

## Famous Bible Stories When Faith Falters Genesis 12.1-13.4

[As we journey through the famous Bible stories found in the Word of God we come to the story of Abram who was later renamed Abraham by God (Genesis 17.5). Abram means “Exalted Father.” The Name Abraham means “Father of a multitude” expressing the promises that God had made to Abraham for his faithful obedience toward God. God gave Abram the new name Abraham when he was ninety-nine (99) years old, with Ishmael as his only child who was born to Hagar the had maid of Sarai (Sarah). But God specifically excluded Ishmael from being the heir of God’s promise.]

[What we discover through the life of Abraham is the journey of faith that pours out of our spiritual walk with our Heavenly Father. Many refer to Abraham as the **father of faith**. Romans four (4) reveals that Abraham was strong in faith. Throughout the Bible Abraham is our primary example for biblical faith. But Abraham had to grow in His faith, just as every child of God (born again Christian) must grow in their faith as well. Hence, as we look briefly into the life of Abraham we discover God’s lessons concerning faith and faithfulness.]

[Now, it is important that we are clear about what biblical faith really is. Faith is not a feeling, it is not an emotional response. Faith is substantive. Faith is always a noun in the Bible. In both the Old Testament (Hebrew – אֱמוּנָה [1][1] - Hab 2.4) and the New Testament (Greek - πίστις[2][2] - Matt 8.10) faith is a noun, not a verb. Yet in our culture faith is almost always used as a verb. God refers to faith in the Bible as something absolute and tangible. **In the Word of God your belief (verb) always pours out of your faith (noun)**. Yet, in contemporary Christianity one’s faith (verb) pours out of their ability to believe something. Therefore, if you are going develop the faith of Abraham, or the faith of the Bible you need to think rightly about what faith is.]

### What Is Biblical Faith?

**Faith is,**

1. **Having A Word From God (Romans 10.17; Gen 3.1; 1 Pet 2.2)** [– The first element in having any kind of godly faith is to have a definitive Word from God.]

*[Romans 10:17 <sup>17</sup> So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. ]*

[This is why the devil has always attacked the Word of God. The first thing the devil said when he approached Eve in the garden was, “. . . Yea, hath God said, . . .” (Genesis 3.1). Or adversaries method has never changed. The devil knows that if he can get you to doubt the Word of God, he will destroy your ability to have biblical faith. For this reason God reminds us,]

*[1 Peter 2:2 <sup>2</sup> As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: ]*

2. **Believing What God Has Said (Rom 4.19-21)** [– Notice what made Abraham strong in faith. Many have referred to Hebrews 11.1 as the biblical definition of faith. I object to this, because Hebrews 11, the hall of fame of faith, reveals what faith does throughout its context. Hebrews 11 tells us what godly faith, biblical faith can do. Instead the definition of faith is found here in,]

*[Romans 4:19-21 <sup>19</sup> And [Abraham] being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: <sup>20</sup> He staggered not at the **promise of God** [the Word of God] through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; <sup>21</sup> And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. ]*

[Abraham was strong in faith because he **Took God At His Word**. Abraham believed what God had said. So faith has belief in it, but it is not based on our ability to believe. Our faith must be founded in the Word God has given first, and then we can believe what God has said.]

3. **Acting On What God Has Said (James 2.26)** [– Adrian Rogers once said, **“Without a response, there is no faith.”** If you have heard from God then how can you help but respond to God. The problem with many people in our day is that they base their faith on what they feel rather than on what God has said, and we all know our feelings change about every day; often numerous times in a day. However, if you know that you have the Word of God and you know that you have heard from the God of all creation, how could you possibly ignore what He has told you. Therefore James was led to write,]

*[James 2:26 <sup>26</sup> For as the body without the spirit is dead, **so faith without works is dead also.** ]*

[I am often asked by people, “Pastor, how can I grow my faith?” The answer is simple, spend more time in your Bible and you will grow your faith. Because faith is **Taking God At His Word.**]

[In the text before us we are introduced to Abram or Abraham and the beginning of his journey in faith. We also discover through Abraham’s life the maturing of his faith. Through his example we learn what faith is and how to avoid many of the pitfalls that will come our way as we learn to respond in faith and faithfulness to our Heavenly Father. This passage shows us the beginning, the faltering, and the rededication of Abraham’s faith.]

[Notice in this text,]

- A. **The Response of Abraham’s Faith (vs 1-9; Matt 9.29 )** [– Our Lord Jesus Christ said,]

*[Matthew 9:29 . . . According to your faith be it unto you.]*

[Your faith matters! Your faith is the difference between the infinite and the finite. Faith believes God and in order to believe and trust God you must first hear from God.]

