

MZFABC Bible Study

Abraham:

The Father of the Jews

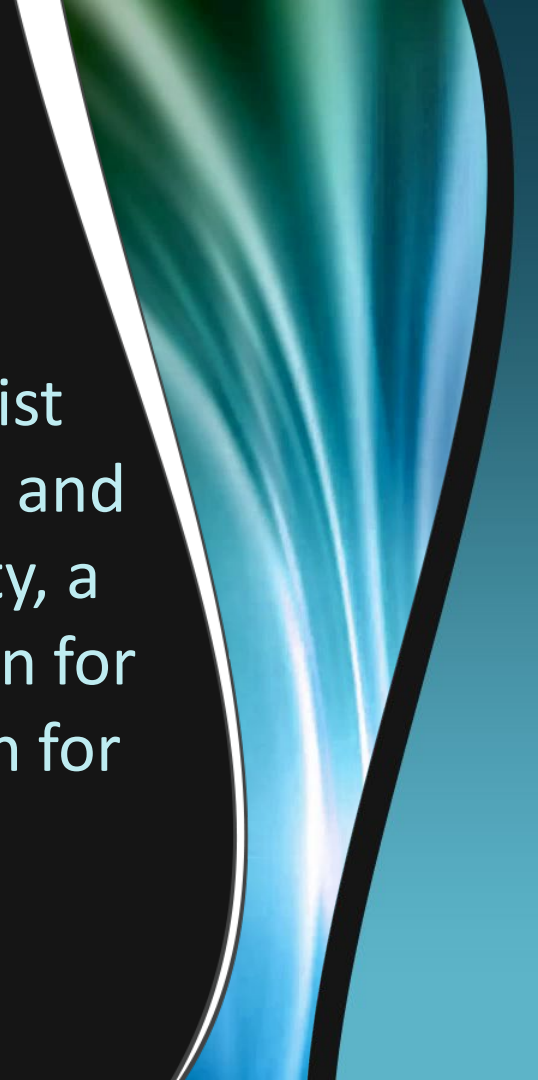
Genesis Chapter 11 v. 27 –Chapter 25 v. 10

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VISION

The vision of the Mt. Zion First African Baptist Church of Charlottesville, Virginia will reach and reproduce within its surrounding community, a people inspired and equipped with a passion for the truth of God's Word and His compassion for others who will be enablers of change.



Moving Forward as a Growing Church:

Believing For It

The background features two prominent, thick, white wavy lines that curve across the frame. The top line starts on the left, dips slightly, and then rises towards the right. The bottom line starts lower on the left, dips more significantly, and then rises towards the right. These lines create a sense of movement and flow. The bottom portion of the image is filled with a solid teal color, which transitions into the black background above the bottom line.

Abraham: **The Father of the Jews**

February 7, 2024

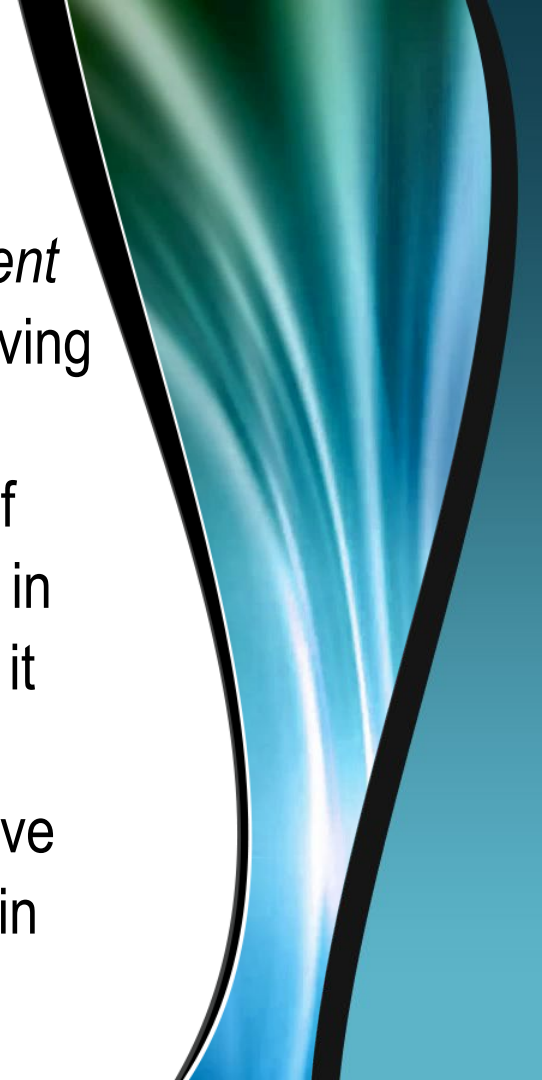
Genesis Chapter 11 v. 27 –Chapter 25 v. 10

Sojourning In Egypt

GENESIS 12:10-13:4

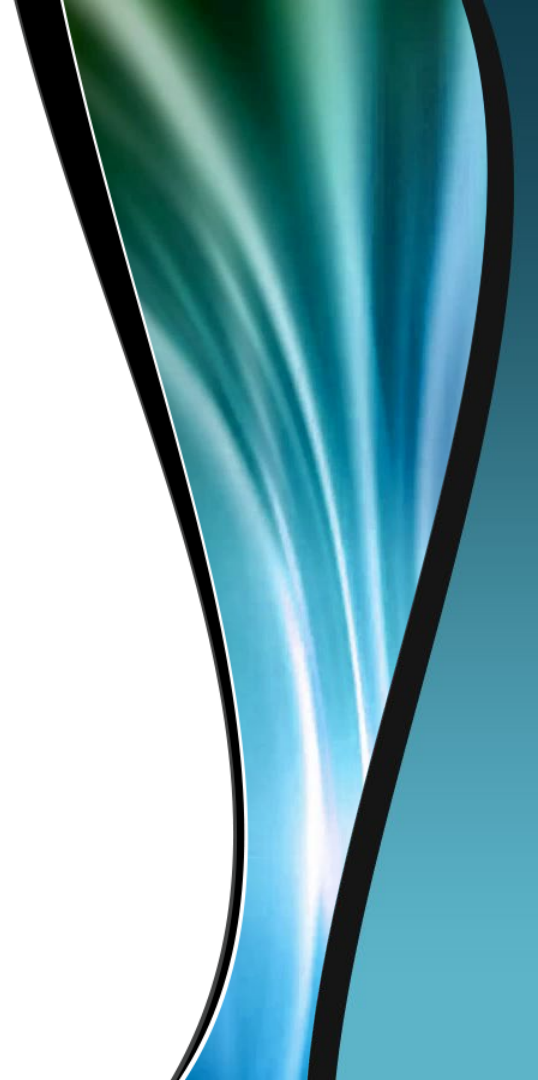


When Abraham was settled down in Canaan and his traveling days from one country to another seem ended, *“there was a famine in the land [Canaan]: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there”* (12:10). Unlike his moving from Ur to Haran and then on to Canaan, this going to Egypt was not an authorized trip even though the land of Canaan was experiencing a great famine. This traveling in disobedience to God got Abraham in deep trouble. Was it not for the intervening grace of God which turned him around and got him back in Canaan, Abraham would have destroyed himself, lost his calling, and been unheard of in history.



