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# **Are we Listening to God?**

**Scripture text: Genesis Ch 12:10-20**

In leaving his family and traveling to an unknown land, Abraham took a great step of faith. After he arrived, he saw God a second time and heard His word of promise. Abraham and Sarah probably **expected to settle down and enjoy their new home**, but God would not let them. Instead, God permitted a famine to come to the land. There is no record that Abraham ever faced a famine in Ur or Haran; but now that he was in God's land, he had to find food for a large company of people, plus flocks and herds.

Why did God allow the famine? To teach Abraham and Sarah a basic lesson in the “**school of faith**,” a lesson you must also learn: **Tests often follow triumphs**. This principle is illustrated in the history of Israel. No sooner had the nation been delivered from Egypt than the Egyptian army chased them and cornered them at the Red Sea (Ex. 12–15). **Triumph was followed by testing**. God brought them through, but then they faced another test: no water (15:22–27). After that came hunger (Ex. 16) and an attack from the Amalekites (Ex. 17). Tests follow triumphs.

**Romans 5:2-5** Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and **we rejoice** in hope of the glory of God. More than that, **we rejoice** in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **and hope does not put us to shame**, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Is this Testing?

**“I thought that getting saved was the end of all my troubles,”** a young believer said to me. **“But now I know that faith in Christ has given me a whole new set of problems!** But now there are two differences,” he added with a smile. **“I don’t face them alone,** because the Lord is with me; **and I know He allows them for my good and His glory.”**

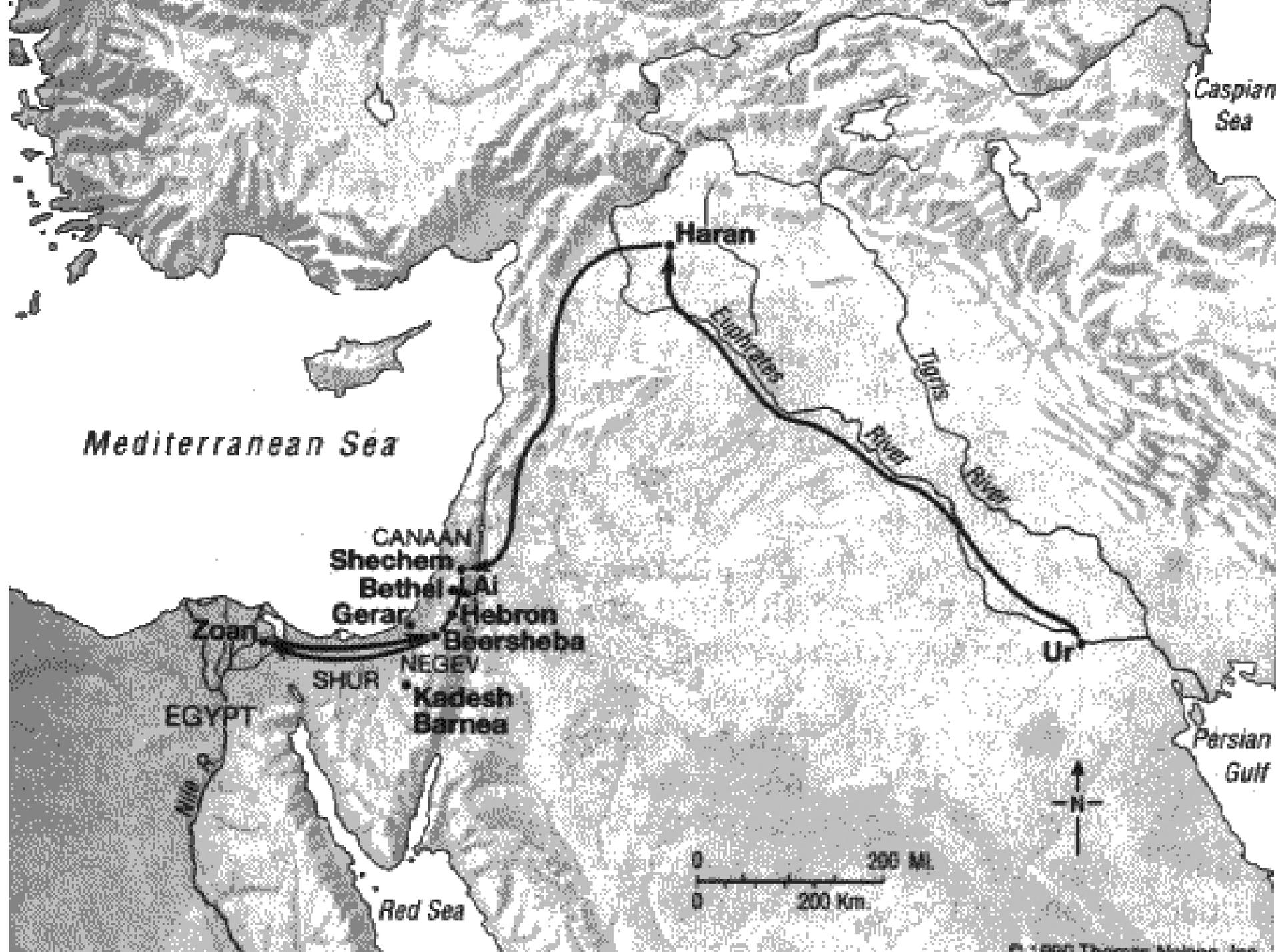
Do you have that mindset, is it all about you or all about Almighty God?

