

Finishing Well

Lesson #14 Starting Point Of Faith April 21, 2021

Schopenhauer: "The first 40 years of life give us the text and the next 40 give us the commentary. For the Christian, the text is Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38 >

The just shall live by faith. The commentary is being written as we listen to God and obey His directions a day at a time. Sad to say, some understand neither the text nor the commentary and their lives are ended before they have started to live."

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.

One of the most convincing proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is the facility with which the Spirit of God takes simple history and recorded them in such a way as to weave together a totally accurate pattern of the development of spiritual life.

Rom. 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

In the Bible's hall of faith in Hebrews 11, "candid pictures are given of great men and women whose faith stands out in Old Testament history like bright stars on a dark night." [Wiersbe] Abraham's life's story reveals the very secrets by which the Spirit of God intends to transform us from faltering pilgrims to men and women of stalwart faith.

In this chronicle Abraham is given almost $\frac{1}{2}$ the space. He has more than 2x the space allocated to the law-giver, Moses. Likewise in Genesis, the story of Abraham and his family is spread from chapters 11 through 50, while only 2 chapters are given to the entire story of creation.

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 gen. from Adam; 292 yrs. since Flood]

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, 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.

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.'

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 another 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

I. 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
 - Born again; Delay Sanctification; Sparse Abundant Life

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."

- His obedience in leaving Ur is singled out, but no notice is taken by the Holy Spirit of his disobedience in taking kindred with him.

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."

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.

Consider: True for God's children! It is death which separates a believer from that which by nature unites him with the old creation.

Gal. 6:14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

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.

1. 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!!!

Life In the Land is Full Of Continual Conflict

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

They are there to challenge and contest the occupation of the Promised 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.

God's 2nd Promise: Gen. 12:7-8 Once in Canaan, God promises the land to Abram's offspring.

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.

Life In The Land Requires Continual Cleansing.

An altar is first a place of cleansing, which provides the basis for worship.

The reason for a daily altar is the urgent need for cleansing in the pilgrim life.

Note #1: There is no record of Abram receiving any further revelation from God until His call had been fully obeyed. Now that he had left Ur and Haran behind him and actually arrived in the land, Jehovah appeared once more unto him.

Note #2: At the first appearing the God of Glory called upon Abram to separate himself from his place by nature. [justification] At the second appearing, He reveals Himself to Abram for communion. [sanctification] Result: Abram erects an altar.

Consider: There was no "altar" for Abram in Ur or Haran.

It is not until there is real separation from the world that fellowship with God is possible.

Obedience of faith > then communion and worship.

Spurgeon: If you think you can walk in holiness without keeping up perpetual fellowship with Jesus, you have made a great mistake. If you would be holy, you MUST live close to Jesus.

Life In The Land is a Life Of Unending Choice

Gen. 12:8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Note #1: How significant! Bethel means "the house of God" while Ai signifies "a heap of ruin."

Note #2: He pitched his tent between them.

This is just where we must live the Christian life, ever looking either to the things of God, or to the ruin of the flesh. We can choose to go to Bethel or to Ai, to Christ or self -- it can never be both. I must continually choose.

Note #3: 2 objects which symbolize a walk in separation with God

➤ Tent = Our Pilgrim Life Altar = Dependency Upon & Worship of God

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.

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."

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.

James 1:1-8 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that

ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. ⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

⁶ BUT let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷ For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸ A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Count It All Joy? Really?

- Count or consider = to think it through; look at things from a different mindset
To make a decision about something after weighing all the facts and circumstances

Sometimes God doesn't change your situation because He is trying to change your heart.

James 1:2-3 When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance.

Note the sequence: Various trials comes to test our faith.

The testing of our faith produces endurance and perseverance. This results in maturity.

Endurance is the ability to undergo a period of stress and strain with the inner strength of Christ, emerging from it stronger than when we entered.

- Eph. 3:16 May you be strengthened in your inner man.

It is looking squarely into the face of discouraging circumstances without despair.

I act as though it is already done...though yet unseen.

Don't worry that you are not strong enough for the journey.

God makes you strong in the journey.

Ps. 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Isa. 58:11 The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

Spurgeon's Sermon: "Look at the weather-beaten sailor, the man at home on the sea. He has a bronzed face and mahogany-colored flesh. He looks as tough as oak and as hardy as if made of iron. How different from us poor landsmen. He can go out to sea in any kind of weather; he has his sea legs on. How did he come to this strength? By doing business in great waters. He could not have become a hardy seaman by tarrying on shore. Now, trial works in the saints that spiritual hardihood which cannot be learned in ease. You may go to school forever, but you cannot learn endurance there. You may color your cheek with paint, but you cannot give it that ingrained brown which comes of stormy seas and howling winds."

J.I. Packer: Sooner or later, this truth will be that God is now exercising His child - His consecrated child - in the way of adult godliness...so that their powers of resistance might grow greater, and their character as men of God become stronger."

Heb. 6:12 Faith and patience cause you to inherit the promises of God.

Heb. 10:35-36 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. ³⁶ For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.