



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

Faith tested!

Genesis 12:8-20

Message #13 of 50 – S910

Sermon given on August 30, 2020

@ Hawk Ranch, Murrieta, CA



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Faith tested!

Genesis 12:8-20

Opening Comments

- Good morning – turn to **Genesis 12**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- If I were to ask you if you trust God – I am guessing most of you would say yes – or at least, ‘I think so!’
- How much do you trust God – with your whole life?
- Trusting God is a matter of faith
- Believing that God is real and that He cares about our lives and has a plan for us that is good
- The Christian life is to be lived by walking in faith **Romans 1:16-17**
For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”
- ‘from faith to faith’ = taking one step of faith after another
- Real faith is about taking steps into an unknown and uncertain future believing that God is there and is able and willing to take care of your there
- Real faith doesn’t have all the answers but trusts in God who does
- Real faith doesn’t know how things are going to turn out but trusts in God who has already determined the outcome
- Real faith faces a fearful future fearlessly because God is with us
- Real faith is not perfect faith but a faith that is being perfected
- The best life any human can live is one of true faith in God, lived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Based on the Word of God, and in the name of Jesus Christ
- So, to live the best life, we ought to learn how to walk in true faith
- Maybe you are sitting there or watching online and thinking – I have faith!
- My question to you is, ‘Do you have enough faith?’
- And if you answer yes to that, my next question is, “How do you know?”

- Faith is invisible until it is used
- Faith is like a debit card with a balance you can't check
- The only way to know if you can use it is to try to use it
- In our text for today we are going to see what God does to increase the available balance of our faith
- Let's pray and ask the Spirit to help us grow our faith
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Faith tested!**
- Last week we saw Abram walking in faith
- God told him to leave his country, family, and father's house
- Abram did, not know where he was going
- God blessed Abram and made 7 radical promises to Abram and to his descendants
- So far, Abram is walking in faith with his God – well done
- God continues to lead Abram on a tour through the land He is giving him
- **Genesis 12:8-9**
- So far so good – faith, obedience, and worship – everything is awesome!
- Abram has heard from the Lord and obeyed
- As he walked in faith God appeared to Him and made incredible promises to him and his descendants
- He is regularly bringing his family to a place of worship of God, even in the idolatry-filled land of Canaan
- He is doing everything right
- **Genesis 12:10**
- Wait! What is in the land? A famine?
- We are not told the cause of the famine, but the result is that there is not enough food for people or animals to eat
- Why would God call Abram to leave his home and go to a land in the middle of a famine? Did God know about the famine before He called Abram? Of course, He did!

- We wrongly assume that walking in faith and obedience somehow guarantees abundance, peace, and success.
- Jesus warned us that life might not be like that **John 16:33**
These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.
- Our peace is not found in the ease of our circumstances but in the strength of our Savior
- The famine was a test
- Abram had been walking by faith, putting his trust in the God who spoke to Him and revealed Himself to him
- But did he really trust God? Did Abram trust God with everything in his life?
- A famine would have disrupted the lives of everyone in Canaan
- The times we are living in are not dissimilar to a famine
- This pandemic is disrupting the lives of everyone
- A famine would have created great fear – death by starvation was a real possibility
- people are living with the daily fear of contracting COVID-19
- During a time like this we have two choices – walking in faith or walking in fear
- The phrase ‘do not be afraid’ appears 50 times in the Bible
- And the phrase ‘fear not’ – 11 times **Isaiah 41:10**
Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.
- Real faith, trusting God drives away fear
- That doesn’t mean you are not made uncomfortable by the fearful things in an uncertain and unknown future
- It just means you walk into them anyway
- Abram’s faith was being tested
- Some suggest that Abram was showing a lack of faith by going to Egypt
- The text doesn’t actually indicate that – doesn’t tell us that Abram consulted God, but it also doesn’t suggest that God was displeased
- It is what Abram does next that is the problem
- **Genesis 12:11-13**
- Just to put this into context – Sarai is 65 years old