*[Genesis 12:1 <sup>1</sup> Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ]*

*[Genesis 12:4 <sup>4</sup> So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; . . . ]*

[Notice that God spoke and Abraham responded, that is faith. Therefore faith is the proper response to the revelation of God. It is important to remember,]

- [There is no faith without the Word of God.]
- [There is no faith without a response to God.]

### **Three things to know about your faith,**

1. **Faith Is Not Rooted In Human Motivation (Gen 11.4; 12.4)** [- Positive thinking is not faith. There is nothing wrong with positive thinking; as a matter of fact thinking positively is a positive thing. But positive thinking is not faith. Last week we looked into the Tower of Babel and its confusion. Consider,]

*[Genesis 11:4 <sup>4</sup> And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.]*

[The inhabitants of Babel were motivated and positive in their thinking, but notice that they thought in themselves time and again in this text. Four times they made specific and determined statements based upon their motivation. In the end their motivation gained them nothing but confusion.]

[Now compare that to what God said to Abram,]

*[Genesis 12:1 <sup>1</sup> Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ]*

[God focused Abram on all the things of God and away from all the things that give security and comfort to people. God told Abram to leave his country, his kindred (family), father's house (future, inheritance), and his land. God removed Abram from everything that most people find motivating to them.]

2. **Faith Is Not Rooted In Human Merit (Rom 4.3-5)** [- When God finished commanding Abram, Abram had nothing left to offer God. The truth is that none of us have anything to offer God. We must come to God knowing that nothing of this mortal life is of any value to God. The Bible says,]

*[Romans 4:3-5 <sup>3</sup> For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. <sup>4</sup> Now to him that worketh is the reward not*

**reckoned of grace, but of debt.** <sup>5</sup> *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. ]*

3. **Faith Is Not Rooted In Human Mentality (vs 4)** [*... and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. - **Faith does not always make sense.** Faith is not seeing your way clear. For many of us, if we think we hear from God we first look at our circumstances and consider whether that is practical for us or not. We consider our finances, we consider our circumstances, we consider our physical well being and count the cost. But faith hears God and responds.]*

[Abram was seventy-five when God called him and he faithfully responded to God. For most of us, seventy-five is deemed beyond our usefulness in this world and life. Yet, in the Bible people are called out and used by God at a time and phase in life when everyone seems to think nothing of importance can happen.]

[Therefore, we must be reminded that Faith is hearing your way clear, not seeing your way clear. In faith one hears a promise or Word from God and responds.]

- B. The Relax of Abraham's Faith (vs 8-10; Isa 31.1)** [*And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. - Abraham was doing what God asked.]*

*[Genesis 12:8 <sup>8</sup> And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.]*

[Abram was where God wanted him to be and he was worshipping God. But then a famine came and Abram faltered. Because of the famine, because of his difficulties Abram went down to Egypt.]

[Egypt in the Bible is always a type of the world, a type of temptation, and potentially a type of sin.]

*[Isaiah 31:1 <sup>1</sup> Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!]*

**[Watch out for the temptation of turning to our world for help when things get tough.** Notice what led to Abram's faltering faith.]

1. **Abraham's Incomplete Obedience (12.1)** [*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: - Two things to notice in Abram's initial obedience,]*
  - a. **[Abram went half way,** he first went to Haran. Abram was originally from Ur and initially went to dwell in Haran. But God wanted him to go into Canaan. There are many half way Christians in our Churches today. Half way christians are weak and

faltering in their faith because they refuse to fully obey God. **There are those who are,]**

- [**Halfway in their Church Attendance** – Many will go to work with a cold but won't come to church with a sniffle.]
- [**Halfway in their Giving** – They will buy Ice Cream and a Latte but struggle to give a full tithe.]
- [**Halfway in their God and I Time** – They watch all kinds of sorted programs and sporting events but have rarely read their Bible all the way through.]
- [**Halfway in their service** – They have time for camping, golfing, and motorcycle rides but rarely have time to sacrificially serve God.]

b. [**Abram took some with him** (hangover sin) – Notice what God's command was,]

*[Genesis 12:1<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ]*

[Notice what Abram did,]

*[Genesis 12:4-5<sup>4</sup> So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. <sup>5</sup> And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.]*

[Without any doubt we will see as we study the passages that follow this one that Lot and many others were distractions, thorns, and problems for Abram and his family. Friends when you hang on to the hangovers of your unredeemed life and its sins you will have problems in your spiritual walk.]

