

Abraham 5 - Hope Deferred

1. Hope deferred

In previous weeks, we've seen that Abram has had some shortcomings but in his recovery each time he has gotten stronger in his faith. As we come to Genesis 16 we find a new kind of challenge. Abram set out for a new country when he was 75, but in chapter 16 he is about 85 years old. He was promised a seed to be his heir in chapters 13 and 15, but at 85 you kind of have to wonder when things are going to happen. Solomon captured this problem in

Prov 13:12 Hope deferred
maketh the heart sick: but *when*
the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of
life.

When you have expectations that go unfulfilled for any length of time you can start to have doubts or at least wonder how realistic you were in your anticipation. Ten years is a long time to be waiting. For us, this can be a problem in our fast paced world. For youth, it is even a bigger problem since they are not trained up to handle delayed gratification. The entertainment world is built on the quick turn around with new releases. The very nature of video games is built on constantly feeding a sense of reward that sucks the impressionable into a zombie vortex. Advertising calls on you to act quickly, but wait, order within the next 15 seconds and we will throw in a thing-a-mabob, act now and we will send you not just one but two. Have you ever noticed that many animals mature within a few years, some with the ability to get up and run within hours after birth, but it takes into the early twenties for a human to mature (if they do at all)? And yet from the time a child is born they fight to fulfill their expectations as fast as they can. When hope is deferred and delayed, there is a heart sickness that sets in.

It is not as though Abram was faced with a temptation to lust, envy, or hate. He had a desire for a good thing that was

promised to him by God. The problem he is facing is *waiting in faith*. Earlier, he had reacted from a position of weakness to the famine and had gone down to Egypt instead of trusting God. What is different, now, is that he is spiritually stronger and has more reason to think that this could appear to be consistent with God's will. The mistake he is going to make is to try to hasten on the good promise of God to have a son.

We can easily identify with Abram because many times we want to do the will of God but we find it difficult to wait on the Lord.

Gen 16:1-3 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name *was* Hagar.

2And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

There are a lot of Scriptures about people doing evil by following their own heart. This can happen by totally disregarding God *or* by attributing something to God that was really your own will. In Abraham's case, with hope deferred, one can also *cross* the line by taking over for God.

2. The problem of good intentions

When hope is deferred, don't fall back on your good intentions!

Back in chapter 15, Abram had been concerned that one who was his servant would end up being his heir. Well, if Sarai was not going to bear a son, then perhaps it could be through Hagar. After all, God had said that it was going to be

his seed but He had not said anything about Sarai having to be the mother until Gen 17:

Gen 17:15-16 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall* her name be.

16And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

Perhaps Hagar could be some kind of surrogate mother. Good intentions can get you into trouble.

Paul thought he was doing God a favor by persecuting the church. In his ignorance, he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and ingenious.

1Tim 1:12-13 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.

According to Acts 22:4, Paul persecuted them unto death. All the while, Paul had good intentions. King Uzziah meant well when he went to offer incense, but that was reserved for the priests and God struck him with leprosy. David meant well when he transported the Ark of the Covenant by cart, but poor Uzza died when he reached out to stabilize it because David didn't move the Ark the prescribed way:

2Sam 6:6-7 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*.

7And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for *his* error; and there he died by the ark of God.

Even though sin is born of selfishness, people can lie, steal, commit adultery, and many other grievous sins and be able to rationalize their actions with good intentions. "I told a lie because I wanted to spare someone's feelings." "I stole because the person was too rich and its not fair for them to have so much." "I only meant to comfort her. I didn't mean to fall in lust...oops...I mean love. It 'just happened.'" "God wants me to be happy, and (fill in the blank with your own will) will make me happy."

3. Do right

When hope is deferred, do right!

Rom 6:9-17 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Reckon comes from the word *logos* from which we get the word logic. It is a matter of logical argument that are dead to sin even though we emotionally don't feel like it. We are *commanded* to reckon it to be so]

12Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. **[He says *let not*, which is another command. Let not sin reign means to command your body, take charge of your passions]**

13Neither yield ye your members *a s i n s t r u m e n t s* of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. **[Yield is another command. Yield yourselves to God.]**

14For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

15What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

16Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

We have to be careful what we are filling our mind with. If you find yourself struggling, Philippians 4 has some areas you can focus on:

- Rejoicing and being grateful
Phil 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

5Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

6Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- Focus on the good

8Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true **[genuine]**, whatsoever things *are* honest **[honorable, worthy of honor and respect which does not include reality TV, for example]**, whatsoever things *are* just **[righteous]**, whatsoever things *are* pure **[chaste, modest]**, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue **[excellence]**, and if *there be* any

praise, think on these things.

The word *think* is the same word *reckon* back in Romans 6. It, also, is in command form. Do not be drawn to that which is good just because it is attractive. Take deliberative action to reckon, think, examine, and study and come to thoughtful appreciation for what God is doing.

We next have to be careful with what we are filling our time with. Paul follows up with the importance of acting.

9Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

The Evangelist Bob Jones Sr. was well known for his challenge to "Do right."

- Do right!
- Duties never conflict.
- You can do anything you ought to do.
- It is never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right.
- Do right 'till the stars fall
- The Devil did not tempt Adam and Eve to steal, to lie, to kill, to commit adultery; he tempted them to live independent of God.
- The acid test of our love for God is obedience to His Word.
- The greatest ability is dependability.
- The test of your character is what it takes to stop you.
- Don't ask God to give you a light burden. Ask Him to give you strong shoulders to carry a heavy burden.
- What you love and what you hate reveal what you are.
- When gratitude dies on the altar of a man's heart, that man is well-nigh hopeless.
- The test of your character is what it takes to stop you.
- Don't sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.

- The best ability is dependability.

This is where ministry comes in. Engage in ministry because it helps you get over self. Every time you are feeling like you got a raw deal, and even if you actually *did* get a raw deal, you are focused on self. It might be that what you are going through is actually unfair (in a limited way of course), but, all the while you are licking your wounds, you are focused on self. The only way to get outside of self is to serve others. We will be looking at Joseph later on, but he was one who was truly treated unfairly. He did didn't focus on that. For years he lived serving others no matter what. I don't even want to refer to the experience he gained during that time and the way God blessed him later. All the while, God was using this for good. He did what was right and served others during a time when he had no reason to think he was ever going to get out. Something I was teaching recently is that all these things take time. What is important is not the significance of our experience, but that faithfully and in minute areas of life you are applying yourself to serve others and love God through loving them. Remember that love is a matter of choice – choosing the best for someone else.

When we are frustrated and feeling powerless, the meditations of our heart become the discipline of our soul. They keep us from crossing the line and finding ways to justify ourselves.

Ps 19:13-14 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.
[presumptuous, deliberate sin based on bad, cheating reason]
 14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Is your whole relationship with God built on a lie? Have you presumed that

you are a child of God but you are not because you have dealt with Him in bad faith, offering up what you think is acceptable for your sin and sinfulness? Or have you let Him Who is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and worthy of praise come into your heart, forgive you, and give you a new heart and mind?

If you *are* saved, are you frustrated with this world? Are you resorting to taking shortcuts and measures to take matters into your own hands because God doesn't seem like He is not coming through for you? Do you need to apply yourself diligently to what you know God wants you to be doing?

1. Hope deferred Prov 13:12, Gen 16:1-3
2. The problem of good intentions 1Tim 1:12-13
3. Do right Rom 6:9-17, Phil 4:4-9, Ps 19:13-14