

Shadows of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #10

Danger: Delayed Obedience

March 20, 2024

Gen. 24:39-41 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

⁴⁰ And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

⁴¹ "then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my relatives;
and if they do not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'

24:42 "And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God of my master Abraham,
if now thou do prosper my way which I go,"

The emphasis has shifted from v. 12: He desired a speedy answer to his quest, but here it is upon his desire for God to show that the long road he had travelled had been the right one. Only what's done by the Holy Spirit's direction has value in God's sight.

He described the way as "my way which I go." The Holy Spirit's control is not apart from the individual's will. For every man, the way he goes is the way he has chosen to go, either in obedience to the Holy Spirit's leading, or in self-will, for the Spirit will not overrule the individual's will to compel obedience.

24:43-44 Behold, I stand by the well of water;

and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water,
and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels:

let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son.

24:45-47 And before I had done speaking in my heart,

behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down
unto the well and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

⁴⁶ And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said,

Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also."

⁴⁷ And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said,

The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him:

and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands."

24:48-49 And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son. And now if ye will deal kindly with my master, tell me, and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

This implies that he would continue his search should they be unwilling to give Rebekah, or should she be unwilling to go with him.

In the servant's inability to compel obedience from any of those involved, we are being reminded that though the Holy Spirit could, He will not compel the obedience of either saint or sinner. Bethuel and Laban were moved by Eliezer's account.

Gen. 24:50-51 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceeds from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. ⁵¹ Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

Gen. 24:52-54 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth.

⁵³ And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

⁵⁴ And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

Gen. 24:55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. "Oh, not so soon! Let Rebekah stay with us for a few days, ten days at least, before she goes away from her home."

Gen. 24:56 "And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master."

No one or any thing must be permitted to hinder the Spirit in His work.

"... seeing the Lord hath prospered my way." Up to this point everything indicated that the Lord had been leading every step of the way. True spiritual discernment will be quick to recognize God's leading in any particular work and will be careful not to spoil that work either by mere activity of the flesh on the one hand, or by spiritual apathy on the other.

"... that I may go to my master." The servant's business required that he return to Abraham with a bride for Isaac. Nothing must be allowed to hinder that business.

The Holy Spirit's business is to return to the Father with the Bride for the Son.

Our responsibility is not only to be sure that we do nothing to impede His business, but that we do everything to assist it.

Faith, A Gift From God, Is A Journey.

A. W. Tozer: "Faith is not merely a journey for the feet. It is a journey for the heart.

The godly life is neither automatic nor instantaneous. We are to grow in godliness and faith as we wait for the fulfillment of God's promises. It would be complacency for us to make no plan and effort to grow in godliness." [II Pet. 3:18 Grow in Grace & Knowledge of Jesus Christ]

It is vital that God builds our patience. We need it to successfully run our race and finish well.

➤ God sends us trials, gives us a promise and tells us to trust Him.

Walk with those who BY FAITH: In each instance, you will find the same elements of faith:

1. God spoke to them through His Word.
2. Their inner selves were stirred in different ways.
3. They obeyed God.
4. He bore witness about them.

Faith Worshiping > Abel

Faith Walking > Enoch

Faith Working > Noah

Faith Waiting = Abraham [20th generation from Adam; 292 yrs. since Flood]

Gen. 12:1 "Now the Lord HAD SAID unto Abram, Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land [inheritance] that I will SHOW YOU.

1. The verb tense looks back to an incident referred to by Stephen and recorded in:

Acts 7:2-3 The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,³ and said to him,

'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.'

What was Abram's response to God's call?

Gen. 11:31 And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and DWELT there.

Perils Of Partial Obedience: He obeyed the 1st command but failed the other 3 commands.

1. He left Chaldea, but Terah, his father and Lot, his nephew, accompanied him.

- Terah = delay - Having Terah resulted in a delay of at least 5 years in Haran
- Haran = parched

Note: Instead of journeying to Canaan, Abram tarried at Haran.

It was not until after Terah's [delay] death that Abram left Haran and came into Canaan.

Note: It was DEATH which broke the link which bound Abram to Haran.

Acts 7:4 "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran.

And from there when his father was dead, God moved him to this land in which you now dwell.

Gen. 12:4 "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."

Living in Haran: Born again; Delay Sanctification; Sparse Abundant Life

Many people seem to be in the same situation Terah and Abraham found themselves.

Many people hear and respond to God's prompting: Move out from their respective "Ur of the Chaldeans" into the land of Canaan, but one way or the other, they settle down in Haran and totally lose the vision of Canaan.

Realize: Where you are at the moment is Haran not Canaan. The destination God is taking you to is much bigger than what you've settled down for. If Abraham had stayed put in Haran, he would have lost his glorious destiny forever. He would have lost his place in God's eternal plan.

You can't afford to accept less than God's best for your life. To accept Haran as your permanent dwelling place is to rob yourself of the unending joy of Canaan.

- Never accept less than God's best for your life, don't settle down in Haran!

