

Title: Famine, Conflict, War

Text: Genesis 12:10-14:24

Proposition: As Abram grew in faith through difficult circumstances, we also must grow in our faith through the events of life.

I. Famine: Deception instead of faith (12:10-20)

A. *And there was a famine in the land. . . (10)*

1. **The Bible does not give the length of the time period between Abram's arrival in the Promised Land and his departure for Egypt.**
2. **As Abram surveyed the land promised to Him by God, he travelled south.**
 - a) **The extent of the land began to take shape in his mind and he began to fully understand what God was promising to him.**
 - (1) The book of Hebrews gives us insight into the perspective of Abram on how to deal with this famine: **Hebrews 11:15** *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*
 - (2) It seems that Abram and Isaac kept some sort of familial ties between them and the family they left behind, as seen in Abram and Isaac seeking wives and refuge for their sons in the old country.
 - (3) However, as far as they were concerned, return to the old country was out of the question because the promise of God was found in the Promise Land.
 - b) **According to historical record, famines were not uncommon, and one occurred on this survey trip of the Promised Land.**
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 - (3) However, as far as they were concerned, return to the old country was out of the question because the promise of God was found in the Promise Land.
 - c) **Abram left the Promised Land out of practical necessity.**
 - (1) The Land could not sustain him.
 - (2) Did he seek God or act upon his own wisdom, the Bible is silent.
 - (3) It is possible this is the first step in relying upon himself then God and continues with the next verses.

B. *And it came to pass. . . (11-13)*

1. **As they came to the point of entering Egypt, Abram became fearful.**
 - a) **This was an unknown land to him.**
 - b) **He travelled with many people and possessions, and one person who he felt could endanger his life: Sarai.**
 - (1) All husbands could learn from Abrams words and honor he gives to Sarai.

(2) She was a beautiful woman and told her so!

2. **Due to her beauty, he contrives a plan to deceive the authorities of Egypt.**

a) **His fear is that they will kill him to get her.**

b) **Instead, he asks Sarai to deceive any inquiries about their relationship, saying she is Abrams sister (half-truth).**

C. *And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt. . .*
(14-20)

1. **Just as Abram predicted, the Egyptians identified Sarai as a beautiful and desirous woman to have. (14-16)**

a) **At first it must have been a satisfying situation to have predicted this occurring and have devised a plan to protect them.**

b) **However, he discovered too late the threat to the promise.**

c) **Pharaoh's lieutenants spoke to Pharaoh about the beauty of Sarai and he took her for himself.**

(1) This was a common practice for rulers of the age, they could take any woman they wanted for their harem.

(2) This was a threat to the promise God had given to Abram.

d) **Pharaoh blessed Abram with material items in payment for her.**

2. **God stepped into preserve the promise and line. (17-20)**

a) **Abram failed to consider the result of his plan.**

(1) His life was saved, but Sarai was still taken.

(2) Most importantly, the promise was in jeopardy.

b) **God brought plagues upon the house of Pharaoh.**

(1) The Bible does not reveal what plagues God brought.

(2) However, they were significant to get his attention.

c) **How Pharaoh perceived the truth of the situation is not mentioned, but he understood the deception and immediately corrected it.**

(1) Abram called for Abram and asked him why.

(2) He gave Sarai back and sent them back where they came from.

D. Application

1. **Our sin never disposes God's plan.**
2. **Abram's plan could have been the end of the line of the redeemer, humanly speaking.**
 - a) **Before the chosen line even had a chance to produce an heir in Isaac.**
 - b) **God stepped in and through His grace saved mankind from himself.**
3. **We are sinners and will be in battle against the sin nature we carry within ourselves until we are heaven.**
 - a) **It is imperative we are willing to trust God in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in, no matter the difficulty.**
 - (1) Isn't it interesting pagan Pharaoh had more respect for God than Abram did.
 - (2) Abram had spoken to God and received God's promise, yet it was Pharaoh responding in proper fear of God, not Abram.
 - b) **We need understand who saved us and what He is capable of, no matter the situation.**
 - c) **1 John 4:4 *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.***

