

Let's Review (again):

We will all face moments of famine, But that does not mean that we will not have enough...even in the places of promise and consecration there are going to be times when things are not as we want them to be!

- Abram leaves the place of promise searching for a plate of provision

I contend that none of this story makes sense unless we acknowledge that God has two goals for all of us: think of them as a near goal and a far goal.

- His **far goal** is the purpose and calling on our life – the lifelong influence and impact we are created for.
- His **near goal** is the transformation and development of our life – God is not just interested in our capability, He is committed to developing our character
- God is more interested in your spiritual development than in your professional capability
- God is more committed to the transformation of your character than to the elevation of your status
- God is more zealous for the increase of your integrity than the expansion of your productivity
- BUT ALL OF THIS IS TRUE BECAUSE GOD KNOWS WITHOUT THE NEAR WORK OF DEVELOPMENT, THE FAR WORK OF CALLING WILL INEVITABLY COLLAPSE.

Learn from the fall....LEARN FROM THE FALL.

- Instead of strategizing a way to survive sinful decisions, let your past mistakes become present prophets that speak wisdom to you so you don't keep walking out of the place of famine and promise and into the land full of food and failure!

I'M NOT SAYING WE ARE TO BE STRONGER THAN WE ARE...I AM SAYING THAT WE MUST BE COMMITTED TO BEING HUMBLE LEARNERS INSTEAD OF ARROGANT OVERESTIMATORS!

And as we get into the final two ideas, I wonder how we are seeing the interaction between God and Abram here.

- I think there's a way to read this that locates God in a role of frustrated ruler, who has to begrudgingly clean up all of Abram's mess because He is contractually obligated by the promise He made to this man.
- And take it a step further, if we think about it long enough there is even a way to read this story and imagine that God wishes He's picked someone else...someone who wouldn't leave the promised land when things got tough, someone who wouldn't give away his wife (and the promised womb that would give birth to generations) in a foreign land.

BUT WHAT IF WE SAW THIS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE?

- What if God's motivation wasn't keeping all the ledgers balanced and the books in order...

- What if God's motivation was that He loved the one He'd called? What if He protected Sarai because He cared so much for this family and all they were supposed to walk in that He said: "I won't let your failure of your present become the failure of your future?"
- *(and let me be clear, God does bring all the accounts into perfect balance, but because His primary motivation is love it means He does that not through aggressive coercion, but through substitutionary sacrifice)*

I guess what I'm asking is, what if God actually loves us?

What if He actually loves you?

And what if that love means that the safest place to fall is not outside of His will, but inside it?

What if that love and compassion means that He doesn't just reward you when you get it right, but He restored you when you're all wrong?

- Sounds crazy, I know
- Thankfully God wrote a book so we could gain some clarity on this craziness:

Ephesians 2:4-5

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

John 3:16

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

Romans 5:8

"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

Psalms 103:8

"The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love."

Lamentations 3:22-23

"The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning."

1 John 4:10

"This is love--not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins."

I THINK SOME OF US DON'T BELIEVE WE HAVE THAT KIND OF FATHER. THE KIND WHO WILL RISK EVERYTHING FOR HIS KIDS...THE KIND WHO WILL EXERCISE HIS AUTHORITY TO PROTECT US, EVEN IF HE'S PROTECTING US FROM OURSELVES!!

The film *Finding Nemo* is an animated story of a father's resolute search for his son. The father, a fish named Marlin, teams up with another fish named Dory to find Nemo. A dentist captured Nemo while diving off the coast of Sydney, Australia and placed him in a fish tank in his office.

Nemo thinks his father has forgotten about him and that he'll never see him again. But one day a pelican named Nigel lands in the window of the dentist office and begins to tell Nemo an amazing story.

"Nemo! Your father's been fighting the entire ocean looking for you!" reports Nigel.

"My father?" Nemo incredulously asks.

"Oh, yeah! He's been battling sharks and jellyfish," Nigel recounts.

