

Title: The Weakness of the Flesh

Text: Genesis 12:4-13:4 4-9

Let's turn to Genesis chapter 12. We will begin where we ~~left~~ <sup>left</sup> off last week. Genesis chapter 12 and beginning at Vs 4 and reading through ~~chapter 13~~ <sup>Vs 9</sup> verse 4.

(Read Genesis 12:4-13:4)

Prayer

We mentioned last week concerning Vs 1-3 of the tremendous future that was ~~led~~ <sup>land</sup> before Abraham. *IF he fulfilled the prerequisites, God would bless him in a wonderful way*

(1C) And I am impressed in Vs 4-9 with how Abraham exercised his faith in going to a land that he had no knowledge about. He simply obeyed. His faith acted. He did not know ~~where~~ where he was going. But he acted in faith and trust upon God. He believed that God was going to lead him all the way.

Jesus promises us that he will never leave us nor forsake us. That he will <sup>always</sup> be with us ~~all ways~~ even unto the ends of the earth.

And in the O.T., God promises to guide ~~us~~ <sup>the believer</sup> with his eye. He tells us constantly in the Book of Psalms that he will direct our paths.

But, the problem is that most of us want the information ahead of time. Abraham had faith that God was going to lead him. He completely trusted God.

And his faith, I see in this passage, depended upon three things. *Faith depends upon three things*  
(1D) Number one, his participation in what God told him to do.

A lot of us set back as spectators even though we know what God wants us to do. It is one thing to hear it and to know something, and it is another thing to do it. And Abraham participated rather than simple being a spectator and doing nothing when he knew God wanted him to do something. <sup>He did it</sup> And the Bible makes a simple statement in Vs 4 "So Abram departed."

And if you will remember from last week, Abraham was told to get out of his country, to get away from the influence of his relatives, and to get away from his own father's house.

Now, he ~~did not do that~~ <sup>really didn't do all of that</sup>. There is a weakness in Abarahams faith.

He did depart. But he ~~took~~ <sup>took</sup> with him some of his relatives, namely Lot.

and we will see ~~how that effect~~ <sup>how that effect</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>took</sup> He did not get away from his father's house. He ~~took~~ <sup>took</sup> Terah. And as we learned last week from the book of Joshua, Terah served other gods. He was an adolarty. So, God in his sovereignty, supernatural came in and took his life in Haran and removed Abraham's father away from Abrham before he went into the land of Canaan.

But, Abraham did have the kind of faith that obeid God. Even though he compromised in it. And in this passage I see a tremendous ~~cpntrast~~ <sup>contrast</sup> between faith that will act upon what God tells us to do, and, the weakness of the flesh. Jesus said, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. So many times we know what we should do, but, we don't do it. We are much like Paul in Romans 7...He said, "the ~~things~~ <sup>things</sup> I want to do I don't do. And the things I don't want to ~~do~~ <sup>do</sup>, I do."...

So, Paul learned about a law...He said there is a law of my members. The old sin nature is waring against the law of my mind which wants to serve God. And the only freedom and the only delieverance from this is the law of the spirit of light. For the Holy Spirit of God in me is much stronger than my old sin nature. And I am to yield to the spirit of God; and by faith to recognize that he can control my life,.

~~But~~ <sup>But</sup> Abraham acted in faith. And for this we praise him and we honor him. ~~For the Bible honors him for his faith in Hebrews 11. But,~~ there was a weakness. A weakness that many of us ought to recognize as being part of our own life. *And we will look at that tonight*

(2D) But, secondly, his faith depended on perseverance in the face of opposition. Because the Bible makes a simple statement that the Canaanite<sup>s</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> in the land....Vs 6...~~I have already mentioned to you about the~~ <sup>Now, that is important because</sup> ~~Canaanite.~~ <sup>the</sup> curse of God ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> upon them. The idolous, immoral, paganist practices of the Canaanite people.

and ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> And one simple statement at the endo of Vs 6.."Now the Canaanite<sup>s</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> then in the land.

What are you going to do Abraham? Here is the land I told you about. But, look who is here. The Canaanites are here. And we are told from history that the Canaanites were great warriors. {And this must have been very upsetting to Abraham. To set there as a man called so many miles, 600 hundred miles, from his own country, setting there in a new land surrounded by war like pagan people and hearing God say: "this is the land I have given you."...

