

IN GOD'S HANDS

You might remember last week that we looked at the subject of THE BRIDGE TO GOD.

We discovered that because of Adam & Eve's sin in the Garden, when they disobeyed God, man became separated from God both physically and spiritually. This created a gap, chasm between us and God.

We next saw that God provided a bridge for mankind which of course is God's son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and in doing so paid the debt of our sin. But the gift that God gave us through his Son is one that each person must choose to take or not.

Lastly, we saw some examples of those in the bible who chose Jesus and those who rejected the Gift. Those who chose to put their faith in Jesus are heaven bound and those who chose to try and do it themselves are hell bound.

We have until our last breath to decide and then it is done.

This morning we want to turn our attention to a subject I've entitled, IN GOD'S HANDS.

If you have put your trust in Jesus Christ to be your Saviour, you can be assured that you are IN GOD'S HANDS. Your salvation can never be lost. I want us to explore one aspect of what it means to be in God's Hands which is faith. I don't mean in respect to Salvation but rather Faith to trust that you are IN GOD'S HANDS and to leave it to him rather than your own hands, your own wisdom.

Let's start by looking at a man whose faith is renowned in the Bible and indeed in James 2:23 is called the Friend of God. This word friend has the meaning of dear and fond. This man of course is Abraham, so please turn with me to **Genesis 22:1-18**.

We notice first here in the passage that God did tempt Abraham. The word tempt has the meaning of test. The next part passage, I would say, would have to be the most extreme test anyone could be asked.

God tells Abraham to take his only son, whom he loves, and offer him for a burnt offering. What was Abraham's response? He gets up early the next day, saddles his ass, takes two young men and Issac plus the wood for the offering and heads off to where God said to go.

How is this possible? How can this be Abraham's response? Reading this passage can so easily just roll off the tongue but we really need to stop and grasp the gravity of this situation.

This is Isaac, which we'll discover is the promised son to Abraham from which God would make a great nation and by him bless all the nations of the earth. So, if Isaac is offered as a sacrifice, then how on earth will all that God promised come to be? What would your response be? Would you get up and get on with it the next day or would you say, now hang on God. Let's talk this out because this is making no sense...etc...

Abraham like all of us likely had his next day, week all planned out but we see he has no delay in going. If we look at **verse 5** he says to the two young men to hang back whilst he and the lad go yonder and worship but then he says, "and come again to you".

A few interesting things to notice here. Abraham calls his son a lad, but he is no young child. He is likely in his late teens or even twenties and we have not read that Isaac did not willingly go with his father. Abraham was an old man and Isaac strong and in his youth; he could easily not have gone. This shows the godly teaching he has received from his parents and his own incredible faith in God.

We also see Abraham says they will go worship. This word has the idea of bowing down oneself. Abraham here is bowing down to God's will and doing what God asked, as impossible it may be. However, notice at the end of the verse he tells the two young men, we'll come again to you.

Abraham continues to trust God, but the temptation/test is about to get harder. See in verses 7-8, Isaac says to his father here is the wood and fire but where is the lamb for the offering. Abraham must have been dying inside as Isaac asks him this. Again, Abraham's faith in God is unwavering as he answers God himself will provide the lamb.

In verses 9-10 Abraham now binds Isaac and lays him on the altar. Again, we see no resistance or rebellion from Isaac. This is an incredible scene if you can start to imagine it. Here is Abraham's promised son, whom he deeply loves, laying on the altar looking into his father's eyes. Abraham looking back at his son but with the knife held high, his beloved son, still knowing and trusting that God will keep his promise.

Look with me in **Hebrews 11:17-19**. It says here accounting that God was able to raise him up. Accounting means to know or know one. Abraham knew that one way or another the promises God made to him concerning his son, he would keep. It makes you wonder but how would Abraham have come to know that, so confidently?

This temptation from God was an incredibly difficult test, because God asked of Abraham the one, most precious thing to he and Sarah; Isaac the promised son.

As I asked earlier, how did Abraham come to have such a dependable faith in God? How was Abraham able to trust that he was secure IN GOD'S HANDS, his promises?

Well, there is a whole back story of what lead to Abraham learning to trust IN GOD'S HANDS. This is now what we are going to dive into.

1. Where do we see God promising Isaac to Abraham?
2. Does Abraham not TRUST IN GOD'S HANDS?
3. What has God promised for us today?