"It's my dad! He took on a shark!" proudly exclaims Nemo.

Nigel says, "I heard he took on three."

Nemo is dumbfounded. He repeats, "Three?"

Nigel explains, "You see, kid. After you were taken, your dad started swimming like a maniac. He took on three sharks. He battled an entire jellyfish forest. Now he's riding a bunch of sea turtles on the east Australian current, and the word is he's headed this way right now to Sydney."

"What a great daddy!" Nemo says.

□□From "Finding Nemo"

WHAT IF THAT IS YOUR FATHER???

WHAT IF HE HASN'T ABANDONED YOU AND I TO OUR OWN NONSENSE EVEN IF WE DESERVE IT??

WHAT IF WE ACTUALLY STILL BELIEVED THAT GRACE WAS UNMERRITED FAVOR, INSTEAD OF A REWARD FOR DOING EVERYTHING RIGHT??

- And yes, you can tell me that's not how the world works...and I'd agree with you
- And then I would gently point out the fact that God isn't the world and thankfully He works differently!

Luke 7 – THE SAFEST PLACE TO FALL

- There is no safer place to "fall" or to "fail" than at the feet of Jesus

Luke 7:36-39

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, **who was a sinner**, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." (ESV)

- There is no better place to "not be enough" than in the presence of the One who is always enough

- This is, once again, counter-intuitive for many who have grown up in church and who see God as the frowning Father looking to call out His kids for every wrong that they commit.
- But in Luke 7, in one of the most potent snippets of Jesus' life recorded in the Gospels, we find that there is no one who will accept and love us, no matter our actions or sin, like Jesus
- Look closely: The woman who enters the Pharisee's house is a "sinner"
- The tensing of this phrase in the Greek is Imperfect Indicative
- This particular tense represents "continual or repeated action"
- This woman, who on some level understood who she was and who Jesus was, didn't run from the house of Simon the Pharisee when she found out Jesus was there – she ran toward the house (v 37).

Or remember the story of Peter, courageously stepping out of the boat in the storm...much like Abram courageously leaving the place his father had settled to follow the voice of God

We are above all things loved - that is the good news of the gospel - and loved not just the way we turn up on Sundays in our best clothes and on our best behavior and with our best feet forward, but loved as we alone know ourselves to be, the weakest and shabbiest of what we are along with the strongest and gladdest.

□□Frederick Buechner

2 – WHEN FAITH FAILS LOOK TO THE SON (12:16-17)

Genesis 12:16-17

¹⁶ And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

¹⁷ But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wifex

In **Galatians 3:16** Paul reveals something with incredible clarity:

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

Jesus was the SINGULAR fulfillment of the promise God said would come through Abraham.

The word "offspring" in Galatians 3:16 is a singular word and it is speaking of Jesus.

- This means that Jesus is the fulfillment of, and the perfection of, everything Abraham began.
- Jesus is the one who left His original location and came to a foreign land...
- Jesus is the one who fulfilled the promise of worldwide, generational blessing...
- AND JESUS IS THE ONE WHO DID NOT GIVE HIS BRIDE AWAY WHEN HIS LIFE WAS THREATENED, INSTEAD HE SHIELDED HER WITH HIS OWN LIFE!!!

When we follow the ways of the culture instead of the ways of Christ we will wind up giving away what we should have given ourselves for...but in the Kingdom God has given His own Son for the salvation of His people, NOT the other way around!

- if you look at this there's a lens of Ephesians chapter 5, God's instruction to husbands is that they love their wives as Christ loved the church... which means they do not preserve their life at the expense of what they were called to protect.

And this is a deeper conversation about present and future value.

- fear and pride can easily cause us to assess value based on present circumstances instead of future potential.
- if you want to talk about part of the spirit of antichrist, you have to talk about this.
- Jesus never defined worth based on a present perspective.
- when he looked at the disciples for the first time, they were not a dream team of scholars and influencers, they were rough around the edges and they had come from some broken places... but Jesus didn't measure who they could be or where they could go by what he saw in the moment.
- **part of what makes Jesus, Jesus is his ability to see the amazing of what something can become not just the average of what it is currently.**

Abram said, "Sarai, I'm going to give you away so I can stay alive."

