

Monday - Week Four

Lesson nine: Abram rescues lot

Read: Genesis 13 and 14

Summary: We are able to see Abram's faith over and over again in this account. Abram had learned his lesson in Egypt: he trusted in God.

Background and Comments

- Abram's faith can be seen in the following places in these chapters:
 1. He wanted peace between his and Lot's workers.
 2. Abram gave Lot the first choice. He trusted that God would be able to bless him wherever he lived.
 3. He trusted that God could give his 318 men victory over a large opposing force.
 4. He refused to take money from the King of Sodom. God, not the king of Sodom, would make him wealthy. Abram didn't want the king to later say that he had made Abram wealthy.
- The book of Hebrews (4:14) says that Melchizedek was a type of Christ (that he symbolized Christ). Melchizedek was a priest and a king just like Jesus was.

Lessons for Today

- Sometimes Christians fall into thinking that wealth is a bad thing. Genesis 13:2 says that Abram was a very wealthy man ... and in these verses we also see that he was a person of great faith. Wealth can become a temptation to lose faith in God (and to trust in your wealth instead) but it doesn't have to. Do you know some wealthy Christians? Pray that they use their wealth in a God-pleasing way and that they stay faithful to the Lord.
- God told Abram to walk through the entire land so that he could see the land that God would give to his descendants. Abram was to look at this land through the eyes of faith knowing that it would all be his. Do you ever take time to dream about all the things God has promised you? He has promised that He will work everything out for your good, that He will take you to heaven, that heaven will be perfect.

Read: Psalm 16; Matthew 16.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, strengthen my faith just as You strengthened Abram's. Focus me on Your promises. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Four

Lesson Ten: God's covenant with Abraham

Read: Genesis 15:1 - 18:15

Summary: God had promised that He would bless Abram with many descendants yet Abram and Sarai remained childless. In these chapters we see Abram struggling with doubt regarding this promise.

Background and Comments

- In Genesis 15:1 God told Abram not to be afraid. What did Abram fear (after all, he had just had a great military victory)? The next verses tell us that Abram was afraid that he wouldn't have any children. God reassured him with a promise which Abram believed (Genesis 15:6). This verse shows us that Abram was saved by grace through faith ... just like you are. St. Paul quotes this verse twice! (Romans 4:3,22; Galatians 3:6).
- Abram's name change was significant because it showed that Abram would be a "father of many" (that is what Abraham means).
- Circumcision was a seal and guarantee that a person had been brought into God's family (Romans 4:11 helps us fully understand circumcision - read it!). This set Abraham and his descendants apart from the heathen world.

Lessons for Today

- The last half of Genesis 15 talks about a smoking fire pot passing between the pieces of sacrificed animals. In Abram's day this was the way a solemn agreement was made between two people; they met in the middle of these sacrificed animals and made a promise to each other. God made a one-sided promise to Abram that day (He was the only one in the middle of the sacrificed animals). He promised to bless Abram with a child. God has made a one sided agreement with us; He has promised to forgive our sins.
- Abram and Sarai's faith wavered when they agreed to get a descendant through Hagar. We see the start of future problems almost immediately. In God's grace He promised Hagar that He would bless her son. God still has a way of making good come out of our mistakes.

Read: Psalm 17; Matthew 17.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, You stayed faithful to Abraham even when he went through times of doubt. Thank You for doing the same for me when I go through times of doubt. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Wednesday - Week four

Catechism Review

Read Questions 9-12

1. We know that the Bible is God's Word because the Bible says that it is God's Word. Isn't that circular reasoning?

2. God gave the writers of the Bible the very words to use as they wrote. How could they write in their own styles? (Luke the doctor writes much differently than Peter the fisherman, and so on.)

3. God's Word is absolutely true. How does that affect the way you read the Bible?

4. What role do your pastors and your church play in your relationship with the Bible? What role dare your pastors and church never play in your relationship with the Bible?

Read: Psalm 18; Matthew 18.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word. Never let me doubt anything Your Word tells me. Cause me to listen to Your Word before I listen to my emotions, my desires, my reason or my will. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Thursday - Week Four

Lesson eleven: The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Read: Genesis 18:16 - 19:29

Summary: These chapters show us the terrible sinfulness of a whole city as well as the justice and love of the Lord.

Background and Comments

- The New Testament (James 2:23) calls Abraham a “friend of God”. God treated Abraham with respect when He told Abraham what would happen to the city of Sodom. He treated Abraham with even more respect when He listened to Abraham’s prayer.
- Lot does not particularly impress us in this account. First of all we learn that he had moved into the city of Sodom. Second we shudder at his suggestion that the sex-crazed mob rape his daughters instead of his guests. Finally we see his reluctance to leave Sodom even when the angels were practically pulling him out of the city.

Lessons for Today

- God considered Abraham great because of what He had made him. Abraham possessed God’s promises - that is what made him great. The same is true of you. You are great because God has promised that your sins are forgiven, that you are His child, and that You are going to heaven. Don’t ever forget how great you are!
- Abraham’s boldness amazes us. God wants us to pray with the very same boldness. Imagine, our prayers make a difference because they are heard, considered, and answered by the Lord of the universe! We can’t quite understand how our prayers can have such an impact but we know that they do because God says that He listens to our prayers.
- Lot’s wife was turned into salt because she disobediently hesitated as she ran from the firestorm. God wants our obedience to be total and unswerving. When is the last time that you disobediently hesitated in your obedience?

Read: Psalm 19; Matthew 19.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for allowing us to pray to You. Your promise to listen to and answer our prayers is among Your richest promises of all. Make us quick to take things to Your heavenly throne. Amen.

Friday - Week Four

Life Questions

Topic/Question: How do you know what interpretation of the Bible is the right one? Why are there so many denominations if there is only one Bible?

Bible References and Considerations

- Whenever we read the Bible we need to answer this question: “who interprets the Bible?”, that is, who tells me what it means? There are quite a few current answers to the question: the Pope, your reason, your emotions, your pastor, the church you belong to or even no one. What does the Bible say? The Bible says that it interprets itself. In other words, what the Bible says the Bible means - period.
- In the book of Acts (17:10ff) we meet a group of people who understood the fact that the Bible interprets itself. The Bereans listened to St. Paul and then went home to compare what he said to what they found in the Old Testament.
- When someone asks you why your church does something do you ever respond this way: “Our church has always done it that way ...” or “That’s what our leaders do.” Don’t fall into that temptation! Go back to the Bible. Understand why things are done the way they are. Be quick to ask the leaders of the congregation if you are having trouble finding Scriptural basis for the action.

Practically Speaking

- Why are there so many denominations? Unfortunately some churches allow other things to interpret the Bible besides the Bible. For example, some churches teach that the body and blood of Christ are not present in the Lord’s Supper. They are allowing their reason to interpret the Bible’s clear statements (“This is my body, etc.”). Other churches say that we need to do certain things to get to heaven (say the Lord’s Prayer a certain number of times, say the rosary, etc.). They are ignoring clear statements of Scripture and blindly listening to their church.
- When we read a passage in the Bible we need to remember its context (what comes before and after the verses).
- When we read a passage that is difficult to understand we need to look for other passages in the Bible that treat the same subject. We do that because the Bible is a unit; that is, the Bible agrees with itself.

Read: Psalm 20; Matthew 20.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, guide me as I study Your Word. Amen.