

The Power of Total Commitment

Genesis 20:1-8

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"Walking by Faith" Series on the Life of Abraham - Lesson 17 of 20

It is both embarrassing and frustrating to stumble again in an area that you thought you had under control. The overwhelming sense of shame is tough to deal with. This is especially true after you promised God that you would never stumble again in that area of life ... but you did.

Abraham had returned to Egypt and he again stumbled into the same trap of lying for self-protection. His memory of how God had previously delivered him had obviously dimmed.

Just like Abraham... Our past spiritual victories will not preclude us from being victimized again in the same area.

Just like Abraham... When we experience a spiritual victory over the enemy, we are called to stand in that victory.

Just like Abraham... It is our responsibility to guard that area of weakness so that we do not return to it and fail again.

The Apostle Paul pleads with the church of Galatia not to return to bondage after being set free in Galatians 5:1, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

God's Over-Ruling Providence

When we are totally surrendered to God's will, the Lord will not let us miss it as a result of our weakness or failures. When our hearts are absolutely committed to God, He will over-rule our weakness by making available to us His strength to deny our flesh and keep moving forward in pursuit of His will. Understand, God does not over-rule our weakness apart from our requesting Him to do so. He will not over-rule our will and He will not over-rule our right of choice.

This is not to be interpreted as a license to live reckless or in open rebellion to the Word of God. We need to realize that even though God's strength to overcome our weakness is available to us upon request, we are accountable for our actions. Our actions are nothing less than the fruit of our choices.

We read in Genesis 20:2 of Abraham's weakness and his willingness to protect himself at any cost; *Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.* It is obvious from this verse that Abraham had a weakness for self-preservation. He was willing to risk the well-being of his wife, Sarah. He didn't act in faith even though he had previously totally committed his heart to God. Abraham's total commitment of his heart to God is recorded in Genesis 14. The occasion of his total surrender to God took place just prior to his meeting with the King of Sodom. Abraham had already met with Melchizedek, the King of Salem, and had raised his hand in an oath of allegiance to God. When the King of Sodom asked him for the unthinkable, Abraham countered his offer with a statement of his total commitment to God in Genesis 14:22, *But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth."*

... But God

Abraham had lied to Abimelech, the king of Gerar. He told him that Sarah was his sister so Abimelech took Sarah and added her to his collection of wives. Notice how God responds to the situation, in Genesis 20:3, **But God** came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, “Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.” There are two very powerful words found in Genesis 20:3 ... “**but God.**”

The words, “**but God,**” are a theme that runs through the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. Over and over again, men have made wrong choices. They have created messes beyond any hope of recovery. We can relate to this. How many of our wrong choices have created circumstances that we thought were beyond recovery? “**But God**” steps in and redeems the mess.

- Consider young Joseph. He was sold into slavery by his own brothers.

*As for you, you meant evil against me; **but God** meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive (Genesis 50:20).*

- Consider young David. He was running for his life from the jealous rage of King Saul.

*David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness, and remained in the mountains in the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, **but God** did not deliver him into his hand (I Samuel 23:14).*

- Consider the confident words of the psalmist Asaph as he waited on God to deliver him from his fears and doubts.

*My flesh and my heart fail; **but God** is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Psalm 76:26).*

- Consider the stinging words of rebuke spoken by Paul on the Day of Pentecost.

*You killed the author of life, **but God** raised him to life. And we are witnesses of this fact (Acts 3:15)!*

- Consider the comforting words of Paul to the Corinthian Church.

*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. **But God** has revealed them to us through His Spirit (I Corinthians 2:9-10).*

Notice that even though Abraham was wrong, God confronted Abimelech, a pagan king. God talked to Abimelech in the middle of the night and motivated him to cooperate with His will for Abraham’s life; *But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, “Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife. Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.” So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid (Genesis 20:3, 7-8).*

God's Redeeming Grace

God's redeeming grace can transform our fear into faith. God honored the integrity of a pagan king and kept him from sinning; *And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her"* (Genesis 20:6). Think about this for just a moment ... if God will stop a pagan king (with whom there was no covenant relationship), what will God do for us? We are His redeemed, covenant children!

Whenever we operate out of the integrity of our hearts, we don't have to be afraid of missing God's will. God will honor our integrity and the intent of our hearts to walk in His will and ways. We can pray with confidence ...

"Lord, I believe You have shown me something You want me to do ...
Therefore, I'll move forward in the integrity of my heart ...
I submit this situation to You ...
I trust You to stop me from moving forward if I have missed you."

God remained faithful to Abraham even though Abraham had not been faithful to God. Genesis 21:1-3 records the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promise to give a son to Abraham and Sarah; *And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac.*

God was faithful even though Abraham was slow to respond in faith to God's promise. God was faithful even though Abraham stumbled repeatedly in his weakness. Abraham's slow faith and stumbling weakness did not stop God from fulfilling His promise to him.

This raises the question ... "Why was God so faithful to a man that seemed so challenged in his faith and in his ability to keep his weakness under control?" The answer is simple ... Abraham was experiencing the power of a total commitment to a faithful God. Abraham's heart was totally committed to God. On the basis of that commitment, God was equally committed to Abraham and was committed to fulfilling His promises and purposes in Abraham's life.

This is incredibly good news for us. When our hearts are totally committed to God, He will honor our commitment in spite of our weakness. Based on our heart's commitment, God will do whatever it takes to move us forward into His will and purpose for our lives.

**When we are totally surrendered to God's will ...
He will make sure we don't miss it!**

God's grace can transform our fear into faith!

God always honors a committed heart!