To study this sojourning experience in Abraham's life, we will consider:

- The famine in the land (12:10)
- The forsaking of the land (12:10),
- The folly out of the land (12:11–17)
- The flight back to the land (12:18–13:4)

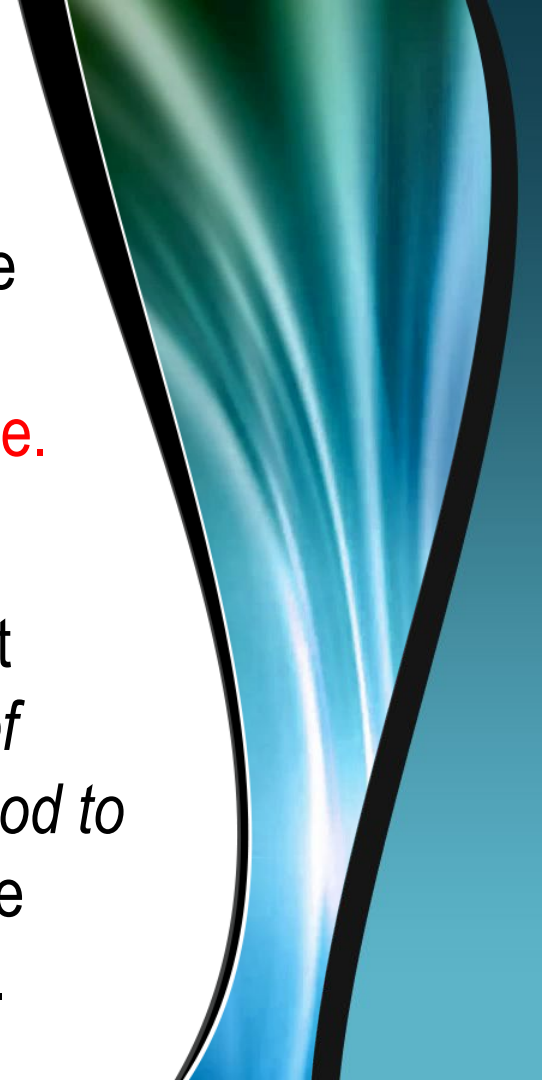


THE FAMINE IN THE LAND

“And there was a famine in the land ... the famine was grievous in the land” (v. 10). We will note three things about this famine: **the site of the famine, the season of the famine, and the severity of the famine.**

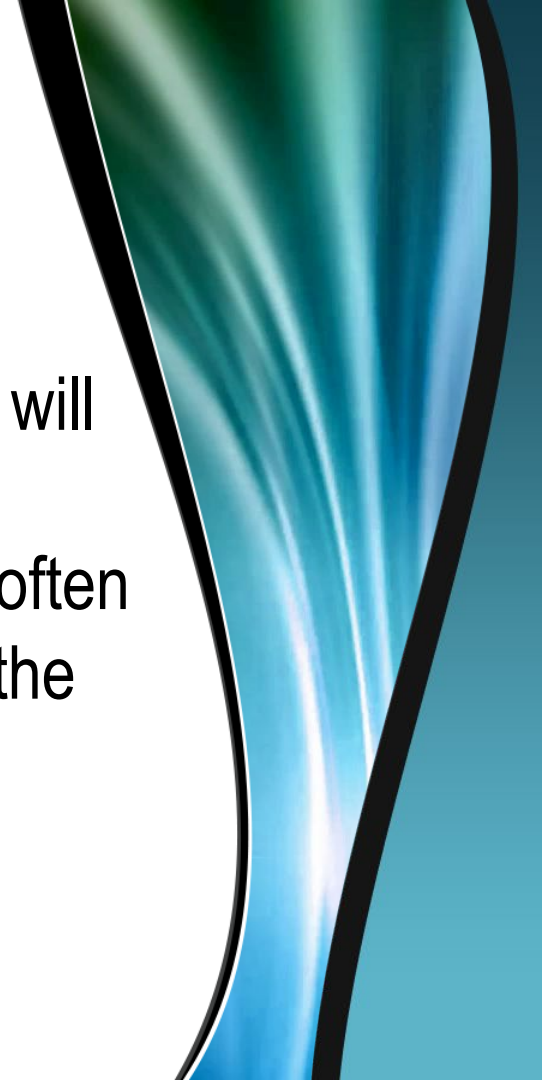
The Site of the Famine

The famine came “in the land” where God had sent Abraham. Coming “in the land” will cause *the will of God, the promises of God, and the dedication to God to be greatly challenged*. Good times do not challenge these things very much, but bad times certainly do.



The Will Of God Challenged

The location of this famine would challenge Abraham about whether or not it was really the will of God for him to come to Canaan. If he judges situations the way people (including believers) often judge adverse situations, he will conclude that the famine being “in the land” indicated he made a mistake in coming to Canaan.

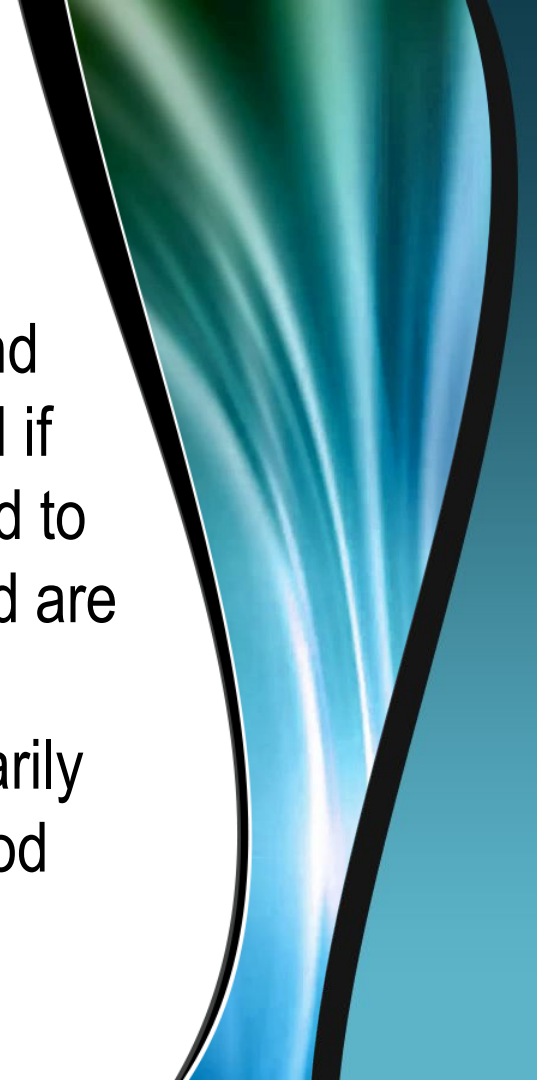


The Will Of God Challenged

For it seems we often judge on the basis of appearances and outward success. For example, if a farmer does the will of God, he will have better crops; if the salesman does the will of God, he will have more sales; if the pastor does the will of God, he will see his church grow in attendance; if a church member does the will of God regarding giving, he will see his finances improve; *and if Abraham goes to Canaan, he will enjoy good times.*



