

Genesis 12:9-20 and 13:1-4

Hebrews 11 gives Abraham the well-deserved title of a man of faith.

But when God first called him to Canaan, he certainly couldn't have claimed that title.

No, his faith had to develop over the years as God patiently dealt with him.

We are first made aware of this weakness in faith in Genesis 12:1-2 when the LORD said to 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:**

² **And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make**

thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."

It was a wonderful promise, but at that point in his life, Abram did not have enough faith to claim it.

To obey God's command would involve leaving his kindred, and especially his father, and he was not willing to make such a sacrifice.

So, as it turned out, it was his father, Terah, an idol worshipper, who eventually broke the tie with home and settled in Haran.

Genesis 11:31 **"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."

We don't really know what prompted Terah to set out for Canaan, but whatever his motivation, he did not complete the journey, but stopped short in Haran.

This, of course, was not a step of faith on Abram's part. He had only complied with his father's wishes.

As far as Abram was concerned, circumstance had brought him part-way to Canaan, and circumstance had left him stranded in Haran, but he made no move to correct that situation.

Yes, because of a lack of faith, Abram lived his life just outside the place of God's blessing.

Many years later, his descendents, the children of Israel, would fail in much the same way, and for the same reason. They did not enter Canaan either, the place of their rightful inheritance.

Instead, they spent the rest of their lives wandering in the wilderness, deprived of God's promises.

Hebrews 3: 19 gives us the *real* reason for their failure---"**So we see that they could not enter in because of *unbelief.***"

In fact, that is really the *only* reason why any of us fail to claim God's promises.

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Well, finally, God had to step in to break the tie of nature that was holding Abram back.

V 32 **"And the days of Terah were two
hundred and five years: and Terah died
in Haran."**

So, as Genesis 12 begins, we see Abram
finally stepping out by faith to make
the long journey to Canaan.

It was the beginning of a lifetime of faith,
a faith that would develop over the
years.

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Last week, in Genesis 12: 6, we read "**--And
the Canaanite was then in the land.**"

Yes, the Canaanite was still in the land,
and was a source of concern to Abram,
but the Lord was also in the land.

And He appeared unto him with the promise
that some day, this land would belong
to his family.

It was a promise that would focus his attention on God rather than the Canaanite, and one that should encourage him to stay in the Promised Land.

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And last week, we learned a practical lesson from this experience of Abram's.

We will also find that the Canaanite is still in the land in *our own* lives.

Satan's power is great, and he will always try to intimidate us into accepting spiritual poverty.

But, as in Abram's case, God's promises are still true, and Canaan is the place where we can find them.

Will we stay in Canaan, or will we run when trouble threatens?

The choice is ours, and as we will soon learn by Abram's experience, it is a choice that will greatly affect our Christian testimony.

So perhaps we can learn from *his* mistakes, rather than going through the painful process of learning from our own.

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Yes, when Abram first entered the Promised Land, he must have been quite intimidated by the presence of the Canaanite, for they were a very wicked people.

However, God's wonderful promise had quieted his fears and encouraged him to stay. But, unfortunately, what fear could not accomplish, adversity soon did.

Yes, after he had taken so long to get to Canaan, he soon pulled up stakes and left.

Oh, no, you say!

Oh, yes, I'm afraid he did.

V 9-10 **"And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.**

¹⁰ 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."

You see, it not only requires faith to enter the Promised Land, it requires faith to stay there.

Now, we have to admit that this was a very serious problem.

Abram had flocks and herds and servants to provide for, so a famine was not only a serious problem to himself personally.

It involved those for whom he was responsible.

But was it a problem too great for God?

We know it wasn't, for God is all powerful.

But, apparently it was too great for Abram's faith to handle, at least at that particular time in his life.

Yes, he felt this responsibility weighing so heavily on his shoulders that he forgot God's promises, and took matters into his own hands.

So, turning his back on Canaan, he fled to the land of Egypt.

Oh, it was a practical solution. There wasn't any famine in Egypt, but in his decision to leave Canaan, he had completely ignored the fact that God had called him to that land.

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Abraham's choice of Egypt rather than Canaan has a significant teaching in it for our own lives.

As far as the Christian's spiritual walk is concerned, Egypt is a picture of the world system that operates under its leader, Satan.

Under the pressures of this world system we live in, we are often called upon to make the choice between holding onto God's promises, or accepting the easier alternative of abandoning them.

However, the choice of Egypt, no matter what the practical advantages may seem to be, is never a good choice for the lasting benefit of God's children.

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But someone might say, *If Egypt is really a type of the world, then why did Joseph*

encourage his brethren to leave the Promised Land, again in the wake of a famine, and seek refuge in Egypt? And not just for a short time, but for the rest of their lives.

Well, that's a very good question, and here's another one to consider.

Why did Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt when Jesus was a baby in order to escape the wrath of Herod?

In these two instances, *Why did the world serve God's purposes so well?*

Well, first of all, we need to notice that in both these cases, it was God's choice, not man's, to go to Egypt.

Yes, in the providence of God, the world can be made to serve His purposes.

And God has every right to use the world system in His plans, if He so desires.

Psalm 76:10 tells us, "**Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.**"

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But in Abram's case, his journey into Egypt was not the result of God's revealed will. It was simply his own idea to avoid adversity.

Yes, he should have remained in the centre of God's will, and, in that case, God's will meant Canaan.

No, for Abram, Egypt was not an option.

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And Abram's decision is one that all of us will be called upon to make, and no doubt have already made.

In every case, we should stay within the path of God's revealed will.

This is the 'land' that He has called us to.

And also, we need to be very careful in discerning God's will, for in many cases, our own expediencies can masquerade quite well as being God's command.

However, if we doggedly refuse to leave Canaan, we can be sure that God, in His own time and in His own way, will take care of the adversity that threatens to drive us out of the path of blessing.

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In Abram's case the famine was certainly very real, and Egypt was readily at hand, but God had not promised him any possession in Egypt.

So in our own lives, Egypt will always be *readily available*, offering deliverance from pressure, and a very reasonable alternative to the land of Canaan.

But we must be careful, for it is seldom the lack of knowledge, but rather the fear of adversity that deflects us from the path of obedience.

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So Abram left the higher ground, and by so doing, he left the fellowship of his God, and very soon that would lead him into further compromises.

V 10-13 **"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.**

¹¹ **And 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:**

¹² **Therefore 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.

¹³ Say, 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."

His original decision to forsake Canaan, the land of God's choice, had simply been a practical decision to avert a problem. But, as we now see, this decision soon sent him down the slippery slope to other bad choices.

I don't think Abram would have ever thought of suggesting such a thing to his wife when he was in Canaan.

But, no doubt, as they journeyed down into Egypt, they noticed the exceeding

wickedness of the people, and soon
Abram caved in to fear.

When you begin to deviate from the path of
God's revealed will, in time you will
surely fall into practices that you
would have never yielded to before.

Under Egypt's influence, Abram had
encouraged his wife to lie about their
relationship, and in so doing, he had
effectively abandoned his
responsibility for her protection.

The realization of what he was doing should
have so shocked him that he would have
immediately turned his back on Egypt.

Egypt was no place for him.

He was getting in way over his head, but
pressed by the famine in Canaan, he
still doggedly continued on.

As the old saying goes, he was jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

V 14-15 **"And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.**

15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

16 And 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."

Being the brother of such a beautiful woman had made him a very popular man with Pharaoh.

He had gone from the point of losing everything to a famine, to becoming a very rich man.

The world had treated him royally.

And it is true that compromise can often be very profitable materially speaking.

Yes, Abram had gained great wealth, but at what cost?

He had no altar, no communication with God, he was telling a lie, and living a lie.

And even though Pharaoh had been very generous with him, his 'sister,' (really his wife), although as yet undefiled, was constrained to live in Pharaoh's court.

The truth was, he had scandalously abandoned his wife to protect his own skin.

Materially speaking, things seem to be going quite well for Sarah's 'brother,' but

in actual fact, everything was going very wrong, and was bound to get much worse.

No doubt by then both Abram and Sarai were having a lot of sleepless nights, and would have given anything to be back in Canaan, if by then it had been in their power to do so.

Proverbs 13:15 says "**--the way of transgressors is hard.**" And for them, that time had come.

Abram had left Canaan and communion with his God, and because of that, had sunken into one compromise after another.

The lesson is plain.

Exemption from temporary pressure, and even the accumulation of great wealth, are a poor equivalent for what one loses by

deviating one hair's breadth from the straight path of obedience.

How sad when the child of God slips into the current of this present evil world to avoid the trials and strain connected with God's path of obedience.

In the end, this course of action will bring leanness and barrenness to his soul.

He may have obtained the world's favour, gotten a name and a position amongst men, but what are these compared to the joy of the Lord, a pure conscience, a testimony for Christ, and an effectual service for Him?

So let us keep careful guard over our faith and a pure conscience.

1 Peter 5:8 warns us to--"**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the**

**devil, as a roaring lion, walketh
about, seeking whom he may devour."**

When trial comes, instead of turning aside
into Egypt, let us wait upon our God.

And let us remember Him **"Who gave himself
for our sins, that he might deliver us
from this present evil world, according
to the will of God and our Father"**

Galatians 1:4.

If His love for us, and His evaluation of
this present world are such that He was
willing to give Himself to deliver us
from it, shall we then deny Him by
plunging back into its power?

God forbid!

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Well, Abram was in way over his head, but,
fortunately for him, God was about to
take matters into His own hands.

There never was a chance that Sarai would become one of Pharaoh's wives.

God had promised Abram, **"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."**

That was God's plan, and neither Abram's foolish actions, nor Pharaoh's schemes, although they were backed up by all the power of Egypt, could change God's plan one iota.

V 17 **"And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife."**

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However, even though God could overrule Pharaoh and protect His own plans, the fact remained that Abram and Sarai had brought reproach upon His Name.

That could *not* be changed.

V 18-20 "And 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?

19 Why 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.

20 And Pharaoh commanded his men
concerning him: and they sent him away,
and his wife, and all that he had."

Although Pharaoh was afraid to do any harm
to Sarai or Abram, he nevertheless
rebuked him sharply.

It is evident that He had lost all respect
and affection for them, and ,of course,
for their God.

They had lost their testimony, and being justly rebuked by an unbeliever, they were told to leave the country.

They must have journeyed back to Canaan in an embarrassed silence.

Outwardly, of course, everything had gone well.

They had escaped the famine of Canaan.

They had come out of Egypt materially rich. Sarai was still with Abram, and neither of them had been injured in any way.

If they had been worldly people, although shaken by this experience, they might have been quite satisfied with themselves.

But they weren't worldly people.

Pharaoh's rebuke pressed heavily upon them.

At one time when they had followed God's call into a strange land and walked by

faith, they had enjoyed His protection,
but now, because of fear, they had lost
their testimony.

Yes, I think the Egyptians would have been
glad to see the last of them.

And no doubt even their own servants,
although they would not say as much,
were disgusted with their master.

They should have never gone to Egypt in the
first place.

Surly the Lord could have supplied for their
needs in Canaan, even during the time
of famine.

And even in Egypt, since they had been
determined to go there, they should
have trusted God to protect them,
rather than resorting to such a
degrading compromise.

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Of course, it is easy for us to criticize Abram and Sarai, but under the same circumstances, we have to ask the question, *Would we have fared any better?*

So the lesson for us is clear: *Stay in Canaan, stay in the centre of God's will. The Lord can preserve us even in a famine.*

No, we don't *have* to go down into Egypt.

1 Corinthians 10: 12-13 says, **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."**

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But, unfortunately, Abram and Sarai had yielded to temptation, and sometimes you and I also yield to temptation, in spite of the fact that God does **"make a way to escape."**

So what about that?

Has God provided reconciliation?

And if he has provided a way back, are we now doomed to a lesser position, a lower form of service in the future?

Is there complete reconciliation with the Lord, or are we somewhat crippled for life?

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The answer to this question is found in the next chapter.

So let's look at Chapter 13, where the true character of divine restoration is made quite plain.

When the child of God strays from known truth and loses his communion with God, he is in great danger. After he has repented for his sin of underestimating the full extent of God's divine grace--because he has failed so miserably--he often stops short of seeking complete restoration.

But the degree to which God does anything is always in keeping with His true nature. So whether He creates, redeems, converts, provides, or restores, He does it completely, for that is in accordance with His true nature.

Unfortunately, we are prone to limit "**the Holy One of Israel.**"

And nowhere are we more prone to limit Him than in the area of His restoring grace.

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Here in Genesis 13:1-4, we see His grace graciously demonstrated to Abram: **"And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.**

2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

3 And 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;

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."

Not only did God deliver Abram out of Egypt, but he brought him back to **"the place where his tent had been at the**

beginning," and "Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."

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So what is the lesson that we can learn here?

It is that nothing can satisfy God in reference to a wanderer or a backslider than His complete restoration.

We might self-righteously think that the backslider should take a lower place than he had formerly, and if it were a question of his merits or character, so he should.

But because it is completely a question of God's grace, and it is *His* right to set the standard of restoration, His grace always restores completely.

This does not mean that there is no
consequence for sin.

No, the example of David's great sin with
Bathsheba makes it clear that there *are*
consequences for sin, even though
fellowship is restored.

When David totally repented, fellowship with
his God was completely restored.
However, there was still a price to
pay.

2 Samuel 12:10-11 **"Now therefore the sword
shall never depart from thine house;
because thou hast despised me, and hast
taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to
be thy wife.**

¹¹ **Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will
raise up evil against thee out of thine
own house---."**

But, as far as the Heavenly Father is concerned, when there is complete repentance and the forsaking of sin, complete and total fellowship is restored.

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We also see this principle taught by Jesus in His parable of the prodigal son.

When the son contemplated returning to his father's house, he had planned to say--

"I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

¹⁹ And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

He was prepared to take the lower position, but, as we will see, his father would not hear of it.

Yes, on returning to his father's house as he had previously planned, he said "---
I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight."

So right there, he had confessed and forsaken his sin, and that is essential, but the other part, that is the part about I "**am no more worthy to be called thy son**" was not even *heard* by the father.

No, "---the father said to his servants,
Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

²³ **And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:**

²⁴ **For this my son was dead, and is**

**alive again; he was lost, and is found.
And they began to be merry."**

God's grace will never allow His child to be just a hired servant. He is either restored completely, or not at all.

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So, in spite of Abram's compromises in Egypt, God brought him back to **"the place where his tent had been at the beginning,"** and **"unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."**

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However, God's complete restoration should always have a very practical effect in our lives.

The restored soul should now have a very keen sense of the evil from which he

has been delivered, and a sincere desire to walk worthy of his restoration.

No, we are not restored in order to lightly plunge back into sin again, but rather to **"go, and sin no more."**

We see this principle taught in Psalm 23:3--

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the *paths of righteousness* for his name's sake."

Those two things must never be separated.

Not only does God cleanse us from the penalty of our sin, but He also leads us **"in the *paths of righteousness* for his name's sake."**