Well what about the Canaanites?...Abraham face it...And the whole history of Israel is in constant conflict with the Canaanite people. Over and over again God said to destroy them. And they did not do it. It seems that as you read Kings and Chronicles Israel did everything God wanted them to do except one thing: and that is to destroy the Canaanite people.

*But* Abraham persevered in the face of this opposition. I really believe that. There is no record that Abraham ever compromised with the Canaanites.

And I am also reminded that whatever faith you and I have, <sup>I hope you</sup> never get the idea that it is never going to be tested and not going to be opposed. There will be all kinds of Canaanites in our lives. And even Hebrews 11 applies it to all of us as believers in challenging us concerning our faith that we will face opposition. And the opposition may come from areas that we never thought possible....The Canaanite <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>more</sup> than in the land.

(3D) The third thing which his faith depended upon was the very presence of the Lord.

So, many people say they have faith, without enjoying the presence of Christ. Abraham knew about the presence of the Lord. And there are two examples here that I want you to understand.

(1E) One is in Vs 6 and 7: the altar he built at Shechem; <sup>Shechem</sup> (2E) and secondly, in Vs 8 the altar that was between Bethel and Ai.

Now, these aren't just off the top of the head locations. They have great significance. They are very important locations.

Abraham knew that his faith depended upon the presence of God. Jeremiah 33:3 says "call upon me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you know not."

If ~~any man is~~ <sup>you are</sup> to have faith, <sup>you</sup> we must recognize that <sup>your</sup> faith is resting upon the sovereignty of God in <sup>your</sup> life. I need the Lord. We need Christ more than anything. And to have real abundant faith, and great faith, is to recognize our tremendous dependence upon God.

*Do you* Remember a ~~group of sermon back we were talking about that~~ <sup>could be the story of the</sup> Canannite woman in Matthew 15? This story always impresses me. It is one of the few times that Jesus said, <sup>To someone</sup> YOU HAVE GREAT FAITH. And what did this woman say to Jesus? after he had put her off by saying ~~the~~ <sup>you</sup> dogs should not eat from the table....What did she say?...She said "yes, but couldn't they at least have the crumbs...She recognized her total need at that moment. A dependence upon him. And Jesus said: "You have great faith."

*every*  
*X*

Abraham coming into this new land, a land he knew nothing about, recognized that his faith depended upon the presence of the Lord. It is sad what happened next. But let us rejoice, first of all, that Abraham knew what he should do. AND THAT IS..TO DEPEND UPON GOD. <sup>many of us, never do that</sup>

You may walk out of this service and say, "I have great faith." And all along it is the old sin nature acting like it trust something. FAITH REST UPON THE POWER AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN OUR LIFE.

And these two altars to me are very fascinating.....

<sup>Sheck / Ken</sup>  
(1E) First of all, the altar at Shechem. The word Shechem means "shoulder". And it always refers to the place of strength...No person is really strong until he is resting upon God, himself. It is easy to have all the facts of the scriptures, and it is easy to act as through we are living for Christ, when the truth of the matter is that the old sin nature is controlling us....THE PLACE OF STRENGTH IS A DEPENDENCE UPON GOD.

The Psalmist wrote: "that the lord is my strength. And in him is the fulness of joy."

*also*, It is at the altar of Shechem, the place of strength, where Abraham learned. Because it was near the oak of <sup>Moreh</sup> Moreh. And the word Moreh is simply the Hebrew word for "instruct." And I like that. Here, Abraham is depending upon God. He is receiving the strength to go on. And it is, also, the place of instruction. AND THE WAY TO REALLY LEARN FROM GOD IS TO WAIT UPON HIM AND TO BE OF GOOD COURAGE AND HE WILL STRENGTHEN YOU. Wait I say upon the Lord.....We always seem to be in such a hurry.

And you may reflect back over your past and then look to the future and say, "what does God want in my life." Listen, don't in any way think that your faith in what God can do in your life depends upon you...It does not. It depends upon God....And to the extent that you will spend time in the presence of Christ waiting upon the Lord. And that becomes a means by which you will experience the strength of the Lord and his instruction..

There <sup>is</sup> two ways to be instructed. One, is to receive the simple accumulation of facts. And the second, is to know it through personal experience.