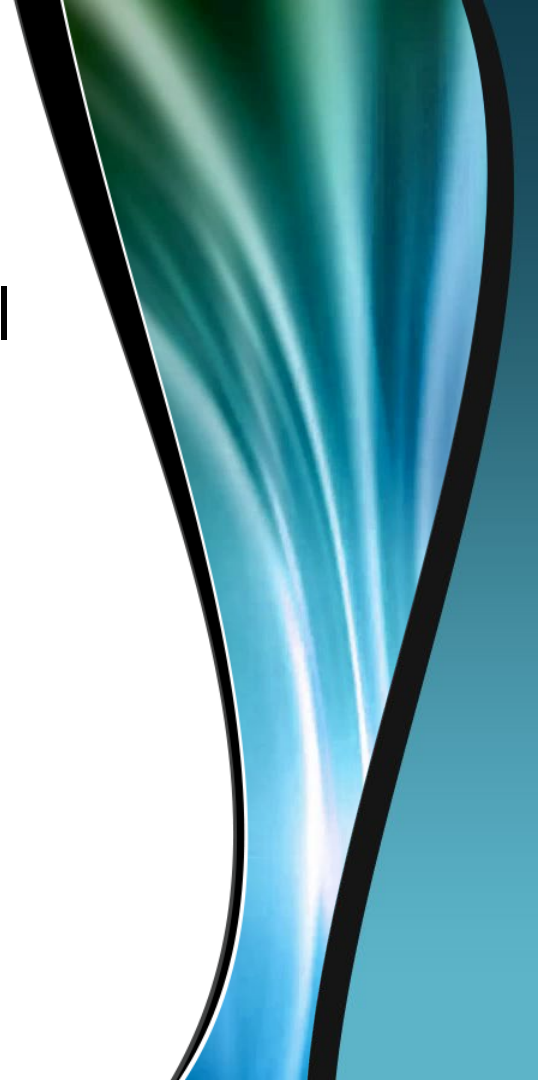
But if the farmer's crops fail, if the salesman loses sales, if the pastor sees his church attendance fall till the church wants to run him off, if the one who liberally gives to the Lord sees a drop in income and the financial situation become very precarious, and if Abraham experiences a famine in the land, we tend to conclude that these folks have made a mistake and are out of the will of God. But *the will of God* is not determined primarily by outward success but primarily by *the Word of God*. And nothing in the Word of God tells us that being in the will of God always means smooth sailing on life's voyage(s).



Just because there was no famine in Ur and Haran does not mean that Abraham should have stayed in Ur or Haran. Abraham had the Word of God to vindicate his Canaan location as being the will of God. Upon reaching Canaan, Abraham was informed by God that *“Unto thy seed will I give this land”* (Genesis 12:7). As previously noted, this statement of promise was tantamount to saying Abraham was in the right place. Whether he experienced a famine or not had nothing to do with determining if he was in the will of God. It was the Word of God that determined that.

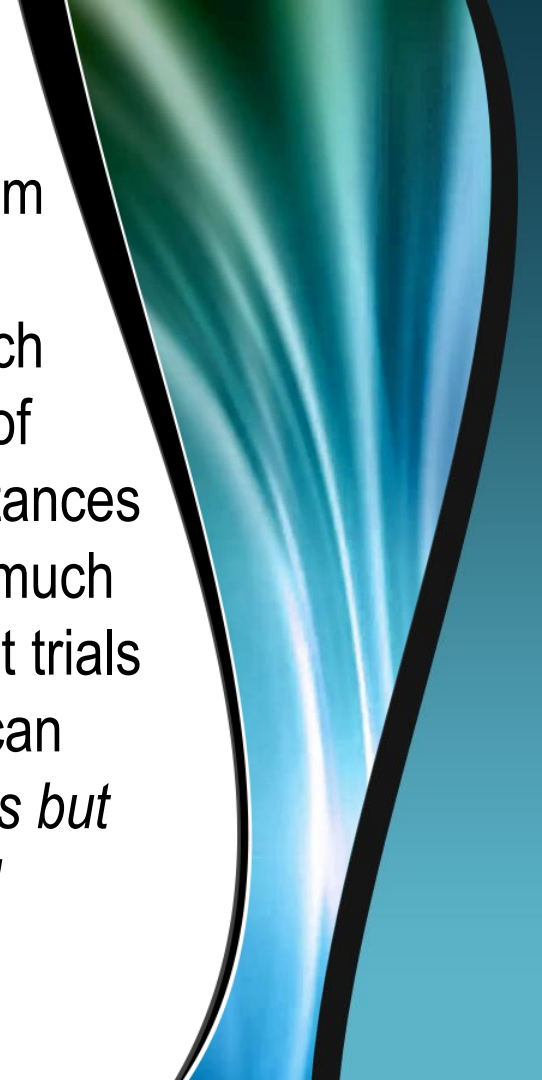


So it is with us. Therefore, we need to know the Word of God well so we will know the will of God well. Otherwise we will draw wrong conclusions about those famines we encounter on the path of obedience and will let them divert us onto the path of disobedience.

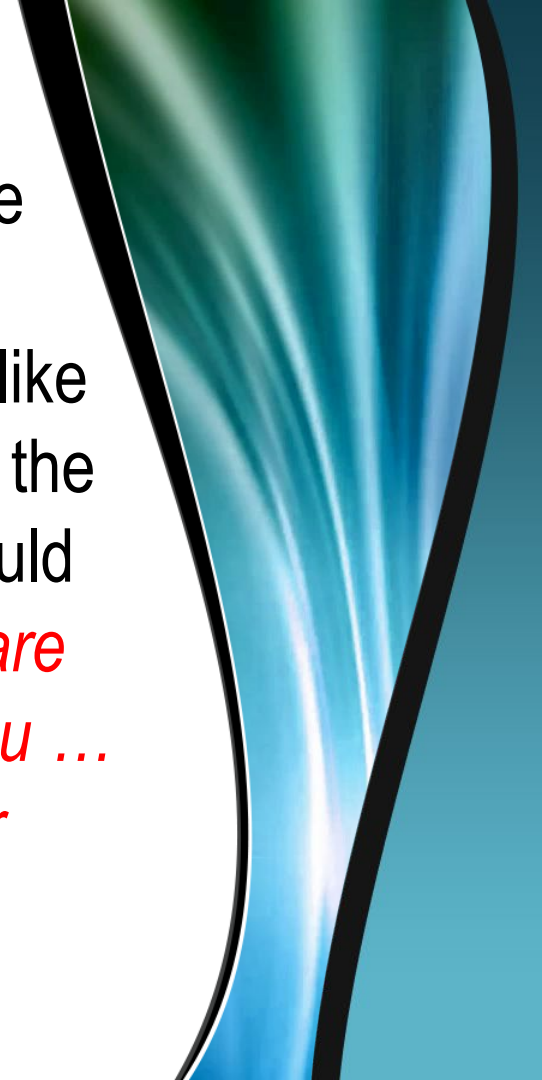


The Promises Of God Challenged

The coming of the famine would also challenge Abraham about the validity of God's promises. God had said He would bless Abraham, but now there was a famine which seemed to curse instead of bless. In the natural realm of thought or reasoning, people will look at these circumstances and mock God and His promises. But the wise will act much differently. They will hold their peace, for they know that trials are often the only way some of the greatest blessings can come to man. Paul said, *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* (2 Corinthians 4:17).