Grace Note: In the New Testament Abram's failure is not mentioned; seems hidden!

Heb. 11:8 "By faith Abram, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

2. This call demanded absolute confidence in and obedience to the word of Jehovah.
Oswald Chambers: Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.

Be obedient with one small step and God will give you the next step and the next and...

3. It was a Call Of Separation from the ties of the natural man:

- Our father, in this sense, is Adam. Our "Adamic nature" is the father's house in which we all live. We are called to leave this, no longer put any dependence upon our old man,
- We are to begin to walk in dependence upon the Holy Spirit to do through us that which we cannot do ourselves.

4. He was called to go to a place which afterwards God would give him for an inheritance.

- This typifies one whose citizenship is in heaven but who is still in the world.
One is called upon to walk by faith and live as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.

5. Starting point of the life of FAITH.

- First requirement is separation from the world and our place in it.

Note: Four things were commanded by God. He was to leave his own country, separate himself from his kindred, and go forth unto a land which Jehovah had promised to show him.

What is the Land God would show Abram? It is living in the fullness of the Spirit.

It is life controlled by the Spirit of God, reflecting the glory of Christ.

Gen. 12:5-6 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh.

- Abram did not enter into occupation of Canaan. He merely Passed Through The Land.

Life In The Land Shows A Spirit-filled Life

1. Abram first halted at Shechem which signifies "shoulder" - the place of strength.

2. As far as the oak of Moreh which means "instruction."

Only as we are taught the Word of God by the Spirit of God do we find strength to live.

Consider: How significant! It is only as we separate ourselves from the world and walk in the path marked out for us by God that we reach the place where STRENGTH is to be found.

It is only then we can enter into fellowship with Him and learn from Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!!!

12:6c And the Canaanites were then in the land.

- Hosts of wickedness presently occupy the heavenlies to wrestle with those who are partakers of the heavenly calling.
- Manifestations of our flesh: lust, envy, jealousy, impatience, intemperance, irritability, touchiness, etc.
- These manifestations of self which make our existence a life of continual conflict.

Gen. 12:7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

At the second appearing, He reveals Himself to Abram for communion. [sanctification]

Note #4: Order of mention: We must first be strangers and pilgrims on earth before acceptable worship is possible.

Life In The Land Is A Life Of Continual Progress, A Never-Ending Journey.

How can we identify true pilgrims? By a tent and an altar.

1. Hold material things loosely; aware of the fleeting, temporary values that the world thinks important.
 - There is a discontent with what the earth offers and a hunger for something more.
2. The altar > the place of self-judgment where true worship is found.
 - Having a low opinion of one's own abilities and a high opinion of God's.
Aware of the constant need of cleansing and a dependence upon a power greater than self.

Consider: Abram is in the land, but he is still learning the conditions of life in the land.

He is like any new Christian who is now "in the Spirit" [Rom. 8:9] but has not yet learned to "walk in the Spirit," [Gal. 5:25].

Common at this stage: The Failure Of Faith

The Famine In Canaan, The Folly Of Egypt, & The Fullness Of God In The Land.

Two-fold Failure of Abram

I. Leaving Canaan and Going Down Into Egypt

Gen. 12:9-10 So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South. 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.

- When the famine overtook Abram, his face was already toward Egypt.

Note #1: 1st mention in Bible of Egypt = that which is a constant menace to the people of God.

- Symbolizes alliance with the world and reliance upon the arm of the flesh.

Isa. 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because they are many, And in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD!

- Going down to Egypt = adopting the attitudes, expectations and resources of the world > drinking from a dry cistern

Note #2 The famine was sent as a trial of Abram's faith. Famine in the Land Of Promise!

Question: Will the famine shake Abram's confidence in God's goodness? Will it shake his faith?

- Abram took counsel, not from God, but from his fears alone.

Remember: The land is a symbol for the Spirit-filled life.

- A famine in the land is any circumstance that threatens our dependence upon him.
- It is any circumstance that makes faith difficult to maintain.

Have you been "living and walking in the Spirit" knowing God is your strength... suddenly, A circumstance beyond your control threatens to shake your faith and your dependence on God? There is a famine in your land! Tempted to flee rather than yield to God's purpose in the trial?

Ridout: "Alas, Abram did as we are all prone to do, he sought relief from all his difficulties, rather than profit by the trial." He could not yet trust God enough to stay in Canaan with the famine. This shows the weakness and failure of man to live up to God's requirements."

II Cor. 12:9-10 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Consider: Did Abram seek counsel from the LORD? Abram was prompted by the WISDOM OF THE FLESH > Relief in human help > ANYTHING but from the living God.

Consider: Abram had journeyed all the way from Chaldea to Canaan on the bare word of Jehovah and was now afraid to trust Him in the time of famine.

SAD: We have Faith In God with regard to our eternal destination,
but we are afraid to confide in Him for the supply of our temporal needs.

Foolishness of Egypt: When Abram lost his faith, he also lost his courage!