1. Where does God promise Isaac to Abraham?

Turn with me to **Genesis 12:1-8**

There are some very interesting details that we don't want to miss from this passage. It's important we understand the moving pieces in this passage as it sets the baseline from which we build the overall picture and application.

God tells Abram (no name change as yet) to get out from all he currently knows. Away from his country, away from his kindred and his father's house and go to a land God would show him. It ends up being Canaan which incidentally is the cursed son of Ham and the land is notoriously wicked.

So, to up and leave your home and extended family and go to a land notorious for its wickedness; would be very difficult to say the least.

However, God promises to Abram he would make a great nation of him. Remember he is 75 (and Sarai (suh-RYE) is 65) at the time and they have no children.

God promises to Bless Abram, make his name great and he will be a blessing.

But look at verse **7** this is the first time scripture records an appearance of God. It's a theophany i.e. a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus and Abram is promised his seed will be given this land.

If we turn now to **Ch 15:1-6**

Sometime has certainly passed, and God comes to **renew** his promise to Abram. Perhaps Abram was having doubts because at this stage they still have no children and he points out that his current heir is Eliezer, his Steward. Eliezer is not even of his own people but rather of Damascus!

God reassures Abram that this is not his heir but in fact would be of his own bowels i.e. from his own self. Verse 6 says and he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

In Ch16 at the age of 86 Abram is convinced by Sarai that he should marry her handmaid so she could have children through her. Remember Abram was first promised seed at the age of 75 and he's now 86. He takes his wife's advice, but this is not what God had promised or what he had planned for them.

Now in **Ch17:1** we see God appears to Abram again and exhorts him to stay in fellowship with him. We see he is now 99 years old so Sarai would be 89. Look down at

verse 16-19 we see the promise again that Sarai would have a child. Abraham falls upon his face and laughs.

This is not a scorning laughter or of doubt but rather merriment or joy. We know that because God does not rebuke Abraham. However, in Ch18 Sarah laughs within her herself and she was rebuked of the LORD because of her doubt.

We have seen multiple times now that God has spoken and appeared to Abraham telling and confirming his promise. However, it took 25 years from when God first promised a son to when Isaac was born. In Ch18:11 it says, Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; **and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women**. See here in this last line that Sarah's body was at that stage in a woman's life where it's not possible to become pregnant. God waited until it was impossible in man's wisdom, for God to then make it possible. This testifies to his divine intervention.

2. Where did Abram not trust in God's Hands?

We need to go back and continue the journey that Abram was taking through Canaan in Ch12.

In **Ch 12:4-5**, without any fuss Abram and Sarai (suh-RYE) leave but interestingly this is not the first time God has told Abram to leave.

In Acts 7 it tells us that God had told Abram "Get **thee out** of thy country, and **from thy kindred**". What happened though was Abram did not obey fully and rather his father, Terah, moved them all down to Haran.

Terah though was a worshipper of other gods! That can be found in Joshua 24. You see there was a good reason God wanted Abram to get out of the country and from his kindred i.e. his father. Terah was not a godly influence.

We see back in our text in verses 4-5 that they are now leaving Haran toward the promised land. Yay, finally on the complete right path and no delay in leaving like before.

It would have been a long and arduous journey and was about 640km from Haran to Canaan. Quninns Rocks to say Kalgoorlie or Kalbarri. They are moving through Canaan and God is providing all their needs. They would have been a large caravan and most likely living and moving nomadically.

In **verse 8** Abram builds an altar unto the Lord and calls upon His name. This is quite important because it shows us that Abram is seeking God's leading, wisdom and direction as they continue south through Canaan. He is in close fellowship with God.

Hebrews 11:8 says, By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

As he goes out with no idea of where he is going and with many people depending on him for daily sustenance and direction; he obeys. God sustains the company of people and of course a vast quantity of cattle. The bible does not specifically say but they are probably going from pasture to pasture and watering hole on this 640km trek.

As we read earlier God had promised him all this land through Canaan but right now is not the time. Abraham right now was living by faith for sustenance and direction.

So, what changes to make Abram not trust in God's hands - faith to waiver? Let's look at **Ch12:9 - Ch13:4**.

What we see here is that Abram has been journeying through Canaan; the land God had promised him. But now we see a famine but a rather grievous one. This word grievous is like it suggests; severely difficult, so great, so hard, much.