If our light afflictions do so much for us, think what heavy afflictions will do! Peter described the trials of our faith as *“being much more precious than of gold”* (1 Peter 1:7). That does not sound like a curse but like a great blessing. Jesus spoke of the rugged trial of persecution as something that would prove to be a great blessing. He said, *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you ... Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven”* (Matthew 5:11, 12).



Trial for God's obedient children may seem on the surface to mock the promise of blessing, but time will definitely prove otherwise. That fact should greatly encourage us when we are in the midst of trial and cannot perceive in our own human thinking any blessing whatever coming from it.

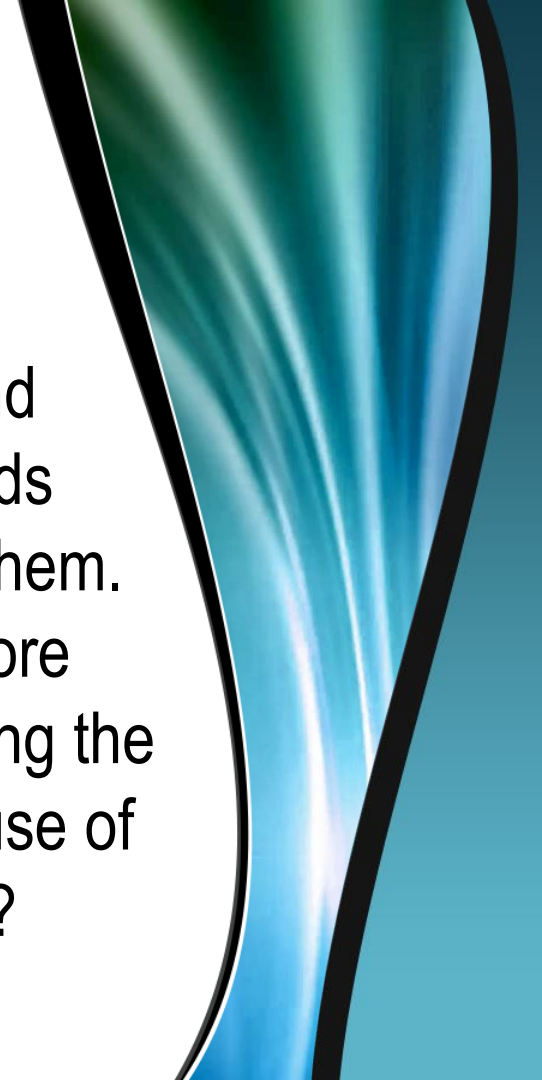


The Dedication To God Challenged

The famine experience in Canaan really challenged the dedication of Abraham to obeying God. In fact, it was a stronger challenge than Abraham could handle; for his dedication to obedience at that time was not strong enough to survive the famine. Nothing challenges our dedication to obeying God like hard times. Many folk are willing to obey God when it results in good times; but if obedience brings upon them rough experiences, they are ready to quit.



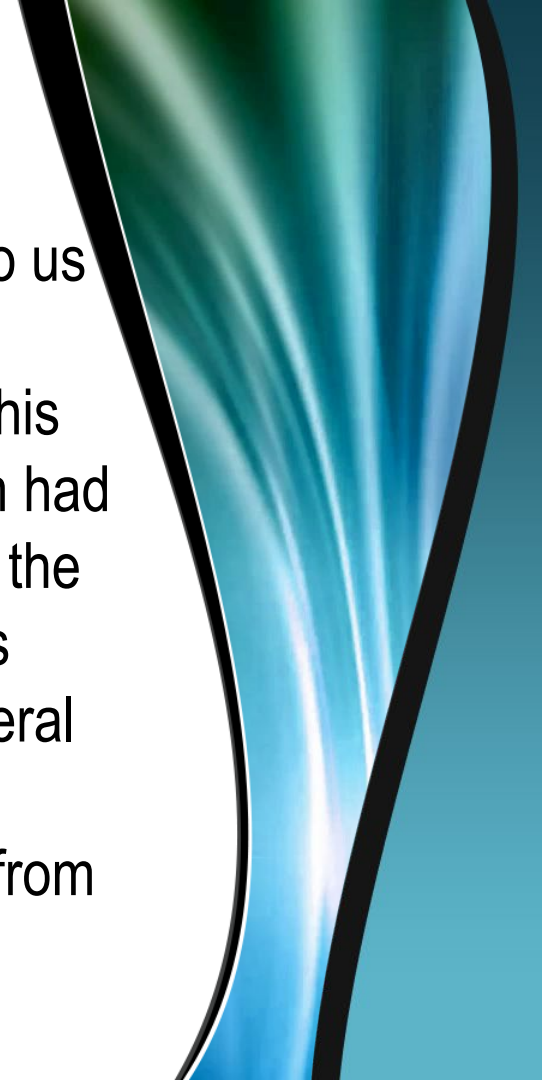
If their obedience is praised and it results in promotion and popularity, they are zealous about God's commands. But let their obedience be criticized or cause them to lose friends or a job, and they will do some rethinking about God's commands and may decide they no longer want to submit to them. We do not walk on the path of obedience long before our dedication will be tested to see if we are obeying the Lord because of delightful circumstances or because of Divine commands. How do you fare in these tests?



The Famine in the Land:

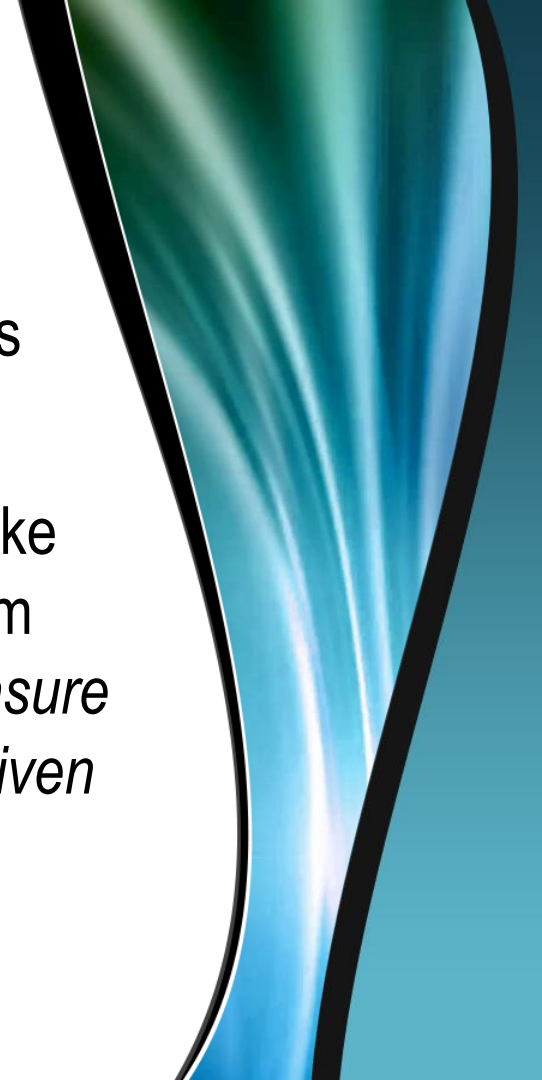
The Season of the Famine

One of the times or seasons in which trial often comes to us is right after we have had some great spiritual victory or mountain peak experience. So it was with the timing of this trial in Abraham's life. The trial came right after Abraham had reached a new high spiritually in his life. He had obeyed the Lord and come to the land of Canaan. Abraham lived his faith unashamedly before the world, for he had built several altars unto the Lord right in public view of the heathen Canaanites. This was accompanied by new revelations from God. All these things spelled a great spiritual high for Abraham—then came the famine.