II. Conflict: Spiritual versus Carnal (13:1-18)

A. The return to the Land of Promise (1-4)

1. ***And Abram went up out of Egypt. . . (1)***
 - a) **After the spiritual failure in the land of Egypt, Abram needed to get back to his spiritual roots.**
 - b) **We find them traveling out of Egypt into the south of Canaan.**
2. ***And Abram was very rich. . . (2)***
 - a) **This is the first mention of the wealth of Abram.**

b) The Bible marks two areas of Abram's personal wealth:

- (1) Cattle – as was the case with other nomads down through the ages in the Middle East, Abram possessed great herds of cattle.
- (2) Silver and gold – this would have separated him from the average nomadic “sheik” of his day; as these items were not usually part of the average wealth.

3. *And he went on his journey's from the south even to Bethel. . . (3-4)*

a) Abram returned to the place of his first worship of God in the Promised Land.

b) In a sense, he returned here to get re-grounded in his walk with God.

B. The division and separation from Lot (5-13)

1. The division with Lot (5-7)

a) We are introduced to the impetus for the division by the description of Lot's wealth.

- (1) Lot, as well as Abram, had prospered and become a wealthy individual.
- (2) It is possible the blessings of God upon Abram were enjoyed by Lot as well.

b) The problem was the land could not sustain both of their large herds.

c) Compounding the problem was a controversy between the herdsmen of Lot and Abram.

- (1) This probably was a result of the land not being able to sustain them.
- (2) There may have a risen conflict over pastures and water.

d) As a last note of the division is the mention of the original inhabitants.

- (1) One reason for the mention is the Land could not support everyone who lived in the area, thereby causing conflict at a time when it was not God's time.
- (2) Another reason, the pagans, to whom Abram was supposed to be a witness of the true God to, was watching the testimony of Abram and Lot.
- (3) This is important as it gives insight into the choices of Lot.

2. **The separation from Lot (8-13)**

a) **Many commentators describe Abram as magnanimous or “exhibiting nobleness of soul.” (Webster 1828)**

- (1) Abram, as the head of the family and as it was his right, could have chosen first and told Lot where to go and settle.
- (2) However, as his faith was in the God of the promise alone, he allowed Lot to choose.

b) **What Abram meant when he told Lot to choose between the left hand and right hand.**

- (1) As Abram and Lot were from the eastern culture, they were facing east as they were having this conversation.
 - (a) Verse 10 describes Lot lifting his eyes and he sees the valley of Jordan or directly east of where they stood.
 - (b) The eastern culture places greater significance on facing the east, whereas Western cultures like ours, place significance on the north.
- (2) It seems Abram’s original thought was to divide the Promise Land in half.
 - (a) As Abram considered Lot his heir at this time, this would make sense in his eyes.
 - (b) Abram was offering to the Lot the best of the Promised Land, either north of Bethel (left hand) or south of Bethel (right hand).

c) **As Lot heard this proposition by his uncle, he looked up to consider his choice.**

- (1) The selfish pride of Lot’s character did not even consider deferring to his uncle.
- (2) His eyes fell upon the *plain of Jordan*.
 - (a) The description of which is very significant.
 - (b) It was a well watered plain great for grazing and fruitful for growing.
 - (c) Most importantly, it was like Egypt, where they had just come from and experienced the great wealth of the Egyptians.

- (3) Instead of choosing from the Promised Land, where both he and Abram had received blessing, he chose another place outside of God's blessing.
 - (a) Lot's first step to leave God's blessing was to look outside of God's place of blessing.
 - (b) Second, he went in the direction of Sodom; a place of wicked sinners (Hebrew literary tool: conjunction used to connect two descriptive words).
 - (c) Third, as will be seen later, he became part of the wickedness.

