Keep the Lord Jesus as your rock and refuge.

*Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands.”*

 1 Samuel 15:10-11

God certainly knew what Saul would do long before Saul was ever king. So, when God says He “regrets” having made Saul king, it’s not that He was taken by surprise and realizes He made a mistake. This type of language is used because it is something we as human-beings can understand; it is something we can relate to.

We can apply this understanding to ourselves. God made a way for us to be saved through the suffering of His Son, Jesus Christ. When we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, we become Christians in the way that God has ordained. It is free, it is by grace. But in addition, Jesus tells us that if we love Him, we will follow His commands.

Do we follow His commands? Or do we turn our backs on the One who has called us and saved us? When we consider all that God has done for us through Jesus, the last thing we want to do is to cause Him to regret having made us Christians.

This isn’t a call to guilt. This is a call to constantly keep in mind what Jesus has done for us so that we can resist the temptations of satan, the world, and our flesh. It is a call to fulfill the desire we have in our hearts to please our Saviour.

In Christ’s love

John

 8-28-22

Genesis 12:1-20

Even before God created mankind, He had a plan to redeem us from sin. He knew we would fail and fail miserably. In His word, the Bible, we learn that God was ready; we learn that God is merciful and that He would save us by His grace alone. In the Garden of Eden, He planted the Tree of Life. There was no need for a tree of life when there was no death, unless it was to let us know that it would be needed later and that God would provide it. The Tree of Life, of course, is Jesus.

Next there is that wonderful verse, Genesis 3:15. Even while God is explaining the horrendous consequences of the sin that has been committed, He promises the seed of the woman that will crush the head of the serpent. Mankind has proven its constant rebellion against God; even with a reset and the chance at a new beginning after the flood, people head straight back into depravity. This is all further proof that salvation has to come from God; mankind cannot save themselves nor is there any other who can save them. Jesus is the only way.

Ten generations after the flood, Abram is born to Terah. After more than seventy years living in Ur worshiping a moon god, Yahweh picks Abram and tells him to go to the place God tells him to go. Notice that Abram had no redeeming qualities. God chose him because that’s what God chose to do. What we learn is that God is able to save, even the person who has nothing to offer God. And such it is for all of us. None of us had or has anything God needs. He has chosen to love us and so offers us salvation through Jesus. This is where grace comes in; none of us deserved this chance.

God told Abram to leave Ur and made some promises to him. Abram believed what God told him and acted on it. He believed the promises and left his home and family for an unknown destination. As Paul writes in Romans 4:3, ‘*For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*’ Here is the Bible giving a strong teaching on the necessity of righteousness before God and the requirement of faith to have the righteousness.

Remember how Noah was said to be righteous. That was by the power of the Holy Spirit who enabled him to believe God and build a ship in the middle of the desert. Noah believed God, proved it by acting on what God told him to do, and righteousness was credited to him. That word “credited” is so very important. He didn’t have righteousness itself, he had credit.

Likewise with Abram. Again, the Holy Spirit is involved, giving Abram the ability to believe. Abram believed God, proved it by acting on what God told him to do, and righteousness was credited to him.

This pattern God established in the Old Testament is to show us what is happening in the New Testament and how it works for us as Christians. Our belief, our faith, is focused on Jesus Christ. Even though we didn’t see it happen, we believe that Jesus suffered and died on the cross in our place. We know that He took the punishment we were due for our own sins. We prove our belief in our works. We follow the commands of Jesus because we want to; because of what He has done for us.

Then, and this is beautiful, the righteousness of Jesus is imparted to us; not just credited, imparted. It becomes ours. On this earth we are still woefully unrighteous, but God looks upon His children in Christ and sees the righteousness of Jesus. Once more, it is so important to see, that our salvation is all of God and we have no grounds to boast. Incidentally, Noah and Abram and all the Old Testament saints had Christ’s righteousness imparted to them once Jesus completed His work on the cross.

Abram is a good one for us to learn about. The LORD called him, and the wording indicates He called him very forcefully, and God made several promises. We are living in very much the same condition as Abram. God has called us and if we are Christians today, we have heeded that call. God has made several promises to us through His word. We know the story of Abram well enough to know that Abram was sometimes faithful and sometimes he failed, but in the end, he didn’t actually see the fulfillment of those promises. It is the same for us. Sometimes we are faithful and sometimes we fail, and many of the promises we are looking forward to we know we won’t see in this life.

Yes, Abram received blessings, both spiritual and material in his life, and so do we. But we know the big ones didn’t happen until later, and some he is still waiting for. Remember that Abram is still alive, his soul is in heaven and he is awaiting the bodily resurrection. His name was made great, through his offspring he became a great nation, many kings came from him; but he is still waiting for the land. Although Israel at one time had much of the land promised to Abram, they never quite got it all. That time will come, probably during the millennial reign of Christ, and definitely in the new creation.

The family stopped in the area of Haran and settled there for a while. The Bible doesn’t tell us why they stopped there. But then at the age of 75, Abram took his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, and continued on the journey into Canaan. It is interesting to note that Canaan was land settled by the line of Ham through his son Canaan; a line in which we definitely see the line of the serpent seed. God put his seed of redemption right in the middle of satan’s back yard.

Abram traveled the length of Canaan. Three particular places are mentioned that are important places in the Old Testament. Abram comes to the land of Shechem. Here there occurs a theophany. God, in some form, revealed Himself to Abram. During this appearance, God told Abram, “*To your descendants I will give this land.*” Now Abram knows that this is the area God was telling him to go. Also, at this point, God’s promises are beyond comprehension. Abram and Sarai are old and have no children, how can the land be given to their descendants? This land is already occupied by hostile and godless peoples, how are these descendants supposed to gain this land?

Still, Abram believed God. What a lesson for us!

As a remembrance, Abram built an alter to God. This would have been an oddity to the pagan occupants of the land. They built alters all the time, but they also put images of deities on or around them. Abram’s alter had no images. It was a memorial to the true God who could not be captured by an image.

Next is recorded Abram’s stop between Bethel and Ai. Here Abram also built an alter but there is no indication that he had a theophany. He simply built an alter as a place for him and his family to worship God. Here was a place they could call upon the name of Yahweh.

This little troop heads into the Negev. The Negev is the South country or the dry country. It is a large area that is south of the Dead Sea and goes to the Red Sea. It also boarders Egypt. All three of the places mentioned in Abram’s travels show up throughout the Old Testament. They are areas where important things take place in the history of God’s people and the story of their redemption.

Abram believed God and he acted on what God told him to do, but in verse 10 we learn of his first test and how he didn’t do very well. God will test you and His desire is to prove and build your faith. Satan will tempt you with the goal of causing you to sin. There is a big difference between the two.

Abram travels through Canaan to the southern end and a famine strikes the land. Now, Abram faces a test; does he stay in the land where God put him with promises, or does he try to solve the problem himself? Abram decided to solve the problem himself. Don’t be too hard on Abram, we all do the same thing.

Abram took his family to Egypt. While the rest of this area had to depend on rain, Egypt had the Nile River to provide water for crops. If a famine was severe enough, it could affect Egypt also; but that was not the case here. While this is the first time Egypt is mentioned, as we go through the Bible, we will see that Egypt becomes a constant temptation to Israel. While God used Egypt in His plans, it is also clear that Egypt represents a world system just like Babylon does.

Babylon is the world system of avarice and lust and slavery. It is defiance of God, rebellion against His authority. Egypt is the system of depending on the world for safety and security. Many times, Israelites went to Egypt seeking food or safety. Kings of Israel turned to Egypt instead of God for help against enemies. The problem is that Egypt will eventually let you down. This world and all it offers will let you down. Even the pagan king of Assyria recognized this as he taunted one of the kings of Israel: *Now behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.*

Certainly, the king of Assyria didn’t like Pharaoh and he spoke more than he knew. Still, the spiritual ramifications are clear. To depend on this world for safety and security is a mistake. It is worse than leaning on a weak staff that will break. The jagged end will pierce your hand in the process. This not only won’t help; it will cause harm.

As Jesus tells us, store up your treasure in heaven. Because we live in this world it is a constant temptation for us to try to have security in this world. And there is a balance here: we need money, a place to live, we need our health. It is fine for us to work for these things because we need them in this life. What we need to watch for is our dependance on them. Any of these things can be taken away from us in an instant; and it happens a lot. Be sure that your trust is in God so that even if you lose everything and pass from this life, your eternity will be secure. This life is fleeting, the next is most important.