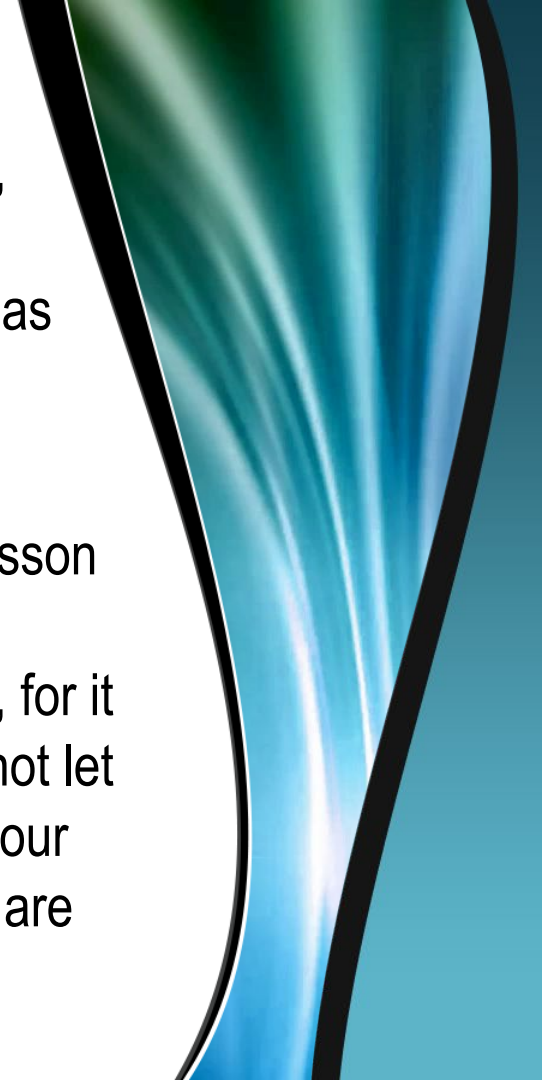
The time after great spiritual victories and experiences is a very critical time for the believer. It is a time when the believer has a tendency to become proud or self-confident. Therefore after our spiritual highs, two things will frequently occur.

First, God will send trials to keep us humble. Paul spoke about this when, after receiving special revelations from God, he said, *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”*
(2 Corinthians 12:7)



Second, Satan will send **temptation** to harm us because he knows that if our guard is let down because of a spiritual high, he will be more effective in attacking us. He will try to use the **trial**, which God sent to humble us, to instead do such things as ***create in us doubt*** about God's way, and disdain for God for allegedly not taking care of us.

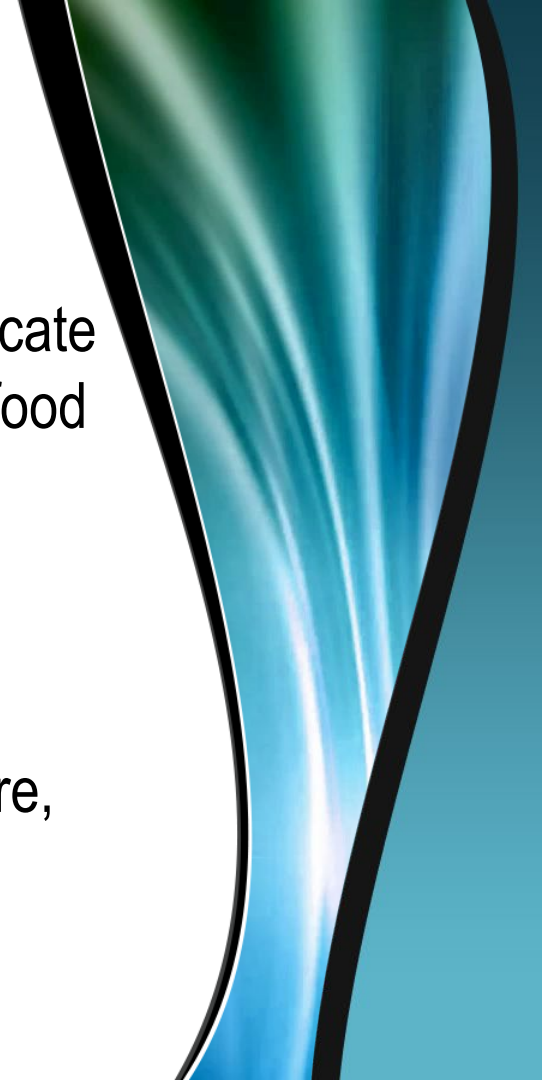
The timing of Abraham's trial brings a strong and important lesson to us to beware of the peril of post-victory and post-blessing problems. Do not let victory or blessing puff you up with pride, for it was God who gave you the victory and the blessing. And do not let down after these experiences either; for the enemy will spot your laxness as weakness, and deliver a knockout punch — if you are not careful!



The Famine in the Land:

The Severity of the Famine

Our text says the famine was “grievous.” This would indicate that the famine was long and had really devastated the food supply. Adding to the grievousness of the famine for Abraham would be his situation. To start with, he was a stranger in the land; and, as any traveler knows, trouble away from home is more grievous than trouble at home. Also, he was living amongst hostile people; and, therefore, he would not find much help from them.