C. The confirmation of the promise (14-18)

1. *And the LORD said unto Abram. . .Lift up now thine eyes. . . (14-17)*

a) **Abram must have been discouraged by the choice of Lot to leave the Promised Land and the loss of his heir.**

- (1) Abram and Lot were heading in two different directions; which is represented by their geographical choices.
- (2) Abram was thinking of the prospect of God's blessing and wondering how God was going to accomplish it; but to see Lot leave was a discouraging blow.

b) **The LORD did not leave Abram in doubt long but came to him with great words of encouragement.**

- (1) This is the Land of Promise I spoke to you of before, as far as you can see in every direction, not just the east, but north, south, and west too!
- (2) By the way, no need to worry about your heir, it will be of your seed directly, not a relative like Lot.
- (3) Your physical seed will be innumerable and they will inhabit this land without cities; as compared to the valley of Jordan where Lot went to settle.
- (4) Now, enough of this wondering, doubt, disappointment, and discouragement; get up and go see the Land of Promise.

2. *Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in. . .Hebron. . .and built there an altar unto the LORD. (18)*

a) **The choices had been made and both were now going in their direction.**

- (1) Lot toward a life outside of God's chosen land of blessing.

(2) Abram toward a life of faith in God's chosen land of blessing.

b) He settled in a new place which will play a significant part in the history of Israel: Hebron.

(1) The first thing he does is set up his tent.

(2) Then, builds a permanent place of worship for God: an altar.

D. Application

1. Christians must choose between a life of spirituality or carnality.

2. The natural, spiritual and carnal: 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3

a) Natural man or those who are unsaved and cannot understand spiritual truth.

b) Spiritual or saved by the blood of Jesus Christ: Abram.

c) Carnal or those saved and living according the flesh: Lot.

3. Abram and Lot provide a great example of what Paul was speaking to the Corinthians about.

a) Will you grow in the Lord, live by faith, and walk in His path of blessing?

(1) No, you may not know the outcome or how it will come to pass.

(2) No, you will be left in the "dark" by what God is actually doing in your life.

(3) But, by His word you know His promises and the hope He has given in Jesus Christ.

b) Or will you follow in the steps of the world?

(1) The "grass does look greener on the other side."

(2) But, imagine if Lot had sought the Lord in his decision; he would have discovered the judgment of God was coming on this valley of Jordan for its wicked sin.

c) The key is not to consider the "greener pastures" but consider by faith what God has said.

(1) Simply remain where He says.

(2) But, when we doubt and are not sure, consider praying and asking for His assurance about your doubts.

III. War: Spiritual rewards (14:1-24)

A. The war of the heathen (1-12)

1. *All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea. (1-3)*

a) **We are given the names and locations of the kings and cities involved in this conflict.**

(1) The first group, led by Chedorlaomer of Elam, is an alliance of kings from the north and west of Canaan: Mesopotamia.

(2) The second group, led by Bera of Sodom, is an alliance of kings from the Jordan valley area: where Lot settled.

b) **We are told they have come together in the area of the Salt Sea or Dead Sea.**

2. *Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer. . .thirteenth year they rebelled. . .fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer. . . (4-12)*

a) **This foreign king from Mesopotamia controlled a vast territory through an alliance he led with other kings, including dominion over a large areas east of the Jordan.**

b) **After years of servitude to this foreign alliance of kings, they rebelled. (5-9)**

(1) The rebellion brought together the armies of Chedorlaomer and they marched on their former vassals.

(2) It took over a year to come to battle.

(3) After campaigning from north to south, they circled back up to the valley of Jordan to battle against the rebels.

c) **The valley where the battle was fought was full of slimepits, probably oil like substance.**

(1) It was poor ground for a battle probably chosen by Chedorlaomer for strategic purposes.

(2) His army carried the day and defeated the alliance led by Sodom.

(3) The victors sacked the cities and carried away everything of value, including Lot.

B. The rescue of the righteous warrior (13-16)

1. *And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew. . . (13)*

a) This is the first time Abram is referred to as a Hebrew.

- (1) The term most likely is a variation of the Eber, a forefather of Abram.
- (2) Abram, although still without an heir, had grown in stature before men and had become a recognized group of people.

b) After Lot's capture, one of his servants escaped to bring word to Abram.