- Either the women of Egypt were very unattractive, or Sarai was exceedingly beautiful
 - Abram is afraid that someone is going to kill him and take his wife
 - So he comes up with this scheme – tell them you are my sister
 - It is a half-truth – she is his half-sister – same father, different mothers
 - Culturally, if they killed him, they could just take her
 - But if she was his sister, they would come to him to negotiate a marriage arrangement – giving him time to get out of it
 - Abram’s fear leads him to tell this half-truth
 - Problem is a half-truth is a whole lie
 - This is one of the problems with walking in fear rather than walking in faith – it always leads to sin – the sin of deception, or the sin of compromise, or the sin of disobedience – always!
 - Let’s reread the promises God made to Abram
 - **Genesis 12:2-3**
 - Is it possible that God could keep those promises to Abram if the Egyptians kill him and take his wife? No!
 - Real faith looks at the reality of every situation – this is what could happen – and then compares it with what God said
 - Real faith chooses to trust in what God said even if that thing that could happen is something fearful
 - Abram is afraid of losing his wife – lies about their relationship
 - What could possibly go wrong?
 - **Genesis 12:14-15**
 - Pharaoh didn’t negotiate for wives – he took any woman he wanted
 - Abram’s plan backfired – his wife, his precious, gorgeous Sarai is taken from him
 - What will happen with all God’s promises now?
 - **Genesis 12:16**
 - Here is a moral dilemma – Abram’s deception led to his prosperity
 - Abram’s lack of faith was rewarded with material wealth, not from God, but from the world.
 - This world will reward you for a lack of faith, but at what cost?
- Matthew 16:26**

**For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?
Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**

- Abram's lack of faith has cost him his wife and put the promises of God in jeopardy

- And there is nothing Abram can do about – so, God steps in

- **Genesis 12:17-20**

- Doesn't say what the plagues were, but they got Pharaoh's attention

- Unlike the Pharaoh in the Exodus – took ten plagues

- How tragic – here was the father of the Hebrew people being driven out of Egypt in humiliation

- Abram was a man of faith – not perfect faith – perfecting faith

- It would later be said of him **Genesis 15:5-6**

Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

- Thankfully, with God, our mistakes do not define us – our faith does

- This is not the last time Abram makes a mistake – in fact, he is going to repeat this same mistake

- And still – God uses him to create a special people through whom he will bring the Savior of the world

- Your mistakes do not define you – even the ones you keep repeating

- It is your faith that defines you

- And God is going to allow or bring tests of your faith into your life

- Sometimes they are little pop quizzes to see if you will do the right thing, even when potential consequence is low

- Every test that God brings or allows in your life is an opportunity to Glorify God, bless others, and grow faith

- As we look at this pathetic account in Abram's life – God is not glorified and any chance of Abram witnessing to the Egyptian people about God is lost

- Not only that but it is likely that this is probably how Hagar, Sarai's Egyptian servant came into their lives

- Hagar would be part of another test that Abram and Sarai both fail – that is for another time

- Tests of your faith are coming – because your faith is not perfect

- Walking in faith is a day-by-day exercise

- One of my favorite images of Jesus and God is found in **John 10:28-29**

And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.

- The Christian life of faith is lived with one hand in the hand of Christ and the other on whatever God sets before you
- When the tests come – and they will – we are tempted to let go of Christ's hands and put both hands to the problem
- That will result in something that is not of faith – a work of the flesh
- During the tests, the trials, the temptations, the tribulations, cling ever more tightly to the hand of your Savior Jesus
- Trust Jesus, cling tightly to Him, the Almighty Creator of the universe and remind yourself of His great and precious promises
- The best life possible is lived by walking hand-in-hand in faith with Jesus into whatever unknown and uncertain future He has in store for you
- Because it is with Him that we will experience the glory of God and know the joy of His presence now and forevermore
- **Pray!**