

Series: God & Abraham #1155

Title: Genesis 12.9-13.1

*God Is Faithful, Abram Is Faith-less (Part 3)*

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Have you been with us as we bring to a close this twelfth chapter of the Book of Genesis? If so then you know I have a second lesson to extract from the text. Our **first lesson** was **Abram, while a man of faith, still failed**. And now we come to our **second: God is faithful to Abram even when Abram was unfaithful to God**. We will see this quite clearly beginning in verse 17. To set the context, I want to read Genesis 12, verses 9 through chapter 13, verse 1.

Genesis 12, beginning in verse 9. <sup>9</sup> **Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.** <sup>10</sup> **Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.** <sup>11</sup> **It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, ‘See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman;** <sup>12</sup> **and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.** <sup>13</sup> **Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.’**

<sup>14</sup> **It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.** <sup>15</sup> **Pharaoh’s officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house.** <sup>16</sup> **Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.**

<sup>17</sup> **But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.** <sup>18</sup> **Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, ‘What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?’** <sup>19</sup> **Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go.’** <sup>20</sup> **Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted [Abram] away, with his wife and all that belonged to him. (Now Chapter 13, verse 1) So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.”**

Please highlight verse 17. Genesis 12, verse 17, “But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.” That little, three-letter word b-u-t, “But the Lord struck Pharaoh...” You know what this tells us? Despite Abram’s faithlessness, despite his sin, God will be faithful to Abram and his family. The Lord acts! He strikes Pharaoh! That Hebrew word for “struck” means to punish severely. This is a heavy punishment because Pharaoh has taken Sarai as a wife for himself when she was already married to Abram. Ah, but the Pharaoh did not know she was Abram’s wife. Yes, but still God does not spare the Pharaoh. This should alert us to the powerful hand of God in accomplishing His purposes despite our sin.

God’s sovereign grace is ministering in the lives of Abram and Sarai in these very circumstances. For one, the Pharaoh had not yet made Sarai his wife, therefore sparing her the indignity of having to sleep with him. The Book of Esther tells us that there was a period of time for a woman to become the wife of a ruler, such as the Pharaoh and it was before this time ended that God intervened. I do not believe Pharaoh ever engaged in sexual intercourse with Sarai. The Lord preserved her for Abram. It got close. “But the Lord...” as the Bible says.

God has made it abundantly clear, earlier in this chapter, what is His plan for Abram. You will (hopefully) remember that God commanded Abram to leave Ur and then to leave Haran and go to the land of Canaan. God said Canaan will be the Promised Land for Abram and his descendants. Egypt is not that land. Abram walked down there in disobedience, so now it falls on the Lord to extract Abram, his family, and possessions from the grip of the Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The Lord will return them to Canaan, and this is how He does it. He strikes with great plagues. (As God will do again – read Exodus!)

And read the Bible. The Lord is always watching over His people. And His sovereign grace and mercy protects them even when they sin; even when they are so *unfaithful* to Him. I think of Psalm chapter 105 as I read these remaining verses in Genesis 12. Listen to the Psalmist in Psalm chapter 105 and verses 12-15,

**“<sup>12</sup> When they were only a few men in number, very few, and strangers in it. <sup>13</sup> And they wandered about from nation to nation, from *one* kingdom to another people. <sup>14</sup> [God] permitted no man to oppress them, and He reproved kings for their sakes: <sup>15</sup> ‘Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.’”**

When they were only a few men in number. Who are they? Abram and his family that’s who. And when they were strangers in it – strangers in the land. When they wandered about from nation to nation, as Abram and his people did here, going from Canaan to Egypt. Verse 14: “[God] permitted no man to oppress them, and He reproved kings for their sakes...” I *love* that verse. And we see that God would not allow the Pharaoh to oppress and He reproved Pharaoh, King of the Egyptians, for the sake of Abram. God declares: “Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.” Abram was a prophet of God. And so no harm came to Abram and Sarai down in Egypt! God is faithful to His promises.

In the margin of your Bible, or in the notes section of your Bible app, next to Genesis 12, verse 17 write Psalm 105.12-15. These texts go together.

On this verse in Genesis, in his commentary, John Calvin gives this pastoral encouragement (quote), “Instructed by such examples, may we also learn, that however the world may hold us in contempt, on account of the smallness of our number, and our weakness; we are yet so precious in the sight of God, that He will, for our sake, declare Himself an enemy to kings, and even to the whole world. Let us know, that we are covered by His protection, in order that the lust and violence of those who are more powerful, may not oppress us (*Genesis*, 364).” That was Calvin and that is very insightful.

That is also timely, as the church undergoes severe persecution in the world at this very moment. Kings, these dictators, wherever they may be (you can name a few, I am sure) they seek to oppress the people of God, but they will never have the victory, because God providentially stands as our protection. God will reprove political rulers for our sakes.

Back to Genesis 12, verse 18, “<sup>18</sup> Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, ‘What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?’ Wow. The godless Pharaoh rebukes the godly Abram! Very often people who are not Christians know better than we do how to *be* Christian, and *they* set *us* straight. As the captain of the boat on which Jonah sailed scolded him, so too here Pharaoh charges Abram accurately. The pagan is telling the man of God how to live! This is convicting.

Verses 19 and 20: “<sup>19</sup> Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go.’ <sup>20</sup> Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they escorted [Abram] away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.” Angered, Pharaoh dismisses Abram and company from his kingdom. He even assigns some of his men to escort them to the border and expel them. Merrill Unger writes (quote), “A wayward child of God is a liability to sinners; they are glad to get rid of him (*Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 57).”

And do not miss verse 1 of the very next chapter, Genesis chapter 13. I will re-read it. “So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.” God puts Abram back where he belongs, in the land of Canaan (the soil of promise). Do you see how God has sovereignly and supernaturally intervened and made sure that God’s covenant with Abram will be fulfilled? God wanted Abram, his family, and associates in Canaan and after their sinful excursion to Egypt they have now been returned.

I like how our friend H.C. Leupold puts it (quote), “Man’s sin almost defeats God purpose, but God’s mercy prevails (*Exposition of Genesis*, 264).” Man’s sin almost defeats God purpose, but God’s mercy prevails. And regarding Abram, “God’s mercy outruns man’s merit.” This is an example of Abram’s failure, of his sinfulness, and his faithlessness. He has no personal merit. *But God* was still faithful!

**God is faithful to Abram even when Abram was unfaithful to God.**

I hope you will take some time this weekend to reflect on Abram's experience with the Living God in light of your own life, and your own experience with God. And then be sure to join us again on Monday as we continue to discover who God Is!

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