2. **Abraham's Incomplete Observance (vs 10)** [– *And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. –* Abram fell into some difficulty and he took matters into his own hands and he went down into Egypt. Now Egypt is a type of the world and it is indicative of us turning to this corrupt world in our times of need rather than turning to God.]

**[Why did Abram turn to the world?** Because Abram doubted what God had said. God promised to take care of Abram, but when difficulties came Abram, like us, doubted God.]

**[Adrian Rogers said, "Don't doubt in the dark what God has said in the light."]**

3. **Abraham's Incomplete Honesty (vs 11-12. 17-20; 13.2; 16.1)** [- *And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: <sup>12</sup> Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. – Abram didn't completely lie when he told this half truth, because Sarai was his half sister. But Abram knew that he was being deceptive when he told this half truth. Notice what happened because of Abram's half lie,]*

*[Genesis 12:17-20 <sup>17</sup> And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. <sup>18</sup> And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? <sup>19</sup> Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. <sup>20</sup> And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had. ]*

**[A Christian out of fellowship with God is sickening to God and man.** When Abram went into Egypt he could have been a great testimony for God but instead Abram was sent away in shame and God was disgraced. Christian, when you are faltering in your faith and purity you become a hindrance to God's kingdom and work.]

**[Consider for a moment The Cost of Abraham's faltering faith,]**

**a. [Abraham Lost]**

- 1) **[Time –** While Abram was walking among the worldly Egyptians he lost time in fellowship with God. Christian when your faith falters you are wasting precious time walking with and serving your Heavenly Father.]
- 2) **[Testimony –** As already mentioned Abram's testimony and reputation was adversely affected by his downward spiral into worldliness.]

**b. [Abraham Gained]**

- 1) **[Wealth (Gen 13.2) Cattle –** *And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. <sup>2</sup> And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. – Before Abram went down into Egypt he had only sheep. While he was in Egypt he gained cattle. Cattles are very different than sheep. It takes more pasture to feed cattle than it does sheep. These Cattle became a thorn to Abram. It caused a range war between Abram and Lot and became the fall of Lot.]*

[Be sure that when you falter in your faith and obedience to God and turn to the world that the world will give you things that will hinder your godliness and your relationships.]

- 2) **[Woman (Gen 16.1) Hagar** – *Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. - Resulting in the Arab nations through Ishmael.*]

**C. The Return of Abraham's Faith (13.1-4)** [- *And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. <sup>2</sup> And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. <sup>3</sup> And he went on his journeys from the south even to **Bethel**, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; <sup>4</sup> Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. - Bethel means the house of God. Abram came up out of Egypt or the land of sin. After Abram faltered in his faith for a while he came back up to the house of God and reestablished his relationship with his Heavenly Father. Christian, have you faltered in your faith, you too can repent and return to your Heavenly Father. Abram did three things in rededicating himself to God.]*

1. **Abraham's Separation ( 13.1; Matt 6.24; 2 Cor 6.17-18)** [- *And Abram went up out of Egypt, . . . – Abraham returned to the Lord. He came up out of Egypt or up out of the world. Jesus said,]*

*[Matthew 6:24 <sup>24</sup> No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.]*

**[Paul wrote,]**

*[2 Corinthians 6:17-18 <sup>17</sup> Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, <sup>18</sup> And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. ]*

[The world will pull you away from God and way from the things of God. You must separate yourself from the things of this world if you will be strong in your faith and in your walk with God.]

2. **Abraham's Sanctification (Gen 13.3; John 14.15)** [- *And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; - Abram went back to where God wanted him to be in the first place. This deals with what you do and the will of God for you. **Do you do what you do because it is what you want to do or what God wants you to do?** Jesus said,]*

*[John 14:15 <sup>15</sup> If ye love me, keep my commandments.]*

[It seems that for many in our day obedience is a matter of convenience and desire. If God's commands are in keeping with what they want and what they feel they have time for then they will obey. Sanctification deals with getting yourself in alignment with God regardless of its personal cost.]

3. **Abraham's Sacrifice (Gen 13.4)** [*– Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. – Notice the Altar. Abraham worshipped God again, and he worshipped God God's way.*]

CrossRoads Baptist Church, August 30, 2009, Sunday Evening

Wednesday Night Youth, Oct 21-2009

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[\[1\]\[1\]](#) James Strong, *Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary*, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch Corp., 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "530

[\[2\]\[2\]](#) Ibid., Under: "4102".