And many times we are simply accumulating facts, <sup>without</sup> without experience it, at the place of strength in total dependence on the Lord. You know, Jesus said in John 15:5 "I am the vine and you are the branches. <sup>He</sup> He that abides in me and I in him, the same bring forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing."

But, many christian interpret that by saying "Without <sup>me</sup> ~~me~~ I can't do the big things, but I can do the little things.." You take care of the big things God. I will take care of the little things."

No...God said "nothing." He said "if my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you."...What a fantastic promise.....BUT NOTICE THE CONDITION..... "Let my words abide in you,"

then you can ask what you want to and it will be done unto you.

It is the place of strength. And the presence of God is needed if we are to have faith in God.

(2E) He also went to the altar between Bethel and Ai. And that has always been interesting to me. That God set that altar right in the middle of those two places.

"Ai in the hebrew means "ruian".... And Bethel is just the opposite. It means "house of God."

So, here you have an altar between a pile of ruin and the house of God.... And Abraham built the altar there....

~~(3M)~~ Now, there are three things about these altars ~~which really struck~~ *that we all need to learn* ~~out in my mind.~~

(1F) First of all, in Vs 8, we read "he pitched his tent there." *In other words,* Abraham did not intend to stay there. It was a temporary place. He pitched his tent there.

And it reminded me of how we, so often, put ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> stakes down so deep that God can't do anything with us. We want to have faith and we want to do what God wants us to do, but our stakes are so deep that we can't move. Our associations, our business, etc, is so deep we can't see the forest because of the trees... *We have always don't that way. I Remember it*

Jesus said we are just strangers in this world. Our real home is in heaven. And we should be laying up treasures in heaven not upon the earth... We should be walking by faith realizing that this is not our home. That we seek a better country, that is a heavenly city says Hebrews 11, whose builder and maker is God. Our home is heaven not here. And yet, we put all of dreams and aspirations and hopes and goals right in what we possess, now, Rather than heaven. And one day we are going to wake up and realize it should have been heaven we should have been shooting for. Or as the chorus says, "this world is not my home, I am just a passing through."

*This altar is a symbol of total dependence*

(2F) The second thing I notice is that he builded and altar.

Now, this altar had no sacred value to it. Other than the fact that it was a symbol of his total dependence upon God.

I don't believe we ought to go home today and put up little stones and build and altar and make that a symbol of our dependence on God .  
But the point is: that many of us have in our lives like altars, places at which we have depended on God. And a lot of us are like <sup>much</sup> ~~much~~ <sup>what</sup> that has happened in the O.T. ~~Along~~ along the line, somewhere, the altars got broken down, and they need to be reconstructed. Somewhere along the line we have failed to see our ~~need~~ <sup>Total</sup> of dependence on the presence of God. We have been living in the strength of the old sin nature. ~~Maybe~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~But~~, we have ~~failed~~ failed to depend entirely on God.

If you have left the altar somewhere back there in your life, build it again. And say, "Lord, I need you more than anything in my life." "Lord, I want to walk by faith and faith alone." That is a tremendous attitude to come to in your life.

(3F) The third thing I notice concerning what happened at the altar is

<sup>is</sup> Vs 8 that he called upon the name of the Lord. He called upon the name of the Lord. That is used a lot in the Bible. Sometimes it means he is seeking direction. Sometimes in the Bible it is used for one who wants to be saved. Call upon the name of the Lord. It is used that way in the N.T. when Paul <sup>SAYS</sup> ~~quotes the Old~~ in Romans 10. He ~~said~~, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." *Unbelieve - call upon the name of the Lord - and get saved*  
*and For the church*  
But ~~most of the time~~ it is referring to seeking direction. ~~Now,~~

~~Let's apply it to our lives.~~ What do we do when we need advise?...Most of the time <sup>We</sup> seek advise from other people. And many times these people are not even christians. Or we look at our whole life and try to plan it all out, do the best we can and hope for the best..... *Well, I hope it will all work out*

And yet, the Bible teaches that we ought to depend so much upon God that we call upon him for advise and direction. To seek the Lord in ever decision we make.....

Are we doing that? Are we really calling upon the name of the Lord?

You see, Abraham's faith was proven because he realized his need of God.

I hope you see that need in your life. And in seeing that need, you too will call upon the name of the Lord!!!!

Let Us pray