

Learning to Walk in the Darkness

Genesis 15:1-8

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"Walking By Faith" Sermon Series on Life of Abraham ~ Lesson 11 of 20

Many of us have prayed for a deeper walk with God only to find ourselves engulfed in the darkness of a new trial. We need to be reminded that with a revelation of God a corresponding challenge will usually be ushered in. God uses these challenges to strengthen our faith and to reveal a facet of Himself that we didn't previously know. God will also use these challenges to test our hearts to see if we really believe what He has revealed to us.

One of the first things we do when we find ourselves in the midst of a new trial is lament about "the good ole' days" of the past. The Psalmist David pens his lament of "the good ole' days" in Psalm 42:3-4, 6, *Day and night, I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, "Where is this God of yours?" My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks—it was the sound of a great celebration!* Notice that David is not only dealing with his trial, which is breaking his heart, but he is also dealing with the taunts of his enemies. The eyes of David's enemies were focused on him. They wanted to know from David why his God had not delivered him.

Many of us have experienced critical remarks from people close to us as they watch us stand in faith. We wait for God to help us even though all of our senses are screaming that we have been defeated. We tend to want to look back and wish that we could return to "the good ole' days" of our past.

The fact of the matter is, that not only is it impossible to go back to "the good ole' days," but God doesn't want us to go back. God allows trials to come into our lives to bring us to a new understanding of this journey called faith. God doesn't want us to go back to where we came from. His desire is that we turn to Him to solve our problems so that He can reveal a new facet of His faithfulness and power.

Honest Questions from a Committed Heart

Abraham asked God two questions. The first question is recorded in Genesis 15:2, *But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"* Abraham's second question is recorded in Genesis 15:7-8, *Then He said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"*

Please understand that God is not challenged by honest questions that come from a non-accusing heart. Haven't we all had questions when adversity strikes our lives? Haven't we all said at one time or another, "Lord, I'm standing on the promises of Your Word, but nothing is happening and I don't understand why?" Part of our problem stems from our inability to be patient and wait for God to answer us. We want God to go to work immediately to resolve our problems, and to be truthful, "now" is late!

Far too many Christians give up and quit trusting God if He doesn't immediately address their needs. They accuse God of being unfaithful and cry out to God, "Where are You and why won't You help me?" When we give in to our anxiety, we will become depressed and our depression will lead to despair. If we do not overcome our anxiety, we will go deeper into our depression and we will utterly be defeated by our enemy. When it comes to having patience to wait on God, we would do well to remember Noah. He pounded nails for a very long time before the first drop of rain fell to the earth. He endured the taunts of his neighbors and continued to do what God had told him.

We Need a Proper Focus

God taught Abraham to stay focused on Him as he walked out his faith. Consider God's words to Abraham in Genesis 15:1, *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."* In making this statement, God was in essence telling Abraham, "Regardless of your circumstances, look to Me. Nothing has the capacity to take My place. No one can do for you what I can do. I can fulfill you when nothing else can."

God has never created anyone or anything that can take His place! For example, how many times have we heard the statement, "time heals all wounds?" Time may diminish the memory of the wound, but time alone cannot heal any wound: only God can heal. God wanted Abraham to realize that when life is boiled down to the bottom line, He was all Abraham needed.

God was not opposed to Abraham's pursuit of the things needed to live life; He just wanted Abraham to realize that those things were sourced in Him. When the Lord becomes the source for everything in your life, you will experience His peace and joy. You will be satisfied in ways you never dreamed possible. The Psalmist understood the power of the Lord's presence, *You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore* (Psalm 16:11).

Don't Settle for Anything Less than What God Promised

Abraham struggled with his ability to wait on God. In the natural, He could not see how God would fulfill the promise of a son who would be his natural born heir. Abraham was watching the sand run rapidly through the hour glass of his life. He began to analyze his circumstances and he realized that it may be too late to have a son by natural means. In Genesis 15:2-3 we read of Abraham's conversation with God, *But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"* Basically, Abraham was saying to God, "I know that You promised me an heir from my own body, but time is running out and maybe I missed what You said to me earlier. Is Eliezer my heir?" Abraham's question about Eliezer being his heir was a legitimate question. His culture allowed for a senior slave to become the heir of a childless man.

God challenges Abraham not to settle for anything less than what had been promised to him. In Genesis 15:4, God tells him his heir will be from his own body, *And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."* When God's answers appear to be delayed (in our opinion), we become too easily satisfied with watered down, spiritualized answers from well-intentioned people seeking to explain away our circumstances. We must never allow our circumstances to judge the integrity of God's Word and His ability to keep His promises. We must choose to stand in faith and refuse to settle for anything less than what God promised. Regardless of how long we have to wait ... wait! The driving force behind our waiting on God is our solid conviction that GOD DOES NOT LIE!

Quit Looking at Your Circumstances ... Start Looking at God's Promises

Abraham's focus was all wrong. Abraham was focused on his circumstances and his natural abilities. He was focused on how fast the sand was running through the hour glass of his life. In his understanding, time was running out as we read in Genesis 15:3, *"Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"* But, in Genesis 15:5, God responds to Abraham, *Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."* Abraham wanted God to look at his circumstances; however, God wanted Abraham to look at His promise. God took Abraham on a walk in the dark of the night and told him to look up at the stars. God showed Abraham what the fulfillment of His promise would look like. God redirected Abraham's focus to what He had promised.

God does not mind honest questions that flow out of a non-accusing and committed heart. God always responds by revealing Himself in such a way that will reassure you that He will not fail to keep the promises of His Word. God always answers our questions with His Word ... and He always backs up His Word with Himself! No one can tell you how God will reveal Himself to you, but rest assured, He will. The big question will be, when He does reveal Himself to you, will you believe Him? Whatever Abraham saw in the stars that night, it was enough for him to believe God, *And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness* (Genesis 15:6). Abraham's doubts were calmed and he chose to wait on God to fulfill what He had promised.

Abraham would have to wait on God for twenty-five more years before the promise was fulfilled. In the fullness of God's time, the day came when the sound of laughter, from his son, Isaac, filled his tent and heart. God proved Himself faithful to Abraham and He rewarded his faith with the fulfillment of what He had promised ... GOD DOES NOT LIE!

REMEMBER ...

You Can't Go Back to "The Good Ole' Days!"

God Doesn't Mind Honest Questions from a Committed Heart!

Focus on the Promise ... Not on the Problem!

Never Settle for Anything Less than What God Promised!

Wait on God!

God Does Not Lie!

God is Faithful to His Word!

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