THEME: Steadfast

Lamentations 3:22 (ESV)

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

Lamentations 3:22

It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

(Genesis 12)

“When you know you are where God wants you, stay there no matter the opposition.”

When examining the life of Abraham we must always keep in view the promise of God and Abraham’s response to that promise, i.e. his faith.

Proverbs 3:5-7

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

OUTLINE

1-2, Abraham Moves

3-7, Abimelech’s Dream

8-13, Abraham and Abimelech Converse

14-18, Restoration and Reproof

Before Abraham could receive the child of promise he needed to be freed from self reliance.

Some habits and tendencies that seem so normal and “right” to us, are actually in direct opposition to a life of faith.

It can be quite a shock to discover that no matter how far along we are in our walk with the Lord… there is always still further to go.

Self reliance will run from a crisis it cannot control because self reliance cannot handle anything bigger than itself.

Abraham removed himself from the area of Sodom to an area that he felt was more “manageable” for him.

Faith allows us to not only believe things bigger than ourselves, but also to bear things bigger than ourselves.

Mark 5:21-24, 35-36, 39-42

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. 22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, 23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. 24 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. ... 35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. ... 39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. 40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. 42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

Psalm 91:7-10

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. 9 Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; 10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

Vs.1

Any distance we put between us and the Lord, no matter how small, will always result in compromising our faith.

Abraham moved away from:

- the place of communion

- the place where he met with the Lord

- the place of revelation

- the place of the Word of God

“Dwelled”

...sit down, remain

“Between”

...a space between

“Kadesh”

...holy

“Shur”

...a wall

“Sojourned”

...turned aside

“Gerar”

...a lodging place

Abraham’s back was against the wall. He had become lodged in the space between a holy life and the life of the world.

Vs.2

Deuteronomy 21:10-14

10 When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, 11 And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; 12 Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; 13 And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. 14 And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

The king always has a right to the bride.

Any decision that delivers the bride into the hands of the world is the wrong decision.

Abraham did not need to place himself under the hand of the king nor Sarah in this position.

Abraham chose to dwell in a land that, while not outside of God’s control, but was outside of God’s will.

Proverbs 12:22

Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

Isaiah 44:20

… a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Obadiah 1:3

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

Abraham had begun to assume that since he was right with God, all he did was “right”.

Just because I am right with God does not mean that I am always “right”, but it does mean I now have access to the source of all that is right–the Word of God.

Our right relationship with God does not in any way mean that we have an innate ability within us to always be right. There is still only one source of right–the Word of God. Our right relationship with God, the renewing work of the cross, and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit now give us the opportunity to apply the source of all that is right to our lives–the Word of God.

Vs.3

“Wife of a husband”

belongs and is ruled over

We must be careful to never assume that our sensibilities are God’s sensibilities. God transcends culture and opinion.

Vs.4-5

Who was Abimelech?

King of the Philistines.

“Abimelech”

Melek is father, my father is king

Abimelech's viewpoint was not wrong, it was just not God’s.

What it is to be an Abimelech?

- Lived by the morality of his time

- Assumed his decisions were his own

- Felt justified by someone else's actions

- Thought his lack of the knowledge of sin relieved him of his accountability to God

Romans 2:11-12, 14-15

1 For there is no respect of persons with God. 12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; ... 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Abimelech rightly recognized that he represented not only himself but the nation he governed.

As goes the king, so goes the nation.

The modern day conservative movement is not wrong in thinking that a better leader would be better for the nation. However, God’s people should not get caught up in attempting to change this world through means that, while not “wrong”, are just not God’s.

Vs.6

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

What Abimelech had assumed were his own decisions was actually direct intervention by God.

God’s withholding Abimelech from sin was not for the sake of Abimelech, but for the sake of God’s people.

2 Thessalonians 2:7

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

How many times has God restrained me from sin for the sake of someone else?

Vs.7

Abimelech was responsible to live up to the truth he was given.

Abraham’s lapse of faith did not alleviate him from his responsibility as a spokesman for God. It just made the job a whole lot harder.

Those who live under the blessing and promise of God are never out of reach of its effects.

God’s mercy was upon Abraham despite the fact that Abraham had just directly jeopardized God’s plan.

Luke 17:1-2

1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! 2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

Vs.8

Like it or not all men are answerable to the Word of God.

Vs.9

It’s never a pretty scene when the world reproves God’s people.

- Did Abraham think that it didn’t matter what he did because God would “rescue” him?

- Did Abraham assume that all nations were as “expendable” as Sodom?

- Was Abraham resentful of God’s timing and care of him?

Vs.10

Abraham saw only himself; not his wife, not Abimelech, not the Lord.

Vs.11-12

Abraham had a very low opinion of the world around him.

Proverbs 3:5-7

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

One lame excuse after another.

- Is it possible that this was Abraham’s attempt at protecting Sarah?

- Did Abraham think that all nations outside of Babylon were savages?

- Was he thinking that at least Sarah being his “sister” bought him some time?

Either way this was an issue of the heart that God had to deal with before he could receive the fulfillment of the promise. Unfortunately for Abraham he allowed this mindset to be passed on to his son Issac.

Genesis 26:6-7

6 And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: 7 And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

Vs.13

“Never try to make yourself look better by making others look worse. Such excuses will eventually find you blaming even God for your poor choices.”

“Kindness”

goodness, faithfulness

(reproach, shame)

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

It is never a kindness to compromise. It only leads to reproach and shame.

And yet…

1 Peter 3:5-6

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: 6 Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Sarah is never reproached for her faithfulness and obedience to Abraham. In Abraham’s lapses of faith Sarah remained faithful and supportive, trusting that God would work through her husband and through the problems. She was “not afraid with any amazement.” In other words, Sarah did not let the fear of her husband's failure move her from her trust in God. Instead of attempting to take matters into her own hands, she left them in the Lord’s.

Vs.14

Material blessing cannot be used as a determiner of our standing in the will of God.

In the midst of compromise how quickly we can forget our vows.

Genesis 14:21-23

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. 22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, 23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.

In compromise, we may forget our promises, but God never will.

Psalm 110:4

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Romans 11:29

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Vs.15

Abimelech was not about to upset this “prophet” whom he still needed to pray for him.

God never intends our influence on the world to come through withholding something from them, or holding something over them.

These blessings were a result of God’s faithfulness… not Abraham’s.

Vs.16

Abimelech essentially paid the price to “clear” Sarah’s name. He was doing for Sarah what Abraham should have done–provided a covering of protection.

Vs.17-18

Abraham at least appears to be one who quickly returns to his God once the error of his way has been shown to him.

Faith is quick to look away from personal failure and back to the face of God.

Prayer was able to do for Abimelech and his family what no amount of medical intervention would ever accomplish.

The chapter ends with a reminder that God is always working on behalf of those who are connected to His promise and blessing.

ENDING

When my faith lapses, God’s promise and blessing never do. They remain steadfast.

In the lowest moments of Abraham’s life he could never separate himself from the faithfulness of God’s blessing and the steadfastness of God’s promise.

Matthew 28:20

Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Joshua 21:43-45

43 And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. 44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

We have looked at both Lot and Abraham at the low points of their lives, yet God never left them and He was always faithful. Their lives were under promise and blessing, but they did not always experience the fullness of those promises and blessings.

How will you use your privilege of being connected to God’s promise and blessing?

Before Abraham could receive the child of promise he needed to be freed from self reliance.

Faith allows us to not only believe things bigger than ourselves, but also to handle things bigger than ourselves.