One of the enemies of the life of faith is **pride**. When you win a victory, you may feel overconfident and start telling yourself that you can defeat any enemy at any time. You start depending on your past experience and your growing knowledge of the Word, **instead of depending wholly on the Lord**. This explains why the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 is preceded by the warning of verse 12: *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands **take heed lest he fall***. (ESV). **God did not want Abraham to become proud and self-confident, so He put him and his faith into the furnace of testing.**

After you have won a great victory of faith, **expect the enemy to attack you** or the Lord to test you, or both. This is the only way you can grow in your faith. **God uses the tough circumstances of life to build the muscles of your faith** and keep you from trusting something other than His Word. **Don't try to run away from the problem. It won't work!**

**Have you ever tried to run?  
What was the result?**

Instead of remaining in the land and **trusting the Lord to help him**, Abraham went “down into Egypt”. In the Bible, **Egypt is a symbol of the world system and its bondage**, while the land of Israel is a picture of the inheritance of blessing God has for you. When people went to Jerusalem, they went up; but when they went to Egypt, they went down. Spiritually speaking, “going down to Egypt” **means doubting God’s promises and running to the world for help.**



**Isaiah 30:1-3** "Ah, stubborn children," declares the LORD, "**who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.**"

**Isaiah 31:1** **Woe to those who go down to Egypt** for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, **but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!**

How is this played out today?

Is this concept still seen in professing believers?

What about you, have you ever made a choice or a decision without seeking God's wisdom and direction first? How did that work for ya?

**Jeremiah 42:11-14** Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand. I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land. But if you say, 'We will not remain in this land,' disobeying the voice of the LORD your God and saying, 'No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,'

**Jeremiah 42:15-17** then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: **If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there,** then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and **there you shall die.** All the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. **They shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster that I will bring upon them.**

When circumstances become difficult and you are **in the furnace of testing, remain where God has put you until He tells you to move.**

Faith moves in the direction of peace and hope, but unbelief moves in the direction of restlessness and fear. “He that believeth shall not make haste” **In times of testing, the important question is not, “How can I get out of this?” but, “What can I get out of this?”** God is at work to build your faith.

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**Isaiah 28:16-17** therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.' And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter."

**James 1:2-5** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, **for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.** And let steadfastness have its full effect, **that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

**James 1:12** Blessed is the man who remains **steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life,** which God has promised to those who love him.

**God alone is in control of circumstances.** You are safer in a famine in His will than in a palace out of His will. It has well been said, **“The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.”** Abraham failed the test of circumstances and turned from the will of God.

I'll put it like this ... who are you listening to? Are you looking for ease and comfort, or are you obeying Almighty God no matter the cost?

**Once in Egypt**, Abraham faced a new set of problems; for **if you run away from one test, you will soon face another**. Once you enroll in “the school of faith,” **you are not allowed to “drop out” just because of one failure**. God has purposes to fulfill in you and through you, and He will do all that is necessary to make you succeed.

