

Lesson 8 – 28 March 2010

Abram—the Awakening of Faith

Lesson Scope: [Genesis Chapter 11:27 to Chapter 13:4](#)

Lesson Focus

In this lesson we find the Biblical introduction to Abram. Like some others before him, he placed his faith in God. He demonstrated faith in ways not seen before. Indeed, faith became the defining characteristic of his life. Abram stands as a shining example for all men who desire to live by faith. Hebrews 11 devotes more verses to an examination of Abram's faith than to that of any of the others named.

The exercise of faith does not require superhuman strength. "Faith cometh by hearing," (Romans 10:17). Evidently, Abram had heard about the true God in the idol-worshipping city of Ur of the Chaldees. He had sufficient knowledge to respond to God when He called.

God rewarded Abram's obedience and led him on a journey of faith. God used Abram to open a new chapter in the story of redemption. Called out from the city of his birth, Abram inherited a new land and became the head of a nation God used to carry on His plan for the redemption of man.

God calls men out of the world to a life of faith. As men obey His call, God blesses them and makes them channels blessing to the world.

This is the first lesson in a series on the faith of Abram, this lesson shows the importance of taking that first step in one's walk with God. Faith in God requires us to obey without knowing where God will lead us or what experiences we will meet.

As we study this lesson note the progress Abram made as he walked each step with God. We can draw practical lessons from Abram's experience that light the way for us who live in more complex times.

Lesson Aim: To give practical instruction on living by faith.

Theme Verse: [Hebrews 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.”

Lesson Text

Faith Awakened—Separation

Genesis 11:31-32

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. ³²And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

Genesis 12:1-5

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ²And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. ⁴So 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. ⁵And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

Faith Stimulated—Worship

Genesis 12:6-8

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite *was* then in the land. ⁷And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. ⁸And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, *having* Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

Faith Tested—Circumstances

Genesis 12:10-20

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine *was* grievous in the land. ¹¹And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou *art* a fair woman to look upon: ¹²Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This *is* his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save

thee alive. ¹³Say, 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.

¹⁴And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she *was* very fair. ¹⁵The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. ¹⁷And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. ¹⁸And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What *is* this *that* thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she *was* thy wife? ¹⁹Why saidst thou, She *is* my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take *her*, and go thy way. ²⁰And Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

Faith Maturing—Return

Genesis 13:1-4

And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. ²And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. ³And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; ⁴Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Questions for Study

Faith Awakened—Separation

1. What purpose did separation from Ur serve for Abram?
2. Why was obedience an essential component in Abram's walk of faith?
3. How might we by partial obedience compromise our profession of faith?

Faith Stimulated—Worship

4. How does worship strengthen one's faith?

Faith Tested—Circumstances

5. What tests did Abram experience in the famine? What lessons did he learn from them?
6. How should we relate to circumstances that seem to hinder our progress?

Faith Maturing—Return

7. Of what spiritual significance was Abram's return to Bethel?
8. What things can distract our minds from our commitment to God?"

Analyzing the Passage

As we trace the course of Abram's life, we see a growing and maturing faith. His leaving Ur at the call of God and his belief in the promises of God were the first moves of faith. Obedience to God gave proof of his faith.

Leaving the long-established city of Ur, Abram took on the life of a nomad or pilgrim, living in tents. The man of faith has no continuing city in this world. His spiritual vision is fixed on the world beyond the reach of mortal sight. Faith, however, is not a god—only a means of receiving God and laying hold on His promises.

Abram's walk of faith makes no sense to the worldly man. He sought what they cannot see. Even Abram was unable to see it with the natural eye.

When Abram moved, he took all his possessions and the people of his household with him (Gen.12:5. 13:1). He reserved nothing in following God's call.

The fact that "the Canaanite was then in the land" (Gen 12:6) posed a possible difficulty for Abram. They were a wicked people. Abram remained separate from them.

Famine in the land presented a trial to Abram's faith (Gen 12:10). Famine strips the land of that which sustains life. This illustrates the fact that the ground on which faith walks is not one of present rest. It seems that it took less faith to get Abram into Canaan than it did to keep him there. The life of faith often brings challenges that call for greater faith.

It does not appear that Abram had God's direction to go into Egypt. Fear caused Abram to say that Sarai should identify herself as his sister. This statement was true but misleading (Gen 12:13). She was his half sister but also his wife (Gen 20:12).

Egypt is a type of the world. The world knows that the man of God does not belong in their midst. God mercifully intervened to get Abram out of his dilemma, and Pharaoh sent him away (Gen.12:17).

We see the progression of Abram's faith in his altar building and worship. We find him at the altar on three occasions (Gen 12:7, 8: 13:4).

Principles and Applications

Faith Awakened—Separation

1. To walk by faith is to take one step at a time (Gen 11:3 1). The man of God accepts God's leadership, following when and where He leads. He does not need to know the details of all that the future holds, but he is content to take the next step as God directs.

2. The promises of God give the man of faith confidence to move (Gen 12:1-3). God promised not only to bless Abram, but also to make him a blessing. The prophecy "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:3) alludes to the fact that Jesus, the Saviour of the world, would come from Abram's descendants. Abram rejoiced in this prospect (John 8:56).

3. Separation is an integral part of living by faith (Gen 12:1, 4). The faithful must leave behind the comfortable life of those who make this world their home. They become strangers and pilgrims here. But the blessings God promises to the faithful are far greater than anything they are asked to give up.

4. Faith motivates action (12:4). This is the action of obedience. "Faith Without works is dead" (James 2:26). Abram obeyed God without asking questions or raising objection. When God calls us to a particular work or Sphere of service, we should move confidently, assured that God will enable us to fulfill the call. He will see us through the difficulties as they arise.