Since they were facing a perilous situation, perhaps they had a family or management meeting to decide the next steps. After all they had a lot of mouths to feed of both people and cattle

Being such a grievous famine there's a good chance that there was a level of panic or hysteria among the group. Maybe Abram was under extreme pressure, possibly members of the group were saying, Abram what are you going to do? We are going to die unless you do something?

Do you remember during covid how people panicked over toilet paper? This is far worse than some toilet paper.

So, you can imagine that these people would have had the same sort of worry or insecurities just as you or I.

It was very clearly going to be a life-or-death situation as they faced the ongoing prospect of this famine.

So, what does Abram do? He decides to leave Canaan and head on down to Egypt. He takes himself and his family away from where God told him to be.

We can't forget that God had already given Abram clear promises concerning his seed and this land. At this juncture he does not build an altar to the Lord and seek God's leading despite doing it twice earlier in this chapter when there was no famine.

Now they are on their way to Egypt and as they begin to enter the land the realisation of what might become of this journey become apparent to Abram.

I am not so sure the problems they were about to face had been considered prior to picking Egypt as the destination. The Egyptians are descendants of Ham and they serve many gods. They are a cruel and immoral people where polygamy and sexual promiscuity are standard practice.

He discusses with suh-RYE that her incredible beauty will be the literal end of him in other words they will kill him to take her. Instead let's say you are my sister, which is true since you're my half-sister and then I'll live.

What future problems could there be though if suh-RYE is taken to be married off? Did not God promise Abram that he would bless his seed, make a great nation of him and possess all of Canann? He sure did, so how is this going to work out if she's married off to some Egyptian?

Do we stop and consider the unintended consequences of acting in our wisdom and logic rather than seeking God's mind? I think it would be fair to say that we often haven't or don't.

Notice here in **verse 14 & 15** just as Abram thought they beheld that she was very fair. This word beheld has the idea of gazing, make to enjoy or look on one another.

But interestingly the Princes of Pharaoh also see her, and they commend her before Pharaoh. This word, commend, is to praise and it's the first time we see it used in the bible which means it has special significance. The princes must have seen something godly in suh-RYE and instead of taking her for themselves they instead send her to Pharaoh.

This principle ought to be true of you and me too. That unsaved men, who don't know God are able to praise him through our testimony, our conduct, our conversation.

For they are quick to point out the sin or hypocrisy when we stumble. The unsaved man very capable of discerning the one walking with God and the one who speaks of God but in no visible way is walking with God.

So, God's hand continues to work and guide in this situation despite Abram's obviously bad decision to go into Egypt.

We see that suh-RYE has avoided being taken by an Egyptian and defiled and so Abram yet lives. We saw that Pharaoh takes her and Abram is handsomely rewarded in verse 16. It was probably little comfort getting all those riches because he was probably dying inside, his heart breaking because that's his wife and she's about to married to Pharaoh.

But God plagues Pharaoh and his house with great plagues. One way or another Pharaoh finds out that she is Abram's wife. In verse 19 Pharaoh was going to marry her. Again, God's protection was at play because she was not defiled or married off. Pharaoh goes on to send them off with all that they had including the gifts given to Abram. Pharaoh sends them off with a stern rebuke.

No doubt Abram and suh-RYE would have been much relieved to go but their testimony, that "commended" which was "to praise" is shattered. There's no chance that they'd be able to attract the Egyptians to God.

Let's read **Ch13-1-4**. They should never have gone to Egypt. God had been supplying all their needs. But when the trial came and the road become bumpy then they jumped out of God's hands and if you like, into their own frying pan.

Having learnt a valuable lesson in seeking God first, Abram in verses 3-4 goes back to the altar where he now calls on the name of the LORD. This here is what he should have done before galivanting off to Egypt.

No doubt Abram here is restored to full fellowship with God just as we are in 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I will tell you something interesting about all this. In Ch20 Abraham comes into another situation this time with King Abimelech. Both he and Sarah again say they are brother and sister and the King takes Sarah..... Guys what are you doing! The same stupid mistake you did before, did you not learn anything.

But I think we just need to "park up for a second" because have not you and I done the same thing repeatedly. We sin, we confess and then we repeat. As much as we may shake out heads at Abraham and Sarah, the more we need to shake our heads at ourselves and take stock to consider our past errors before we go ahead and do the same again.