Abram solved his famine problem by going to Egypt, which created its own set of problems. The most obvious problem was that he didn’t think God could help him in this situation. He left the land promised to him in exchange for food. Next, he knew that Sarai being his wife could get him killed. Remember that these are pagan people whose moral compass is not centered on God. And especially the king of the land had absolute power; he could get away with anything. Sarai was beautiful in appearance and form. Abram knew she would attract attention.

Abram asked Sarai to tell people she was his sister. We learn later in chapter 20 verse 12 that she is his half-sister; still, a half-truth is a whole lie. We also learn in verse 13 of that chapter that they had made this arrangement between themselves before they left Ur. They carried an agreement to deceive with them from the beginning. We will see how this deception and its consequences continue to cause problems to this family and others.

As Abram predicted, Pharoah took notice and had Sarai added to his harem. This worked out well for Abram materially because it was customary to give a substantial dowery to a woman’s father or brother, so Abram added greatly to his wealth.

But at what cost? His wife was now in the hands of another man. All of us should feel some kind of revulsion in our gut. We can try to smooth things over by saying that this kind of thing was custom in those days; but that doesn’t work. What Abram did was wrong and even though God worked things out, He did so in spite of Abram, not because of him. Although God works through people, He is not dependent on people. God’s plan of redemption is never in jeopardy.

God struck Pharoah and Egypt with plagues and Pharoah found out that Sarai was Abram’s wife. The severity of God’s hand convinced Pharoah that the best thing to do was to get Abram out of the country. Pharoah told Abram to take his wife and go. He even let him keep all the dowery he had received. The king of Egypt even made sure he left by having some of his army escort them out of Egypt.

There is something very important that is implied here that we find out explicitly later in Genesis: Pharoah never had relations with Sarai. The genealogy of the Messiah is kept track of through the men. But it was necessary that their wives bore children through them: the promise is through the seed of the woman. If Pharoah had had relations with Sarai, then there might be question that the child of promise was Abram’s. God made sure that this didn’t happen.

We can see so much of what is coming through the life of Abram; there is foreshadowing of Israel and he is a type of Jesus. Abram went to Egypt because of famine, he was told to leave because of plagues God inflicted, and when he left, he had great riches he acquired there. Think of the Exodus account. Israel was originally in Egypt because of a famine, they were ejected because of plagues from God, and when they left, the Egyptians gave them much gold and silver and precious things. Israel plundered Egypt.

Also, look at what Abram did and the promises he had from God. He had to leave his country, an area that was rich in wealth and civilization and go to a land that was unstable and warlike. Jesus left His home in heaven, His Father’s house, surrounded by love and glory to come to the earth; unstable and warlike.

Abram was promised a nation, Jesus is promised all the nations. Abram is promised that his name will be great and it is, but how much greater is the name of Jesus. Abram would become a blessing to all the families of the earth, but that blessing came through Jesus who is that blessing. God would bless those who blessed Abram and curse those who cursed him. What blessings we receive from God when we accept Jesus as our Saviour. What curses and terror await those who curse and reject Him.

God promised to bless Abram, which He has done. God has promised to bless Jesus. He will be King of all the nations of the earth; every knee will bow to Him; He receives countless brothers and sisters through His faithful work on the cross. In Abram all the families of the earth would be blessed. Jesus blesses all the families of the earth. Eternal life will be granted through Him to members of all people and tribes and tongues.

When the two disciples were on the road to Emmaus and Jesus explained everything to them about the Christ from the Old Testament, do you think He mentioned Abraham?

Prayer

Thank You Lord, that You have, from before creation, had a way for us to be redeemed. If not for Your kindness and mercy, we would be eternally lost. Thank You also Lord that Your plan of redemption does not depend on us. It is a comfort that although You use us, we cannot derail Your will.

It is our desire to be used by You in this life; that we can be a part of building the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. We know that in being used of You, we are storing up treasure in heaven. We know that it will be waiting there for us because no one can take it and it will never waste away. And although we don’t understand what that treasure will be, we are assured it will be precious beyond imagination.

We praise You Lord, and thank You. May Your Holy Spirit constantly lead us and guide us. Keep us depending on You and not on this world. Shield us from the evils of Babylon and Egypt. May our eyes be upon You always.

In Jesus’ name we pray

Amen