

WHEN THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL FAILED

(Genesis 12:10-20)

I. What contributed to his failure.

- a. When we fall into sin and fail in our spiritual lives, there are usually several factors that contribute to that failure and this seems to be the case with Abraham.
- b. Abraham experienced a lack of faith.
 - i. We often think of Abraham as this great spiritual giant when it comes to faith.
 - ii. However, we must realize that it took a long time for Abraham to reach the point where he could sacrifice his only son.
 - iii. Abraham, like us, had to let his faith grow.
 - iv. The problem is seen in verse 10 (Genesis 12:10).
 - v. This seems like a valid option doesn't it?
 - vi. Famine hits, let's go to Egypt where there is food.
 - vii. However, look at Genesis 12:6-8.
 - viii. God had said go to Canaan, not to Egypt.
 - ix. If God told Abraham to go to a certain place, does it not seem reasonable and logical that God would sustain him in that place?
 - x. We don't read that Abraham went to God in prayer for wisdom or to ask God to sustain him do we?
 - xi. It seems as if his automatic response was "Let's go to Egypt".
 - xii. True faith is shown in times of crisis.
 - xiii. It's easy to rely on God when things are going well.
 - xiv. How often do you and I run to Egypt when things get difficult?
 - xv. We turn away from God and to something else.
 - xvi. We want something so badly we go in debt to get it, which leads to stress and marriage problems, instead of being patient and planning, and good stewards of our blessings from God.
 - xvii. When things get difficult with our spouse, we turn to someone else for comfort.
 - xviii. When someone is mean or hurtful and we turn mean and hurtful towards them instead of turning to God in prayer.
 - xix. When we do sin and it seems we get caught, we lie to cover up the sin instead of doing what is right.
 - xx. Our Egypt may be any number of things but it is a reliance on something other than God when things are difficult.

- xxi. Abraham showed a lack of faith by bolting for Egypt instead of turning to God.
- c. A second factor could be a loss of touch with God.
- i. Listen to this quote: Abraham left Bethel, his place of worship, and he did not get back to Bethel until he was expelled from Egypt. This deserves study. Bethel, meaning "House of God", was Abram's last recorded residence before his going into Egypt, and we are told that it was there that Abraham had built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:8). Perhaps in leaving Bethel, Abram left his place of worship, since Scripture does not record him worshiping again until he returns."
 - ii. If this is not reading too much into it, Abraham had allowed himself to get away from God while trying to get away from the famine.
 - iii. This happens when we try to handle things ourselves doesn't it?
 - iv. Think about our spiritual lives like our cell phone batteries.
 1. When we plug our cell phones up, we can do all we want to do on our phones and not worry about draining the battery.
 2. When we unplug our phone, it begins to die.
 3. That is how we are.
 4. As long as we stay connected to God through prayer and study we do really well.
 5. When we allow ourselves to become disconnected to God is when the problems really start.
 - v. When we get lax in our attendance it makes it easier and easier to miss more.
 - vi. When we get lax in our prayer life it makes it easier and easier to not pray.
 - vii. Same thing with study, evangelism, or whatever spiritual endeavor it may be.
 - viii. If we want to avoid failure as much as possible, we have to stay connected to God.
 - ix. It's really a matter of neglect in this area.
- d. A third factor is rationalization.
- i. Notice Genesis 12:11-13.
 - ii. Abraham is clearly not thinking correctly.
 - iii. Sarai could have helped him here but women did not speak up in that day and time.
 - iv. However, Abraham was thinking that all of God's promises would be for naught if the Egyptians killed him, never thinking that God would not allow that.
 - v. Also, Abraham was probably thinking that it really wouldn't be a lie.

1. We know this from what he says later on in life when he pulled this same stunt.
 2. She is my half-sister.
 - vi. Basically, Abraham is saying “We aren’t lying, we just aren’t telling the whole truth”.
 - vii. Rationalizing our sins is an extremely dangerous reaction to sin.
 - viii. It makes us feel as if we are right in what we are doing and it leads to a hardened heart.
 - ix. We rationalize our hatred, our fear, our return of evil for evil, or whatever sin we are committing and we are headed for Egypt instead of towards God.
 - x. Only the truth sets us free and rationalization of sin and truth cannot exist together.
- e. These were the contributing factors in Abraham’s failure.

II. The costs of failure.

- a. Just like there are numerous contributing factors when sin occurs, there are often numerous costs.
- b. Abraham paid a spiritual cost.
 - i. Any time we sin, we are separating ourselves from God.
 - ii. We are putting up a wall between us and God and the longer we stay in sin, the bigger the wall becomes.
- c. Abraham paid a cost with his wife.
 - i. We aren’t told how Sarai reacted to this but you know there had to be some hurt feelings on her part.
 - ii. Her husband allowed her to be taken into another man’s home.
 - iii. Husbands, try this out: wait from some other man to show an interest in your wife and then say, “Oh, she is just my friend”.
 - iv. You would be telling the truth, but you are compromising your relationship.
 - v. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his wife to protect himself.
- d. Abraham paid a cost with his ability to tell others about God.
 - i. Who did right in this situation: Pharaoh or Abraham?
 - ii. It was an idolater who did exactly as God said, not Abraham (Genesis 12:17-20).
 - iii. Any door of opportunity to tell Pharaoh or others about God was slammed shut.
 - iv. When you and I fail before others, it harms our ability to tell them about the gospel that can save them.
 - v. Our actions speak louder than our words, and when our actions are sinful, they often remembered for a long time.
- e. Sin carries a very heavy price tag.

III. The corrections for failure.

- a.** Just as there are multiple contributors and costs to sin, there are also multiple corrections that must be made.
- b.** Failure is going to happen and the effects can be long-term and harsh.
- c.** We can all probably point to numerous failures in life.
- d.** When we fail, or sin, there are some things we have to do.
 - i.** Confess the sin (1 John 1:7-9) – admit the failure, repent of it, and end the rationalizing and excuse-making and be honest.
 - ii.** Make right what you can – restitution where possible to help repair what damage we can.
 - iii.** Run to God.
- e.** God rescued Abraham from his failure.
- f.** God showed mercy to Abraham and it is that same mercy we desperately need.
- g.** The parable of the Prodigal Son bears out the mercy of God that He wants to bestow upon us.
- h.** We mentioned some early that had failed and God had mercy on them and He will have mercy on us if we do what they did.

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