- Even before he got into Egypt, he grew afraid and acted cowardly.

In Egypt, he relied on his own resources to defend Sarai. He lied in order to deceive.

- In Egypt, the old man will rise up and assume control.

Abram became a curse instead of a blessing. "His life of hypocrisy and weakness was a stumbling block and a plague upon the hearts of those who were watching him."

Egypt: place of rebuke and humiliation. Abram, the man of God, stood before a pagan king who had better morals than he. He was publicly rebuked for his folly.

Steadman: But now God terminates the painful lesson of Egypt in Abram's life.

"Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had." What a price to pay for the release from pressure that Egypt affords.

At the deepest moment of his agony, crushed with humiliation and sick at heart, Abram comes out of Egypt, tarred and feathered and riding on a rail, back into the land of Canaan.

Gen. 13:1, 3-4 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. ³ And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴ to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Question: How many times have you returned to your "Ai" - your heap of ruin?

Note #1: His journey in Egypt was so much lost time!

Note #2: He returned to the very place he had left.

He repented and "DID THE FIRST WORKS."

Back in the land, he finds the fullness of supply that was his all along! As soon as Abram is back in the land, there is the tent and the altar again and he calls upon the name of the Lord.

Danger of Delayed Obedience

The Valley of Eschol takes center stage on one of the Old Testament's saddest days.

The 10 spies traveled about 500 miles during the 40 days of the survey of Canaan, but they discovered nothing that God had not already told them.

Report: It is a good land that flows with milk and honey, BUT there are giants,

large, fortified cities and powerful "ites." The people were filled with fear as they listened.

John Gardner: "We are continually faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems."

Num. 13:31-33 But the men that went up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people; And they brought up an evil report of the land...

Peterson Simbotwe: Any report that creates hopelessness, fear and causes people to doubt the authenticity of the already spoken word of God, is an evil report.

Num. 13:26-33 They weighed their options & decided that the cards were stacked against them. Things were not the way they had first appeared or how they expected.

Consider: Living by sight puts the burden on you. Living by faith rolls the burden on God.

Recall: The negative report of the 10 spies hindered God's command to go in and possess the land.

Delayed obedience is disobedience. Causes of delayed obedience:

1. They murmured and complained. They questioned God's motives.

Deut. 1:27 And you murmured in your tents and said, Because the LORD hated us, He hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.

2. They were filled with fear.

Deut. 1:28 Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.

- Confidence comes, not from great assurance in your ability or the facts of your circumstances. Confidence comes in trusting God.
- If you are doing what God has led you to do, you don't have to worry and fret over the results.

3. They delayed their obedience because they did not believe.

Deut. 1:32 Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God,

Biblical Truth: Delayed obedience is disobedience and disbelief.

Consequences of evil report: 10 spies died. They mourned bitterly. Chastened by the death of the 10 spies, they now tried to go into the land in their own strength.

Deut. 1:43 So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill.

1. God will not be with you, but they did not listen. Terrible defeat
2. Their confidence was in themselves, not God.

Danger of Delayed Obedience

1. We grow spiritually indifferent.
 - Neglect doing what we know the Lord commands of us.
 - Cooling of our heart occurs. Things of God become routine.
 - Our desire for prayer, the Word, church and spiritual service are quenched.
 - Go through the motions, but lack spiritual life and growth.
2. We grow to accept disobedience.
 - We know where are not where we should be spiritually, but we make no effort to change.
 - Remedy: Painful repentance

Martin Luther: "A true believer will crucify, or put to death, the question: Why?

He will simply obey without questioning.

"I refuse to be one of those people who 'unless...I see miraculous signs and wonders...will never believe. [John 4:48]. I will obey without questioning."

"Ours not to make reply, ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die."

God's Word is not there simply to be read. You get no extra points for studying the Bible. What matters is our obedience to God's Word. You might impress people with your knowledge of the Bible as a Jeopardy contestant, but God is looking for your submission and obedience to His Word.

Key: One of God's most effective tools in the process of spiritual growth is failure. So many believers are simply frantic over the fact of failure in their lives. They will go to all lengths to hide failure, ignore it or rationalize it. All the time they are resisting the main instrument in the Father's hand for conforming us to the likeness of His Son. Failure where "self" is concerned in our Christian walk is allowed and often engineered by God in order to turn us completely from ourselves to His Source for our life - Christ Jesus, who never fails.

William Gurnall wrote these words over 350 years ago, but they are as relevant today as when they were first published. "Count on the strength of your own godly attributes, and you will grow lax in your duties for Christ. Knowing you are weak keeps you from wandering too far from Him. When you see that your own cupboard is bare and everything you need is in His, you will go often to Him for supplies. But a soul who thinks he can take care of himself will say, 'I have plenty and to spare for a long time. Let the doubting soul pray; my faith is strong. Let the weak go to God for help; I can manage fine on my own.' What a sad state of affairs, to suppose we no longer need the moment by moment sustaining Grace of God."

Ps. 119:60 David wrote: "I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands."