

TRUST IN THE LORD AT ALL TIMES

12 Now there was a famine in the land, so Abram went down into Egypt to stay there for a while, because the famine was severe in the land. ¹¹When he came near to the border of Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, Listen, I know that you are a beautiful woman. ¹²When the Egyptians see you they will say, This is his wife. They will kill me, but keep you alive. ¹³I ask you, Please say that you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.

¹⁴And so it happened that when Abram had come into Egypt, the Egyptians observed that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵The princes of Pharaoh saw her and praised her to Pharaoh. So the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶And Pharaoh treated Abram well for her sake. Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels. ¹⁷But Jehovah inflicted severe plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, She is my sister, so that I took her to be my wife? Now, therefore, here is your wife, take her and go your way. ²⁰Then Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning Abram and they escorted him away, together with his wife and all his possessions.

13 Abram departed out of Egypt, he and his wife, with all his possessions. And Lot went with him. They journeyed to the South of Canaan. ²Now Abram was very rich in cattle and in silver and gold. ³And he traveled from the South as far north as Beth-el, to the place where he had pitched his tent when he first arrived in Canaan, between Beth-el and Ai. ⁴He went to the place of the altar that he had made when he first came; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah.

⁵Now Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶And the land was not able to sustain them, that they might live together; because their possessions were so great, they could not live together. ⁷There occurred a conflict between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle; (and the Canaanite and the Perizzite were then living in the land.) ⁸Then Abram said to Lot, I beg you, let there be no conflict between me and you, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. ⁹Is not the whole land before you? I ask you, please separate yourself from me. If you will go to the left, then I will go to the right. Or if you will go to the right, I will go to the left. ¹⁰Lot looked up and observed that all the Plain of the Jordan was well watered every where, it was like the garden of Jehovah, or like the land of Egypt as you go towards Zoar. (This was before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹So Lot chose for himself all the Plain of the Jordan. Then Lot journeyed east. So they separated themselves from one another. ¹²Abram settled in the land of Canaan, but Lot settled in the cities of the Plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. ¹³Now the men of Sodom were wicked and exceedingly great sinners against Jehovah.

¹⁴After Lot had separated himself from him, Jehovah said to Abram, Now lift up your eyes from the place where you are and look northward and southward and eastward and westward; ¹⁵because I will give to you and to your offspring forever all the land that you see. ¹⁶And I will make your descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth, so that if a man could count the dust of the earth, then may your offspring also be counted. ¹⁷Arise, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I will give it to

you. ¹⁸Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to Jehovah. (Gen. 12:10-13:18)

Introduction

Do you ever have trouble remembering things? Do you sometimes have trouble remembering whether or not you just did something? If so, you're not alone: 38% of the population admits that they sometimes forget whether or not they have just done a routine task. A researcher from Johns Hopkins Medical School discovered that most people tend to be forgetful: 83% forget names; ... 60% forget where they put something; ... 57% forget telephone numbers; ... 53% forget words; ... 49% forget what was just said to them; ... 42% forget faces (*Our Daily Bread*, 12/27/96.) From time to time we all seem to have a problem with remembering.

As Christians, how many times must we add to the above list such things as:

- Forgetting God's promises
- Forgetting God's awesome power
- Forgetting God's covenant love and faithfulness.

Even though we possess the LORD's promises, like Abram, we often forget His covenant faithfulness and fail to trust Him in time of need. Because the LORD is our faithful God, we must trust in Him at all times, especially in times of trial.

I. Trust in the LORD at All Times, and Do Not Take Matters into Your Own Hands

When there comes a famine to the land of Canaan, Abram takes it upon himself to journey down into Egypt (12:10.) The pressure on him was great: the famine was severe in Canaan, but the land of Egypt was well watered and fertile (cp. Gen. 13:10.) Confronted by this trying situation, Abram apparently forgot to trust in the LORD. He neither consults the LORD to ascertain His divine will, nor appeals to the LORD to meet his need. Rather than trust in the LORD's covenant faithfulness; when confronted by a trying situation, Abram takes matters into his own hands. He probably thought it was an easy and obvious decision; he was probably blind to the complications—until he got down to Egypt.

When Abram and Sarai arrive at the border of Egypt, Abram becomes aware of another problem: his wife, Sarai, is a beautiful woman (12:11-13.) His apprehension is that the Egyptians will covet Sarai, and in order to obtain her they will kill him. Once again, Abram devises his own solution: Sarai is to identify herself as Abram's sister. This way, not only will Abram's life be spared, but the Egyptians will treat him well for Sarai's sake.

This time his own solution involves Abram in a double breach of faith. He is violating his commitment to Sarai; rather than reverence their sacred marriage

bond, he is willing to prostitute her for his own safety and personal gain. He is violating his commitment to the LORD; again, for the sake of his own personal safety and profit, he is going to resort to telling a lie. He may have consoled himself with the rationalization that it was only a “white lie,” because Sarai was his half-sister, but it was a lie. His marriage relationship to her took precedence over any former relationship between them.

Abram’s failure to trust in the LORD in his time of need (failing looking to the LORD for counsel and provision) has 1) led him to unanticipated complications, and 2) led him to commit actual sins against his wife and against his God.

At first, it seemed that Abram’s stratagem was a wise move (12:14-16.) The Egyptians were attracted to Sarai; consequently, Abram’s life may well have been in jeopardy before the all-powerful Pharaoh. Pharaoh bestows much riches upon Abram for Sarai’s sake: Pharaoh takes Sarai, and in exchange gives Abram much cattle. Sometimes decisions made apart from God look good—in the short run.

But the LORD, for the sake of His justice and His own righteousness, will not allow one of His people to perpetrate such an evil (12:17-20.) The LORD plagued Pharaoh and his whole household with great plagues on account of Sarai, Abram’s wife. When Pharaoh ascertains the cause of the plagues, he rebukes Abram, putting him to public shame by demonstrating himself to be more honorable than this “Christian” man. Pharaoh then expels Abram from Egypt. Consequently, Abram is denied access to the fruits of Egypt and is confronted once again with his original problem: how to cope with the severe famine.

As we consider this incident in the life of Abram, note that Abram was motivated by fear and desperation. His failure to resort to the LORD led him to dishonor God and bring dishonor upon himself, and he was denied what he initially had sought to gain. Let us trust in the LORD at all times, resisting the temptation to take matters into our own hands.

II. Trust in the LORD at All Times, and Do Not be Deceived by “Attractive Alternatives”

It appears that Abram took to heart his bitter experience in Egypt and came to his senses (13:1-4.) He returned to Canaan and journeyed back to his original camp site and to the altar he had built to the LORD, *“there Abram called on the name of Jehovah,”* (i.e., he appeals to the covenant God for mercy, for guidance, for divine provisions.) One true sign of God’s work of grace is that His people return to Him in repentance and renewed commitment.

But Lot did not learn from the Egyptian experience. Lot was with Abram and Sarai in Egypt, and he was well aware of all that took place, as is indicated in Genesis 13:1a, *“Abram departed out of Egypt, he and his wife, with all his*

possessions And Lot went with him.” When the next dilemma arises, Lot is the one who fails to remember the LORD.

When Abram and Lot return to the land of Canaan, they are confronted with that next dilemma. Both Abram and Lot have large herds and flocks (13:2,5.) Their cattle and possessions were so great that they could no longer dwell together (13:6;) conflicts and disputes were erupting between their respective herdsmen (13:7.) Out of concern to maintain their peace and unity as Christian brothers, Abram proposes a viable solution (13:8-9.) Abram offers Lot first choice of the land (vs. 9.) Note: Abram is limiting the choice to the whole land of Canaan; they are to remain within the bounds of the Promised Land.

But Lot takes Abram’s suggestion a step further, beyond what was spiritually legitimate to what was spiritually dangerous and beyond the divinely acceptable limits (13:10-11.) Lot sees that the Plain of the Jordan (the land east of the Jordan River) is very attractive (vs. 10.) So he chose that land as his portion: *“Lot journeyed east”* (13:11)—here is a subtle way of indicating that Lot was journeying away from the LORD his God. Compare this editorial comment of Genesis 13:11 with what is said of Cain in Genesis 4:16, *“Cain departed from the presence of Jehovah and settled in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.”* So it was that *“Abram settled in the land of Canaan, but Lot settled in the cities of the Plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. ¹³Now the men of Sodom were wicked”* (Gen. 13:12-13a.)

Let us trust in the LORD at all times, and not be deceived by “attractive alternatives.” Whereas Abram’s earlier decision was motivated by fear and desperation, Lot’s present decision was motivated by the prospect of preserving and promoting his personal wealth. In both cases, their failure to remember and trust in the LORD their God cost them dearly. In this present instance Lot’s righteous soul would become tormented by the lives of his lawless neighbors, as we are told by the Apostle Peter (cp. 2 Peter 2:7-8,)

... righteous Lot ... was distressed by the conduct of lawless men living in licentiousness—⁸for by what he saw and heard as he lived among them day by day, that righteous man felt his righteous soul tormented by their lawless deeds. (2 Pet. 2:7-8)

Lot’s unrighteous choice contributed to the partial loss of his family. Only he and his two daughters survived. Genesis 19:30 records that after escaping the destruction of Sodom, *“Lot ... stayed in the mountains with his two daughters.”* Lot’s wife was consumed in the destruction of Sodom: she *“looked back ... and ... became a pillar of salt”* Gen. 19:26.)

III. Trust in the LORD at All Times, and He will Sustain You

After Lot separated himself and left the land of Canaan, the LORD spoke to Abram (13:14.) The LORD's nearness and intimacy is reserved for those who trust in Him and seek to abide in covenant faithfulness to Him.

The LORD personally grants to Abram divine assurance that he and his descendants shall inherit the Promised Land (13:14-16.) Abram had exhibited a great act of faith: he had rejected the fertile plains and confined himself to the land of Canaan, (even though it was presently famine-stricken), because it was the Promised Land. In so doing, Abram received the sustaining presence and reassurance of the LORD.

The LORD commands Abram to walk through the length and breadth of the land and again declares that He will give it to Abram (13:17.) Walking around the circumference of the land was the act of validating the acquisition of a piece of property (Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, Gordon-Conwell Seminary, South Hamilton MA, 01982, 1993, p.229.)

The LORD's repeated statement, *"I will give to you and to your offspring forever all the land that you see,"* is the reminder that in the last analysis everything belongs to the LORD, and is His to dispense as He sees fit—and He sees fit to share it with those who are faithful to Him (note Ecclesiastes 2:26, printed below):

God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to the man who pleases him; but to the sinner God gives the arduous task of gathering and storing up wealth so that He may give it to the one who pleases Him. (Eccl. 2:26)

Let us trust in the LORD at all times, and as we do so, we will find Him faithful to sustain us with His own dear presence and His sure promise.

Conclusion

This is the message of Scripture: Because the LORD is our faithful God, we must trust Him at all times, especially in times of trial.

In the light of this passage of Scripture, let us be spiritually perceptive to recognize that trials come in a variety of forms: 1) situations that arouse within us the emotions of fear and desperation, and 2) situations that appear to offer the prospect of security and great material gain. But whichever the variety of trial, may we be constant in remembering and trusting the LORD our God: Looking to Him for counsel; Relying upon Him for His provisions; and Committing ourselves to the course that is right and pleasing in His sight.