**Philippians 1:6** And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion** at the day of Jesus Christ.

In Canaan, all Abraham had to deal with was a famine; but in Egypt, he had to get along with a proud ruler and his officers. Pharaoh was looked on as a god, but he was not a god like Abraham's God, loving and generous and faithful. Abraham soon discovered that he had been better off dealing with the circumstances in Canaan than with the people in Egypt. Notice the changes that took place in Abraham's life because he went down to Egypt.

***“Faith is living without scheming”***

To begin with, **Abraham moved from trusting to scheming.** Abraham had no altar in Egypt, and you don't find him calling on the Lord for guidance and help. **When you stop trusting God's Word, you start leaning on man's wisdom;** and this leads to trouble. Abraham and Sarah brought this "half-truth" with them from Ur (Gen. 20:13), used it in Egypt and Gerar, and then their son Isaac adopted it. **When you find yourself scheming in order to escape problems with people, beware; worse trouble is coming!**

**Proverb 3:5-6** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

**1 Corinthians 3:18-20** Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. **For the wisdom of this world is folly with God.** For it is written, "**He catches the wise in their craftiness,**" and again, "**The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.**"

He also **moved from confidence to fear**. When you are in the place of God's choosing, you don't ever need to be afraid; **for faith and fear cannot dwell in the same heart**. The fear of God is the fear that conquers every fear; but *"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe."* (Prov. 29:25, ESV). God had repeatedly said "I will" to Abraham, but now Abraham was saying *"They will"* (Gen. 12:12, italics added). He took his eyes off the Lord and started looking at people.

**Isaiah 12:2** "Behold, **God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid;** for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and **he has become my salvation.**"

**Mark 4:40-41** He said to them, "**Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?**" And they were **filled with great fear** and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

**Psalm 112:1-2** Praise the LORD! **Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!** His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

**Psalm 112:6-8** For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. **He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.** His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

**Isaiah 8:11-14** For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and **warned me not to walk in the way of this people**, saying: "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and **do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread**. But the LORD of hosts, **him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread**. And **he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense** and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

A third change took place: **He moved from “others” to self.** He lied so that it might “be well with me for thy [Sarah’s] sake” (12:13). As the husband, Abraham should have thought first of his wife and not of himself. In fact, he should never have taken his wife there in the first place!

**A husband out of the will of God can bring untold trouble to his wife and family.**

**Ephesians 5:25-29** Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, **without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.** In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,**

This leads to a fourth change: **He moved from bringing blessing to bringing judgment.** God called Abraham to be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:1–3); but because of Abraham’s disobedience, judgment fell on Pharaoh and his household (12:17). This also happened years later in Gerar (Gen. 20). **If you want to be a blessing to others, then stay in the will of God.** Jonah ran from God’s will and caused a storm that almost sank the ship. **Like Jonah, Abraham lost his testimony before unbelievers and had to face embarrassment and rebuke.**

God graciously watched over His servant and brought him out of a difficult situation. If Sarah had become one of Pharaoh's wives, what would have happened to the promise of the Redeemer?

**When we don't let God rule, He overrules and accomplishes His purposes; but we pay dearly for our disobedience.**

A casual observer of this episode might conclude, “**What happened to Abraham wasn’t all bad.** Pharaoh gave Abraham a lot of wealth (Gen. 12:16; 13:2), and Sarah was given her own maid, Hagar (16:1). **God forgave Abraham’s sin, and he started over again.** So, what’s the big problem?”

What do you think the problem was and or is?

The “**big problem**” is that everything Abraham **received in Egypt later caused trouble**. Because of their great wealth, Abraham and Lot could not live together and **had to separate**. Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant, **brought division and sorrow into the home**. Having had a taste of Egypt (the world), **Lot started measuring everything by what he saw there**; and this led to his downfall and the ruin of his family. **There are no benefits from disobedience.**

Can you see the problem now?

**The practical lesson from all of this is simply never abandon your altar [your relationship with Jesus Christ].**

Stay in fellowship with the Lord no matter what the circumstances may be. If you have disobeyed and God is disciplining you, go back to the place where you left Him and make things right. Remember:

**“The victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings.” That is not an excuse for sin, but it is an encouragement for repentance.**

**Genesis 13:1-4** So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb. Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as **Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place where he had made an altar at the first.** And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.

When you find yourself without God, go back to where you were last with Him!

**Genesis 12:7-8** Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of **Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east.** And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

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