

'ABRAM: FAITH TESTED, WEAKNESS REVEALED' # 7**Read Genesis 12:10-20**

There is more than one way to understand this passage, but we are following the more obvious path showing Abram making a poor decision, and God, by influencing Pharaoh, delivers rescue for Sarai and Abram and family, and provides much material enrichment. God had promised to protect them and bless them, a promise He faithfully delivers.

Do you think God regularly tests our faith, or are there simply choices in life, and we either make good or bad choices?

What action is noticeably not mentioned before/as Abram makes his plan? And do we sometimes also make the same mistake with the same outcome?

Two facts about Egyptian society need to be accounted to help understanding of this passage. All sicknesses were considered to be the result of sin, and absolute truthfulness was of very high importance. Pharaoh's household became seriously sick, so someone must have sinned. Imagine how Pharaoh felt when it was discovered that he had unknowingly sinned (adultery with Sarai) as a result of Abram's lie. Somewhat surprising that Abram was not executed! It was as if there was something else in control!

Theologians recommend we see this passage as having parallels with the account of Abraham's grandson Jacob taking the family once again to Egypt as a result of famine (Genesis 46ff). What other parallels are there within these two accounts? Why might drawing parallels be helpful?

Read James 1:2-5 & 13-18

For James' letter (the author is not the apostle, but almost certainly a brother of Jesus) there is no full introduction such as found in the letters of Paul, Peter and John, but he goes straight into his purpose for writing following a simple one word, 'Greetings.'

James makes clear that God does not tempt, temptation is by evil. The warning is that conceding to temptation is like playing with fire. How do we decide between different types of temptation? What are the criteria against which we should make choices?

I suspect not many of us could claim we find the living through a testing time 'a pure joy', but, in hindsight, can view the experience differently. What has been your experience?

The need to persevere in resisting temptation is identified by James as the path to follow as this will bring character benefits. And help, guidance and support will be offered by God if we seek him. Does this imply that we should pray for the temptation not to be removed but to continue until (with God's help) we can overcome it?

Prayer: We pray for people today faced with difficult decisions; decisions which will seriously affect their lives and the lives of their loved ones. We pray for those who can see no way through their problems; for whom it is all too much. Help them Lord to see that you, who control the universe, are in control of their lives too. Amen (Further Everyday Prayers)