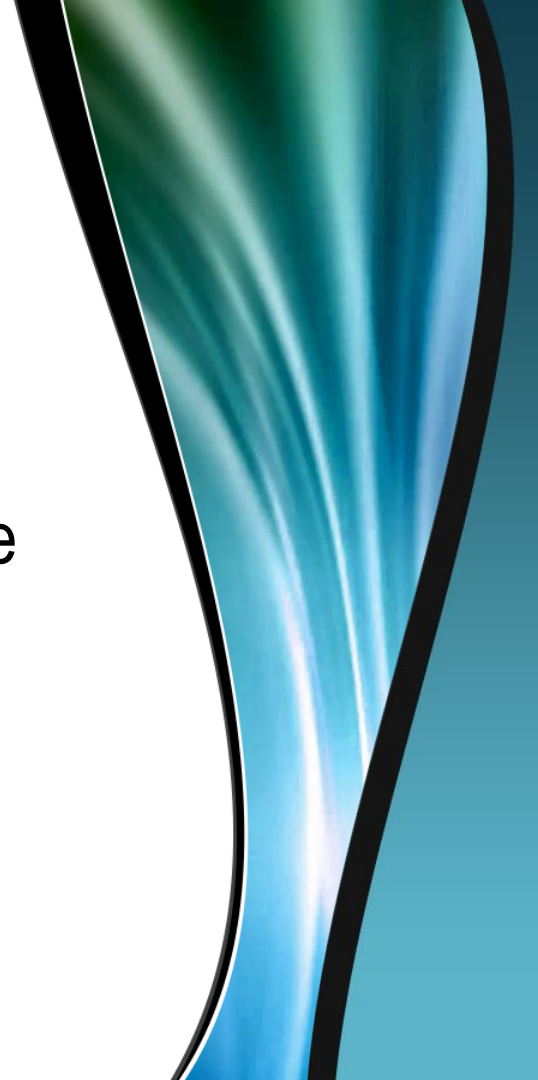


Furthermore, Abraham had many under his care which in time of famine would increase the burden of the famine. Besides his wife and Lot, Abraham also had many servants plus large flocks of animals who depended on him for their sustenance. All these things would add much to the weight of the already burdensome famine. Some of our trials will indeed be grievous. But the severity of these trials will be more than compensated for in the fact that they give great opportunity for two important things to occur:

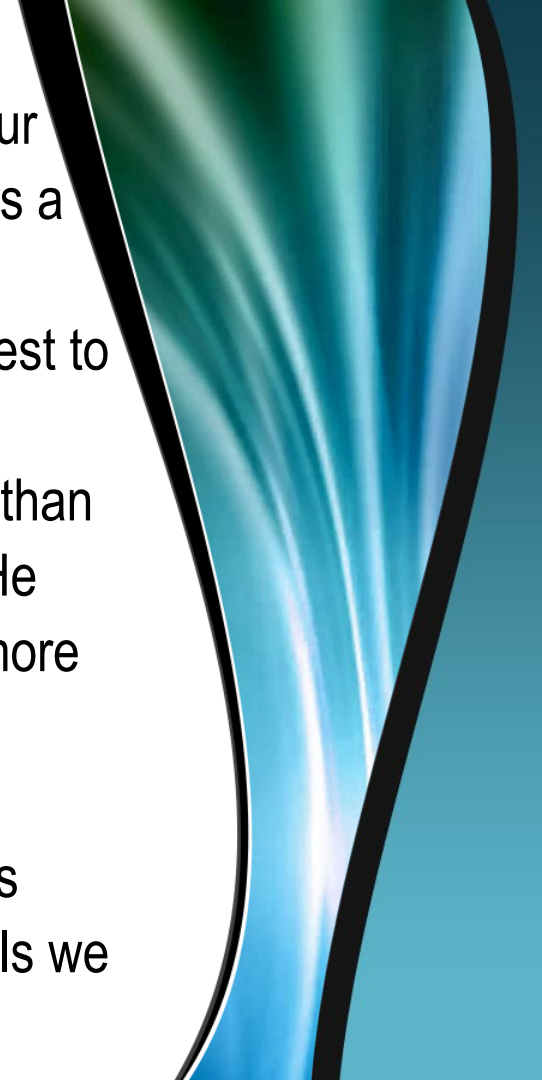
- 1) *The development of one's faith,***
- 2) *The display of God's power.***



It is important to recognize/understand the development of faith and the display of God's glory during severe trials, lest we complain and dishonor God concerning the extreme heaviness of some of our trials. All trials provide opportunity for our faith to develop and God's glory to be displayed; but the more severe the trial, the greater the opportunity for these perspectives to be observed.

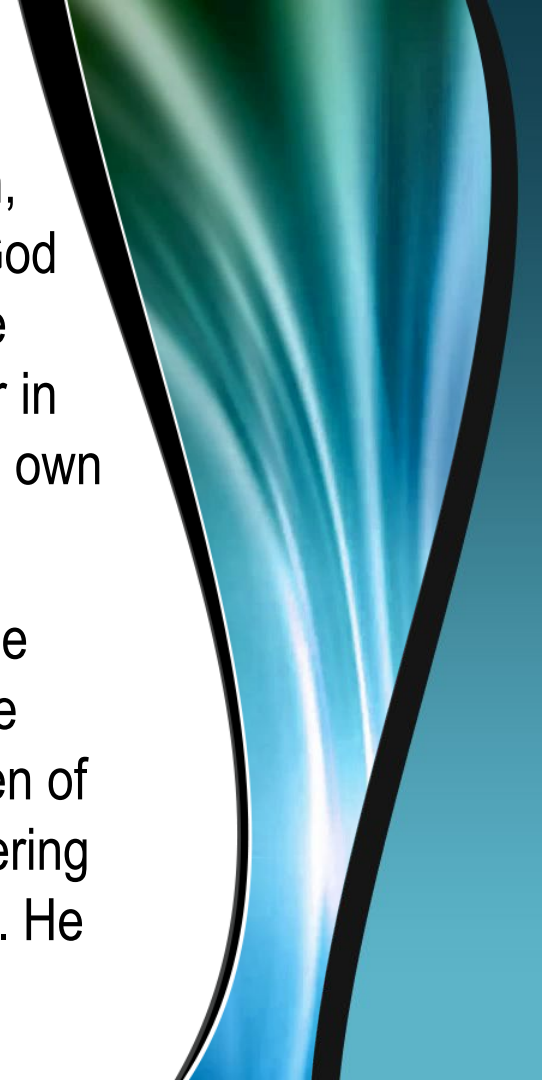


The development of one's faith: As we make progress in our spiritual lives, trials will get harder. When a sports team enters a tournament, the further they advance in the tournament the tougher will be their competition. They will have to beat the best to be the champion. So it is with our faith. If you want to be a champion for God, you will have to conquer something more than trivial trials in life. God wants to build strong, healthy saints. He has enough weak-kneed, wishy-washy disciples and wants more of the strong, faithful variety. Faith cannot be developed on a peaches and cream diet, just as you do not build muscles by weight-lifting marshmallows. Faith grows through grace and is developed through strenuous trials. Without these severe trials we do not develop strong faith.



The display of God's power: God wants to be glorified and should be glorified. Unfortunately, in our age of self-exaltation, we forget this very important fact. One of the ways in which God is glorified is in the display of His power. The more severe the situation for His people, the more God shows His great power in delivering His people. God allows severe trials to come to His own that He might show His great power in delivering them.

Those who complain about God making us suffer so He will be glorified need to remember that God suffered at Calvary in the person of Jesus Christ so that we might be glorified as children of God—the greatest glory a person can ever have. So our suffering for His glory is not an unfair arrangement for us—it is for God. He suffered so much more at Calvary than we will ever suffer.