5. Faith sees danger in compromise (Gen 12:4, 5). At Haran Abram had gone only partway to Canaan. He prospered while there, but Haran was not his destination. We must likewise sense the danger of feeling satisfied when we have completed only part of the journey. We may not stop short of where God wants us to be.

Faith Stimulated—Worship

6. The man of faith acknowledges God in worship (Gen 12:7). At each point where God revealed Himself and more of His plan, Abram acknowledged God by worshiping at an altar. Reflecting on how God had blessed and led him, Abram was moved to worship. Worship indicates that we are thankful for God's past leading and that we are ready to move on with Him.

7. The man of faith senses his need of communion with God (Gen 12:8). Abram thrived spiritually through his communion with God. His worship helped to communicate his spiritual values to his family and to teach them

the way of faith. As he faced the uncertain future, he knew that he needed to stay in touch with God. God knows the far-reaching consequences, of the decisions we make. He knows how to fulfill the promises He has made to us. We must walk close to Him.

Faith Tested—Circumstances

8. Difficult experiences in life become a test of faith (Gen 12:10-13). As a man, Abram was not faultless. Evidently he failed to seek God's direction before going to Egypt. He used deceit in an effort to protect himself. We should take warning lest we likewise stumble. Humanistic wisdom seeks wrong means to avoid difficulties. Truly God watches over His people and takes much better care of them than they can do for themselves.

Faith Maturing—Return

9. The man of faith must constantly renew his commitments (Gen 13:3, 4). After Abram's faith was tested by the famine, he returned to the first altar he had built in Canaan. For Christians today, it is helpful to recall the vows we made at baptism and to remind ourselves how those commitments affect choices we face presently.

Important Teachings

1. To walk by faith is to take one step at a time (Gen 11:31).
2. The promises of God give the man of faith confidence to move (Gen 12:1-3).
3. Separation is an integral part of living by faith (Gen 12:1, 4).
4. Faith motivates action (Gen 12:4).
5. Faith sees danger in compromise (Gen 12:4, 5).
6. The man of faith acknowledges God in worship (Gen 12:7).
7. The man of faith senses his need of communion with God (Gen 12:8).
8. Difficult experiences in life become a test of faith (Gen 12:10-13).
9. The man of faith must constantly renew his commitments (Gen 13:3, 4).

Answers to Questions

1. What, purpose did separation from Ur serve for Abram?

Separating from Ur removed Abram from its idolatrous environment. It separated him and his family from the influence of idol-worshipping, kin-folks. It gave Abram an opportunity to demonstrate before his family what it means to live by faith.

2. Why was obedience an essential component in Abram's walk of faith?

When God called Abram to leave Ur, mere mental assent to God's call was not enough. To say "I believe" was inadequate proof of his faith. He demonstrated his faith clearly when he moved out at God's call. Without obedience, his faith was incomplete and therefore invalid.

3. How might we by partial obedience compromise our profession of faith? At any point along life's way, we might feel self-satisfied with our progress and fail to move on to the next level in our journey of faith. We might feel that we are doing as well as our brethren, failing to realize that if everyone aimed to be average, the level of spirituality among us would soon sink. Comparing ourselves among ourselves is not wise (2 Corinthians 10: 12). Another example of partial obedience is to claim to believe a certain truth but apply it only in certain areas of life.

4. How does worship strengthen one's faith?

As the man of faith reflects on how God continually guides him and provides for him, his faith becomes stronger. His past experience of walking with God by faith shows clearly that God's way is best and His direction unerring. Resting in the Lord in times of worship, one gains strength for the next segment of the journey.

5. What tests did Abram experience in the famine? What lessons did he learn from them?

Abram faced the test of trusting God to provide for him when famine reduced the food supply. In Egypt he faced possible danger to his life.

Abram learned that, although he was where God wanted him to be, his life was not without difficulties. He learned that relying on human wisdom rather than on God can complicate the difficulties. He experienced God's mercy in the midst of his ill-advised scheme, bringing him through without lasting harm.

6. How should we relate to circumstances that seem to hinder our progress? In the midst of life's circumstances, we often face difficulties that threaten to halt us in our journey. At such times we must patiently endure, seeking God's grace to make the best of the situation. Often we find that, in the end, the things that seemed to be against us actually worked for us, enhancing our faith in God and fortifying our spiritual stamina and strength.

7. Of what spiritual significance was Abram's return to Bethel?

During Abram's sojourn in Egypt, he learned that "God's way is best; even if human wisdom a fairer way may seem to show." By returning to Bethel,

he was expressing a desire to renew his covenant with God. He was recognizing his need of God and His divine leading for the future.

8. What things can distract our minds from our commitment to God?

These distractions abound in our day. The fast pace of modern life can crowd out the spiritual things we claim to value. The business and duties of each day can keep our minds occupied with thoughts of our material pursuits so that we do not consider the real reason we are in this world. We need daily time alone with God to regain our focus on Him and to renew our commitment to walk with Him by faith.

Summarizing the Lesson

To begin a life of faith, we take the first step when we move in obedience to God's call. Like Abram, we start the journey without the benefit of a detailed itinerary listing all the experiences we will meet. It is sufficient to know that God leads the way and that He rewards simple obedience.

Research Guide

1. In a discourse on the relationship of faith and works (James 2:14– 26), Abraham is used as an example. This passage presents the practical involvements of living by faith. Study this lesson, relating Abram's faith to the work (obedience) that proved the validity of his faith.
2. Read Romans 10 to see how man comes to faith.