstances that are difficult and even that, circumstances that are good.

And show us the degree of our yieldedness to you and our confidence in you and our surrender to you so that we can see that and then we can make the adjustments we need to make.

So, just ask that you work that in us so that we can truly be the people of faith and confidence and trust in you to work your will in and through us no matter what the circumstances may be and whatever that may lead to, even through difficulties that may lead to.

[30 : 24] So, Father, just give us that sense and that desire and that longing to know you to satisfy your will. I will thank you for it, praise you for it, I look forward to next week now.

We ask it all in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Thank you.