THE FORSAKING OF THE LAND

“And Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there.”
(12:10). Abraham did not react well to the famine. Egypt was not where Abraham was to be. He was to be in Canaan. But when our faith fails, and we walk by sight rather than by faith, we seldom stay in our Canaans. Three aspects to consider about Aram’s move to Egypt are: ***The rationalizing about his move, the reason for his move, and the reoccurrences of his move.***

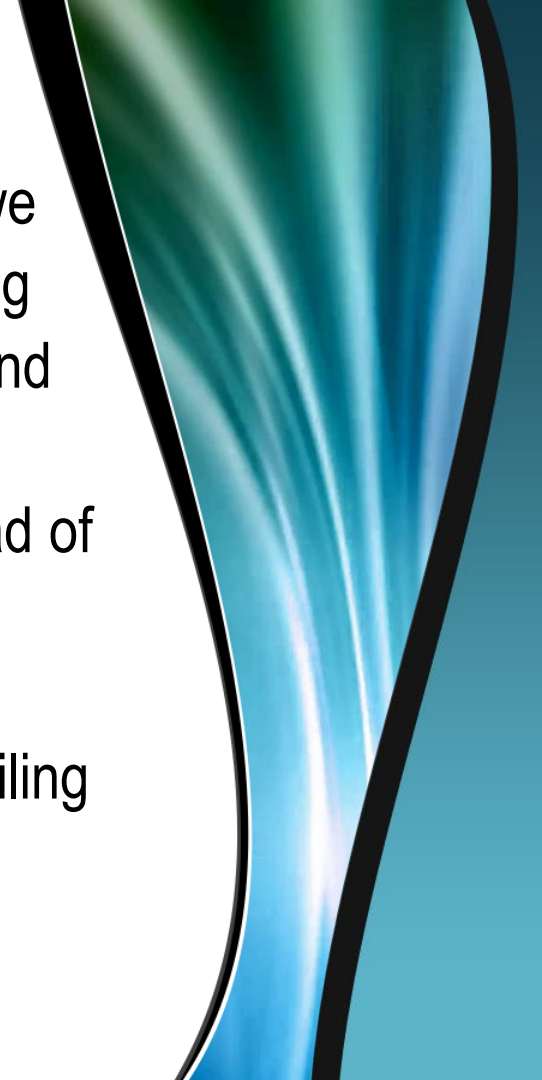


The Rationalizing About His Move

Some excuse this failure of Abraham by emphasizing that he was young in the faith and could not be expected to do otherwise than what he did. It is true that we do not expect new believers to immediately walk as mature believers, for we recognize that growth in grace/faith is progressive. But Abraham had been progressing in faith over a number of months now; and this going to Egypt represented backsliding, not a lack of maturity. In commenting on this failure of Abraham, Joseph Parker said, *“It is a bad thing to rack our brains for excuses on behalf of the Bible worthies when they fall; if God did not excuse them, we need not stretch our charity into a covering for their sins.”*



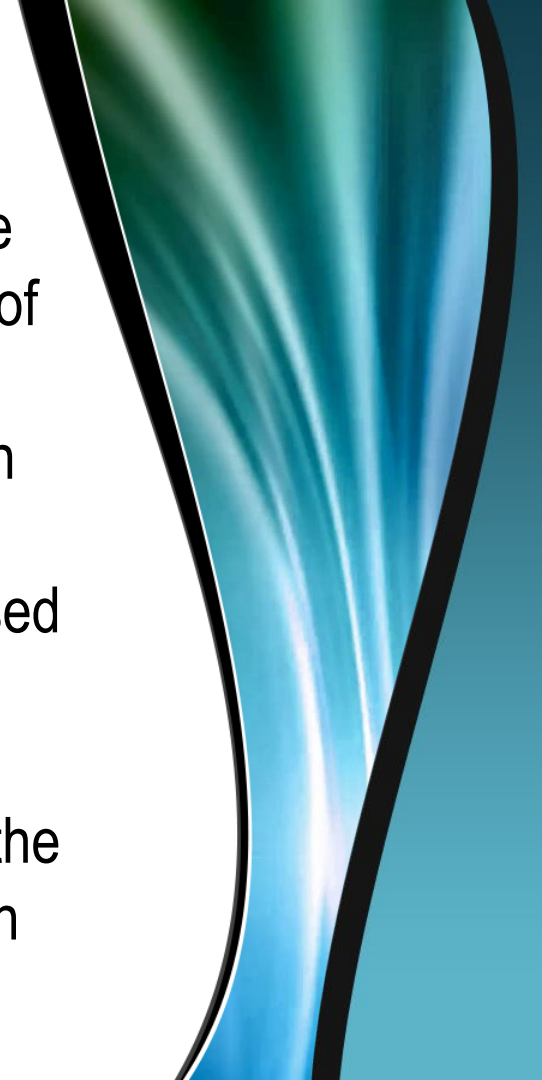
Rather than trying to excuse Abraham for his failure, we need to take warning from it to help us keep from failing when our faith is tested by stressful situations. The trend of today is often to minimize and excuse sin (disobedience). Therefore, when someone sins, instead of naming the reality of the sin and warning others and ourselves about it, we rush to console the sinner and excuse the sin. Thus, we wonder why humankind is failing more and more to walk uprightly.



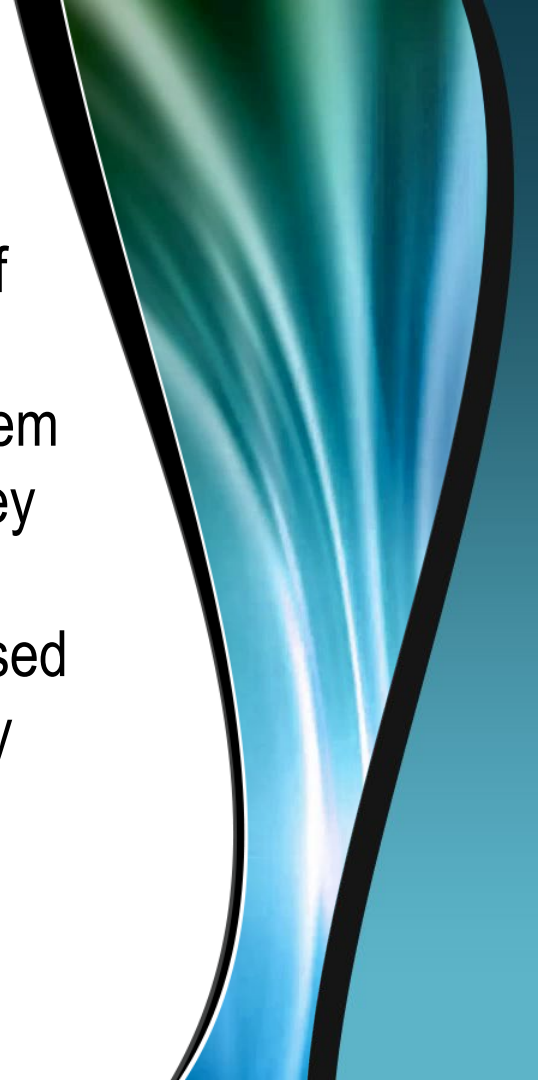
The Reason for His Move

The reason Abraham moved to Egypt when the famine came to Canaan was that he ceased to use the Word of God for his guide and used other guides instead.