2. *And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive...* (14-16)

a) There was no hesitation on the part of Abram.

- (1) After Lot's defection, Abram still loved and believed it was his responsibility to protect and defend his family, Lot.
- (2) He disregarded the past and went into action.

b) The greatness of Abram is seen in these verses.

- (1) He had 318 servants born in his house who were capable of bearing arms and going into battle.
- (2) This number is above the ones he left to care for his herds and other possessions while he was gone.

c) The battle was quick and decisive.

- (1) He caught them off guard as they were headed to their homeland.
- (2) Defeated them in battle and recovered all that was taken.

C. The blessings of the man of God (17-24)

1. *And the king of Sodom...* (17, 21-24)

a) This probably was quite the meeting in honor of Abram's victory.

b) As was normal in this culture, Abram had the right to the spoils.

- (1) The king of Sodom offered Abram to keep the spoils.
- (2) However, Abram was quick to respond that he would not take the spoils.
- (3) The offer was coming from a wicked king of a wicked city.
- (4) Abram refused by saying he had sworn to God to not touch the spoils (minus the tithes and portion for Canaanite men who went to battle with him).
- (5) Abram had truly grown spiritually since the days of Egypt.

- (a) He understood God was the only way to blessing.
 - (b) He understood God would bless him and prosper him and this was not going to be the way God blessed.
- (6) He would not be beholden to the world for his prosperity, but to God.
- (a) If he had taken the spoils, the people he was meant to be an example of God's grace and mercy could deny that God had prospered Abram.
 - (b) Instead, by denying what was rightfully his, Abram would continue to be a witness of God's blessing.

2. ***And Melchizedek king of Salem. . . (18-20)***

a) The king of righteousness from the city of peace

- (1) Much has been made of this man, as this is the only time the historical figure is mentioned.
- (2) He is important due to what the Bible describes as the priesthood of Melchizedek.
 - (a) **Psalms 110:4** *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*
 - (b) The Messiah, Jesus Christ, was prophesied to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek.
- (3) The book of Hebrews further expounds upon Melchizedek.
 - (a) **Hebrews 5:6** *As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*
 - (b) **Hebrews 6:20-7:3** Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.
- (4) The significance of Melchizedek:

- (a) Jesus Christ is after the order of Melchizedek, not the order of Aaron; therefore, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is greater than Aaron because it is not of the Law.
- (b) Hebrews 7:1-4 describe him as a person without discernable descent or genealogy and his priesthood lasting forever.
- (c) Possible view, a pre-incarnate form of Christ; however, it seems this was not the case as he was the king of Salem and all other references to Christ taking on human form in the O.T. are for brief amounts of time.
- (d) Another (better) view, the Bible is using this man as a picture of Christ and therefore does not record his genealogy for that purpose; but that his priesthood would continue forever, outside of the Law, in Jesus Christ.
- (e) Hebrews 7:10-22 describe how Jesus was made a priest after the order of Melchizedek, outside of the Law, a perfect priesthood, by an oath of God.
- (f) Aaron's priesthood was imperfect and built around and upon the Law, but Christ's priesthood was built upon the grace and mercy of the eternal Son of God.

D. Application

1. The blessing of God may be found in relying upon Him alone.

2. The Christian who relies upon God alone finds great blessing and rewards.

a) The comparison of Abram and Lot provide a great picture of that.

- (1) Lot's choice was the world and this is just the first consequence of his decision.
- (2) Abram's choice was God and the blessings of his choice are still being felt around the world through today in the saving power of Jesus Christ.

b) Abram relied upon God to give him victory and spurned the attempt of the world to ensnare him.

- (1) We also need to rely upon God alone for the victory in our daily walk through this world.
- (2) It is not what the world has to offer, but the eternal blessings of God.
- (3) Abram offered a tithe to the priest of God as an example to the world of his dependence upon God.
- (4) So also must Christians learn to give God the glory, so that the world might understand where real victory truly comes from.