

Faltering Faith and A Faithful God

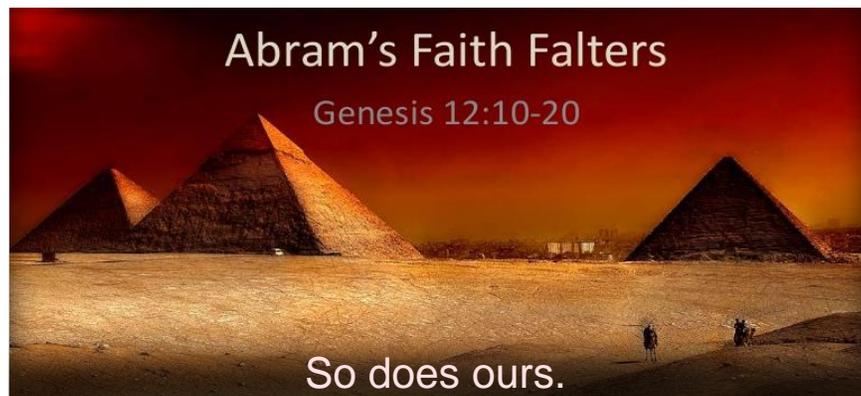
Genesis 12.10-20

Last week we were introduced to Abram: God called, he responded, journeyed to Canaan, and worshipped the Lord. *Standing ovation!* But this week, Abram has a crisis of faith. Instead of trusting God, he deceives man, and the promised blessing is jeopardized.

- **Hardship and Deception: A Crisis of Faith (10-13)**
*In a time of crisis, Abram trusted in himself, not God.
Abram deceived Pharaoh in order to preserve God's promise.*
- **Gain and Loss: The Promised Blessing Jeopardized (14-16)**
*Sarai is taken into the Pharaoh's harem.
Abram gains great riches...but his wife is gone.*
- **Chastened Hero: A Faithful God Saves the Day (17-20)**
*God sends plagues on Pharaoh's household.
Pharaoh confronts Abram's deceit, and returns Sarai.
Abram is expelled from Egypt, shamed but protected.*

Lessons for our Lives

- Trials bring crises of faith, but deception is not a solution.
- We can gain worldly riches, yet be chastened by God.
- God's faithfulness – not ours – preserves His promise.



Digging Deeper

1. Genesis 11.27-12.9 introduces us to Abram, and shows him to be a man of faith and worship. Of course, we know him as the hero of faith! We sometimes view our heroes as indestructible, but in Scripture, we see 'warts and all.' Why do we put people on a pedestal? Have you experienced having a spiritual hero of yours go through a crisis of faith? What did it do to your faith? Why do you think God includes the failures of 'biblical heroes' in Scripture?
2. Abram's 'detour' away from faith began with a crisis: How did he respond to it? Have you faced a crisis in your life recently? How did you respond to it? What is our natural tendency when faced with trials? Bonus: How and why does deception often become a part of our human response to a crisis?
3. Abram acted without faith in deceiving Pharaoh about Sarai, yet gained great wealth by doing so! This material bounty gave him no comfort, however: It constantly reminded him of what he had lost – his wife! Have you ever gained something by deception, but lost the 'blessing' of God's peace as a result? It is tempting to trade eternal rewards gained by following Christ for temporal rewards in this life on earth. How do Jesus' words in Mk. 8.34-38 correct our thinking?
4. In Gen. 12.2-3 and 7 God promises Abram amazing things – he will become a great nation, his descendants will live in the land of Canaan. But Abram's faith was immature: *He would save his life, and give up his wife!* God will teach Abram that He never fulfills promises through immoral means (in this case, adultery). What promises do you need to trust God to fulfill in your life?
5. God acted unilaterally to protect His promised blessing, despite Abram's lack of faith. How does this reflect one of the greatest truths in our Christian lives? To all who believe, God *gives* the gift of eternal life. When our faith falters (as it will), what is the reassurance He gives? See 2 Timothy 2.13.