Jesus said, "I'm going to be given over to death on the world's behalf so they can find life and life more abundant."

FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM HE ENDURED.

The True Gospel is Dangerous

If we tell Christians that their past sins, their present and their future sins have already been put away by God, are we not more or less telling them that they are free to go out and sin? If you react in that way to my statements I am most happy, for I am obviously a good and true interpreter of the Apostle Paul. It was because he preached such things that people said, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? (chapter 6:1). That is the very charge they were bringing against him, and if we do not preach and represent the gospel in a way that sounds dangerous at first, we are not preaching it truly. The true preaching of the gospel is always liable to be misunderstood by people in that way. The Apostle has already given the answer in chapters 6 and 7, proving that there is no risk at all, but the opposite."

- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 7.1-8.4*, Banner of Truth, pages 273-273.

3 – WHEN FAITH FAILS, DON'T STAY LONGER THAN NECESSARY (12:18-20, 13:1)

Genesis 12:18-20, 13:1

¹⁸ So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go." ²⁰ And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

¹ So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

Robert Frost has this incredible line... Robert Frost has this incredible line. It's buried in the last third of a very long poem called Death of the Hired Man. In the conversation between two people, one of them is almost scoffing but they say,

“Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.”

- Frost, “Death of the Hired Man”

I've always loved this line. It's buried in the last third of a long poem by Frost. But there's something about it that catches in my throat when I say it out loud. It's that idea that the place that I can actually call home is the place where I can go no matter what I've done.

- If I repent and return, if I'm willing to walk away from Egypt, if I'm willing to leave the place of failing and falling, there will always be an open door because Jesus has made a way.
- Abram walks out of the place of his failure and reenters the place he was called to. He's left the land of promise, he's reclassified the womb of promise, and yet after all is said and done, after grace has interjected itself into the situation, he comes back to the place he was called to originally.

When failing does not get the final word, Do not hesitate, leave Egypt and get back to Canaan.

God is inviting people back home. Failures and misfits, the broken and the wounded, God is inviting people back home. What have you done so wrong that God will not open the door and let you back in? Prodigals and Pharisees, God has invited you back home. Those of you who felt worthless and those who had overestimated their worth, God has invited you back home.

You remember the words of invitation that the seed of Abraham, the offspring of promise, the fulfillment of all that God was going to do in the world. You remember his words, don't you?

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

WHEN FAILING DOESN'T GET THE FINAL WORD, DON'T HESITATE, LEAVE EGYPT AND GET BACK TO CANAAN.

There is a long thread in the scriptures of people coming home.

- Abraham comes home in chapter 13 after a terrible decision and an incredible protection.
- Joshua leads the people home as they cross the Jordan River.
- Naomi comes home after a long season of death and wandering.
- David comes home after being on the run from his King for 10 years.
- Zerubbabel leads a remnant of exiles back home to Jerusalem after years in captivity.

Even the birth of Christ sees Joseph leading his pregnant wife back to the home of his ancestors in Bethlehem, where the Messiah would be born.

The promise of Jesus in the gospel of John is that he would go and prepare a place for us to call home, that we might be with him eternally.

And then in revelation declared overall of creation is the statement that the home of God is with humanity, with man.

There's something about coming home.

It's hard to put a finger on, it's hard to fully understand, it's hard to make sense of at times, but there's even a legitimate psychological condition that we call home sickness...

How many of us are wandering?

How many of us just need to go ahead and come home?

Home to the place where God is.

Home to the life that he called us to.

God is inviting you...come back home.

All of you, all of us...come home.

Stop wandering and wasting away...come home.

Prodigals and pharisees, broken and wounded, rebels and misfits...come home.

Let me read it again...

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."