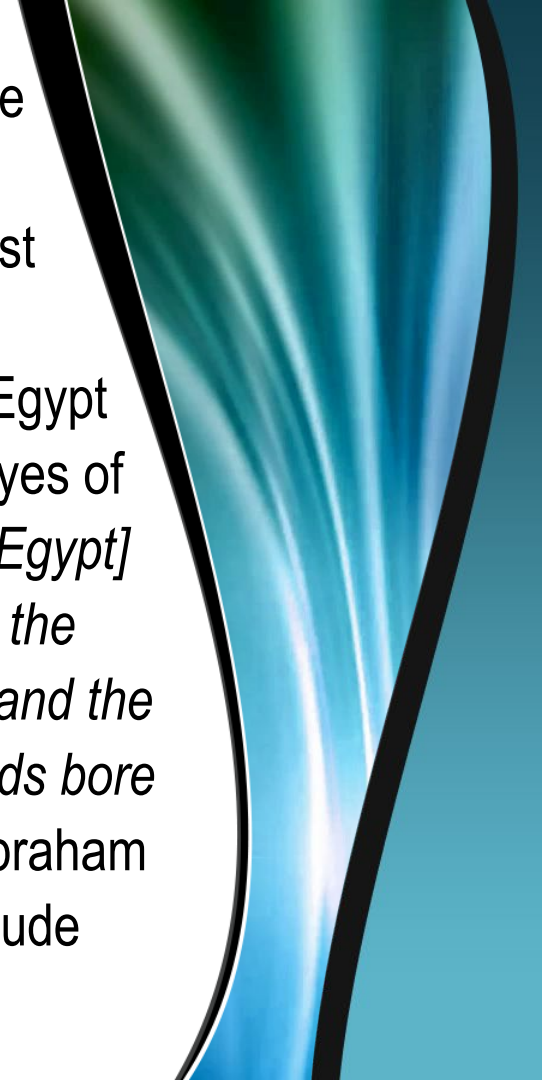
Abraham had come from Ur all the way to Canaan with God's Word as his guide. But when the famine hit, he ceased walking by that *guide of all guides*. So he ceased to walk by faith which is the only way you can walk victoriously in life. Faith is rooted and grounded on the Word of God (Romans 10:17); and when you forsake the Word, your faith is bound to fail. It certainly was so with Abraham.



Abraham used two other guides instead of the Word of God: ***circumstances and self-preservation***. These guides are very prominent in the world today. They seem so much more attractive than the Word of God. But they will lead us to destruction if we replace the Word with them. An examination of these two guides Abraham used will reveal why they are so attractive, but also why they are no substitute for the Word of God.



Circumstances: Abraham's circumstances in Canaan and the circumstances in Egypt really seemed to sanction Abraham's move from Canaan to Egypt. After all, Canaan was in the midst of a severe famine which would really make it difficult for Abraham to take care of his family, servants, and flocks. But Egypt was in much better condition; it looked very attractive to the eyes of the flesh. As Robert Candlish says, "*The temptation [to go to Egypt] was a severe one. Egypt was at this time a flourishing nation; the fertile valley of the Nile supported a considerable population; and the country was already assuming the character which it afterwards bore as the granary of the world.*" Food and pasture—the things Abraham needed—were abundant in Egypt. Thus the flesh would conclude that surely this dictates a move to Egypt.



Although circumstances often seem so logical as a guide for our lives, they are not trustworthy. It is not wrong to include circumstances in guiding our decisions, but circumstances alone cannot be depended upon to show you the right way. Circumstances must always be interpreted by the Word of God, by Divine revelation. Though they look so appealing, they can also be very deceiving in appearance. Every circumstance, no matter how favorable it seems to be, needs to be examined by what God says; or we will go astray. Abraham appeared to have an improved circumstance in Egypt, but it proved otherwise. Many are the drop-outs in life who made decisions based solely on what appeared to be improved material circumstances.

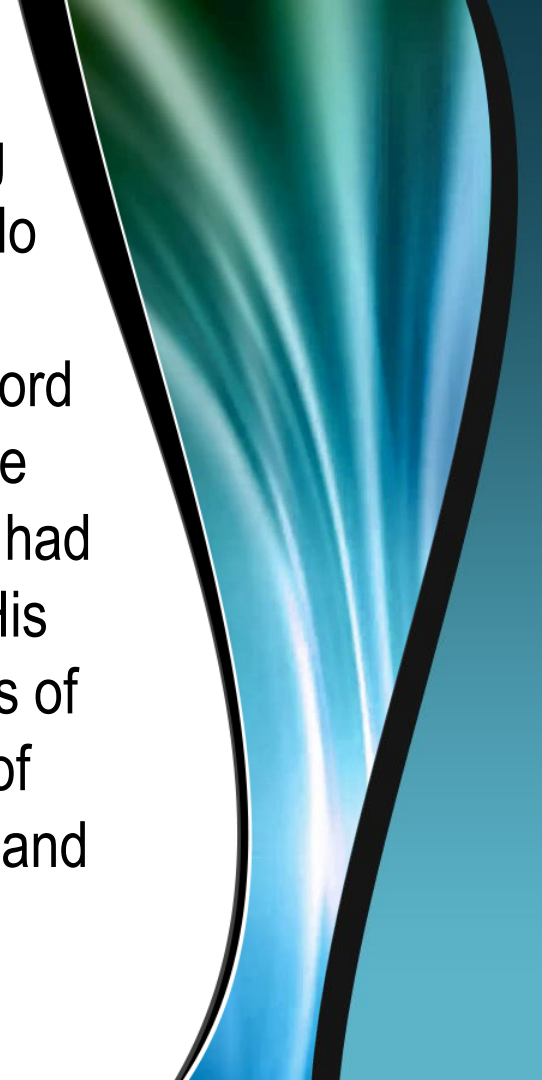


Self-preservation: Another popular guide, which Abraham obviously used, is self-preservation. The thinking would be that if he stayed in Canaan, he would not survive; but if he went to Egypt, he would survive. Self-preservation is indeed very important in life, but it is not so important that it can replace the Word of God as our guide in life.

The world, however, places a premium on self-preservation; and oftentimes many Christians do likewise. As an example, during the days of the early church, some believers worked in idol factories. The great church leader Tertullian rebuked them for this unsavory employment. Their reply was that they had to live. Tertullian responded, “Do you?” Tertullian was using the Word of God as his guide; the Christians who worked in the idol factories were using self-preservation as their guide.



Many professing Christians today would cease working where they do and stop doing many other things they do if their guide was the Word of God instead of self-preservation. Self-preservation must not replace the Word of God as our chief guide, or we will deviate far from the will of God and greatly defile ourselves. If Jesus Christ had used self-preservation instead of the Word of God as His guide, there would have been no Calvary. If the martyrs of early Christendom had used self-preservation instead of God's Word as their guide, there would be no martyrs; and the church would have died out long ago.



Abraham was called to go to Canaan, not Egypt. He was, therefore, safer in Canaan in the midst of the worst of famines than in Egypt in the midst of plenty. Going to Egypt appeared to enhance Abraham's self-preservation; but before he even arrived in Egypt, he realized his self-preservation was imperiled greater than it had been in Canaan. So self-preservation certainly failed him as a guide. It is the Word of God that does not fail in guiding us correctly.