3. What has God promised us today?

Like Abram what does God want us to do? Live by faith, stop and wait, listen and stay in close fellowship with Him. We need to resist our own way of doing and thinking.

Turn with me now to **1 Corinthians 10:12-13**. It is very easy to have read this account of Abraham and Sarah and point to all their flaws and poor judgement. We might say things like What were they thinking? How did they possibly think that was a good idea?

See here in verse 12 the very stark and confronting warning: let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. If we get into the mindset of:

- Well, you know I wouldn't have done that
- I would not have gone there
- Of course I would have prayed first

If we think like this God says to take heed lest you fall, lest I fall.

That word heed is a verb so it's an action word and means; look at, behold, beware, perceive and regard.

You might say heed what, well it's examples like these of Abraham and Sarah that God gives us. It will cause us to examine the choices and the subsequent consequences.

Look at **verse 11**. When it says happened unto them; for context the first part of this chapter is talking about Israel in the wilderness before entering the promised land. But to the point this word ensample, had the idea of a die or stamp to imprint. Then it is written for our admonition i.e. calling our attention or a mild rebuke or warning.

These words are very deliberate to get us to really pay attention so we can avoid the same pit falls, mistakes of others and keep in fellowship of God.

But where is our promise like God had promised Abraham. **Verse 13** provides a beautiful and pragmatic promise.

First, we see that whatever temptation/test we face; it's not unique to only you. It sure may feel like it. We don't want to let pride creep in, and you say, "oh my trial/test, no one understands, no one cares, no one knows". This sure does sound like the sinful flesh coming through.

The Lord allows these trials/tests/temptations and what can happen is that we can wear it like a badge which we use to share our woes with others for sympathy and a pat on the back. But God says to us it is "common to man" and so yes, it's a test but it's not a one of a kind.

But look at the next part of the verse: God is faithful – you see God keeps his promises. Remember how he kept his promise to Abraham.

He will not suffer you (which is permit or leave alone) to be tested above that ye are able (means possible) but then look at this next part. God will make a way to escape that ye can bear it.

God is faithful, he keeps his promises, we are safe in his hands.

It is important to note that God makes a way to escape so we can bear it. We still need to take that escape route to bear the temptation or test. We still have a choice.

What promise did Jesus give us? Turn to **John 10:28-30** So, here in black and white is our promise; we are in Christ's hands and Christ is in the Father's hands.

God always keeps his word and even if we compromise or choose a path without seeking God's mind, we are still in his hands, and he will fulfill his promises.

You see just like Abraham and Sarah we too can rationalise or justify our choices. Or we ask God to stamp our choices "approved" after the fact; hoping it will be ok. This **is not trusting** in God's hands.

What practical lessons can we learn from Abraham and Sarah?

- There will be tests/trial/temptations
- It will be a long road at times

- Wait on the Lord – seek him out. Your faith will strengthen.
- Often, we learn the same way as Abraham and Sarah but it doesn't have to be that way
- Their faith became so strong because they learnt through temptations/trials to trust in God's hands. We saw this personified with their obedience to not withhold Isaac.

We too like Abraham can strengthen our faith and it should start with Psalm 46:10, [Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.](#)

Our lives can feel like a turbulent storm just like when Jesus was in the ship. Look quickly with me at **Mark 4:39-40**. See here how Jesus said to the disciples, how is it ye have not faith?

We can draw a parallel here of the wind and the sea storm with our chaotic/stressful living. When we are experiencing this, when we are in what seems to be a storm of life; Be Still, go to the Altar (like Abraham did eventually), seek the Lord and trust in what he has promised and will do.

He will [make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.](#) Because we are in God's Hands.

Let's pray.

Order of Service

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

Opening Prayer

HE LIVES

I AM RESOLVED

Announcements

- Prayer for Pastore and Tweedie family as they enjoy their last week in Adelaide. They will be back Thursday 13th.
- Evening service at 6pm
- No Wednesday Night bible study this week
- Men's meeting will be Friday 21st at 7:15pm at the Gym. Don't forget to read the next two chapters of the Crucified Life.
- Operation Launch out will recommence Saturday 22nd at 0930

Scripture memory Revelation 22:16 & 17

Offering

NEAR THE CROSS

Sermon