

ABRAHAM, FEAR AND CHOICE

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Genesis 15:1 "After these things, the Word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward'."

Abram is one of my heroes. To me, he exemplifies obedience. Abram is remembered as one of the great patriarchs of our faith. Let's take a look at one reason why.

Each one of us will face or have faced seasons in our lives that cause us to despair beyond what we can imagine. The season forces us out of familiar places into new territory literally or spiritually.

Abram experienced similar circumstances. He was asked to leave his home not knowing where God would lead him. He left all he knew in blind faith. Just prior to this chapter Abram risks everything he has to rescue Lot. Lot has been carried off by Chedorlaomer king of Elam (an early Persian king). Along with Lot were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. As a reward for his help, the King of Sodom has offered material goods obtained from the rescue of Lot and the others from the King of Chedorlaomer. Abram refuses. He was previously told by the Lord, his reward is the promise of heirs beyond what can be numbered. The temptation had to be enormous! Immediate gratification or long term reward were the options. I can't say that I would have been so heavenly minded. God knew Abram's loyalty was being challenged. Abram could have chosen immediate gratification, instead, he remained obedient in choosing the Lord and the Lord came to Him with a kingdom promise.

It is hard to imagine that Abram may have been questioning his commitment yet he must have been for the Lord to reassure him so directly. When we have worked so hard, it is easy to expect or long for some relief and more immediate gratification. It is easy to feel anxious about the commitment we have made to follow Jesus.

Below is a possible modern day example of this struggle. It was fear that propelled the choices of the young woman quoted below...not the love of the Lord. I believe that Abram loved God and chose Him despite his fear. The following was written to me not long ago by a woman who experienced loss emotionally and physically beyond what she thought she was able to endure. She had pursued all the earthly things she thought were the things necessary to bring about peace, safety, and immediate reward. It was her season of practicing obedience.

"It is twilight and I am alone. I don't mean physically alone. I mean alone with the Lord. Craving His presence I find myself sitting in silence. Without going into all the details, this has been the most difficult year of my life. The physical, emotional and financial losses, unexpressed grief and intense fear resulting from not being protected are being exposed. It has brought me to depths of despair and to depths of healing I had not known I needed. There is a compulsion to worship, to seek His face, to learn what it

means to love Him and listen to His voice. I am overwhelmed at times. Many years of choices based in fear brought me to this place.” This dear lady describes only a small piece of what she has gone through. The preciousness of who she is and the Lord’s love for her creates an understanding of God’s love for us his children that one does not know prior to intense suffering.

Abram suffered too. It was intense suffering. It was good suffering. The loss of home, family, and security were more than we can know for Abram unless we have been there. Then, there is the suffering of dealing with a selfish young nephew. For our dear young woman it also encompassed the grief, the rage and the fear she had tried to rid herself of for so long. These could no longer remain hidden. Abram passed up obtaining all kinds of earthly wealth. No doubt he was questioning, at some level the wisdom of this decision. However, as God is assuring Abram so He is assuring each of us. The reassurance means we no longer need to live in fear or uncertainty but live in the awareness daily that He is and always will be our shield, our reward.

Dear friends, do not hesitate to begin choosing Him. Trust His Word. There is little that holds value when we are in His presence. The Lord promises to come to us wholly, speedily, and abundantly. His protection is unfailing and His presence is our reward. There is need for nothing else.

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