

Sermon Outlines

Lessons From The Life of Abraham - Part 1

Introduction

- 1) Some of the greatest people, politically and ecclesiastically, have suffered from depression. Winston Churchill called it, “his dark shadow”. Mike Tyson said, “I’ve suffered from self-loathing my entire life”.
- 2) It can particularly happen after a delightful experience. This is what happened to Abraham.
 - a) God had told him to leave Ur and go to Canaan. It must have been excitement, tinged with a little anxiety.
 - b) Then the dark cloud came and there was a famine in the land. That which seemed so filled with possibilities suddenly crashed.
 - c) He had great livestock and from the natural viewpoint, there was a possibility of losing it all.
 - d) A decision had to be made, “Do we stay or move to where there is plenty of grasslands?”
 - i) In such situations, it is easy to say God is sovereign but believing it can be very difficult.
 - ii) Being natural rational beings, it is difficult to see a crisis as a test from God.
 - iii) He was about 80 years old at this time and there had not been a famine like this for over 100 years.

In trials, the often asked question.

- 1) As I write this my niece, who is 54 years of age, is dying of cancer. Life was so filled with promise. She had a lovely home, daughters of marriageable age, and a great husband. Life was a pleasure, then cancer struck.
 - a) This was not the way it ought to be. Questions swirled:
 - i) It was not fair, she will leave two daughters and her husband.
 - ii) Why, what is the purpose, could not have prevented this disease?
 - iii) James informs us to, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (Jam. 1:2). Paul writes, “All things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28).
 - iv) Realistically, in the storms of life, whether they are anticipated or unexpected, these Biblical truths are very hard to accept.
 - b) Illustration:
 - i) In the summer sunshine the wheat waves in the wind. How vital that wind has been throughout its growth for had there been no wind, the wheat would never reach its full potential. If the wheat was able to speak it would object to the wind. It would complain about the coldness and fierceness, and all the time missing that it was bringing the wheat to be the best it could be.
 - ii) This is the same with our Christian growth. The storms of life and the trials of life cause our roots in Christ to grow deeper and we become more like the Lord, but it is not easy.

What lessons can we learn from the trials of disappointment, discouragement or, humiliation?

- 1) It must be remembered that God is the manifestation of purest love as seen at Calvary. Therefore, anything that crosses our path has been permitted by God for our blessing. The disciples in the boat would never have appreciated the greatness of Christ if they had never known the storm.
- 2) The trials and storms of life are a blessing:
 - a) They are part of that good and perfect gift that cometh from the Father of lights (Jam. 1:17). They are the evidence of sonship being spiritually developed (Heb. 12:7).

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- b) When exercised, they become a pathway to a deeper understanding of the ways of God (Psa. 73:17). In that hallowed sphere, the individual sees the power and glory of the Lord.
- c) Faith never gets tested when there is no opposition. When the Lord spoke to Philip about feeding the 5000, it was a test for Philip. The Lord knew what He would do (Jn. 6:6). To test and develop our faith. The faith of Abraham was carefully and progressively developed by God. The first step was separating from idolatrous Ur. In time he learnt that God could be depended on, even when away from Him spiritually and in a pagan environment. Only when his faith was greatly developed was he asked to offer his son.
- d) So it is with us. We are spiritually separated from the world by redemption.
- e) God wants to make us spiritually minded individuals. Therefore, as time passes, our faith gets tested as we pass through the fire and flood.
- f) Often in the weakness of body or mind, we develop in learning God rather than learning about God.
- g) To be weaned from earthly pleasures to celestial delights, as long as we are healthy in mind and body, there can be an indulgence in the pursuits of earth. However, when a possibly final illness is known or a time is given for life's existence on earth, the things of this earth lose their attraction and importance.
 - i) On 9/11 in the towers, business deals had to be finalized, chores were begun when suddenly the possibility of death became real. Nothing else mattered. Soon important pieces of personal interest, business deals, sweetheart affections and invoices lay strewn in the streets and no one cared.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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