

The Life of Abraham: A Journey of Faith – Part 8

Spiritual Checkup – Genesis 18:1-15

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Feb. 27th, 2022

Intro:

- Every year I schedule an appointment with three people. One is my dentist, who does a cleaning on my teeth, takes x-rays, and checks everything over to make sure all is okay. The second appointment I make is with my general physician, who checks my vitals, takes some fluids, runs tests to make sure everything is working well and doing okay. The third appointment I make is with a skin doctor to check me over to see if I am developing any skin issues (there is a family history of skin cancer). These checkups help me know what is going on with my body, which directs me to where I need to make changes and encourages me to keep doing good, healthy, and beneficial things for myself.
- From our passage this morning, we are going to do a spiritual “checkup” to gauge how we are doing spiritually so that we know where we may need to make changes, and to find encouragement to keep doing things that keep us spiritually healthy. Our “examination” is going to happen through three primary questions that arise from our text as we use the Word to examine ourselves with guidance and help from the Holy Spirit.
- If you remember from last week through our time in Genesis, chapter seventeen, after 13 years of silence, God again appears to Abram, reestablishing His covenant with him. God provides more details as to what will be happening within months. God reminds Abram of His promise to him and his decedents, His blessing to them, and their place in the world. He tells Abram that those who receive the covenant promises are to be “set apart.” As a sign that they have received the covenant, the males are to be circumcised in the flesh. God gives Abram a new identity by changing his name from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude).
- God also reveals that the child of the promise will come from Abram through the body of Sarai, his wife. She will bear him a child in her old age, even though she has been physically unable to do so her whole life. He is to name this son “Isaac” (he will laugh, laughter), and God will establish His covenant with him. Also, this child will be born at this time next year. God then changed the name of Sarai (princess) to Sarah (my princess), giving her a new identity and blessing as well.
- God “went up” from Abraham, and Abraham proceeds to circumcise all the males in his household and is circumcised himself. Sometime within the next three months (because Sarah is not yet pregnant), God again visits Abraham, and this is where I am asking you our first diagnostic question in our spiritual checkup. How is your relationship with God?

How is your relationship with God?

- This question comes from the positive things we see in Abraham when it comes to his relationship with God. Let’s turn to our text to find out what happened.

Gen 18:1-2 NIV

The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing

nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

- Abraham knew that the people he saw nearby were the Lord and His companions. Notice it was in the “heat of the day,” and this nearly 100-year-old man, when he saw it was the Lord, “ran” to them. So, when it comes to your communication with and connection to God, do you “run” to Him? Is this something that your heart desires? Is there anticipation in your heart for your next meeting with Him to come as quickly as it can? Is your desire to meet with Him? Or is it dull? Do you feel indifferent toward meeting with God?
- When you meet with Him, what is your “posture” toward Him? Is it one of bowing in honor and respect to Him? Is it one that comes with a raised fist or pointing finger? Is it one where we are looking at our watch, looking beyond this meeting to the next thing? In our interactions with God, do we have the heart posture of “hallowed be your name?”
- Abraham, at this point, had been walking with the Lord for at least 25 years. He had a tender, hungry, honoring love for God that desired to be with Him. Next, Abraham said:

Gen 18:3-5 NIV

He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, do not pass your servant by. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

- Abraham had a humble heart, recognizing the true honor and privilege it was to be meeting with God. “If I have found favor in your eyes” is a statement that does not presume about God or his status before Him. There is a recognition that God could “pass him by,” and he wanted the honor of His presence in his life. Do we presume upon God? Do we see ourselves truly in comparison to Him? Does this give us humility in His presence? Or are we proud and think it is an honor for God to be in our presence, as if He should be the one stopping for us and giving us honor?
- Abraham saw himself as a “servant” of God, one who was under Him. Abraham’s desire was to serve the Lord, bless the Lord, honor the Lord, and assist Him in any way He could that would be “beneficial” for what the Lord was doing. He recognized that God was active in His plans, and he was honored to be with Him and did not make himself the center of attention in God’s plans. Is it our heart’s desire to serve God and bless Him? To honor Him and play a positive part in His plans? Or has our heart hardened toward Him thinking He is the one who should be serving us, or responding in a “what do you want” kind of way? Or do we respond out of obligation, or perhaps wish that God would “pass us by?”
- Once Abraham received the “go ahead” from the Lord, he hurried into action.

Gen 18:6-8 NIV

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

- Did you notice how quickly Abraham put the plan into action? The text points this out four times (hurried, quick, ran, hurried). I think all of this was done in this way because of his honor, respect, and love for the Lord and His agenda (he knew they were going on to another place). Our honor, respect, and love for the Lord are seen in how we respond to Him. Are we “quick” to offer ourselves in service, or quick to honor Him in any way we can? Or do we respond with drudgery, slowness, and dishonor treating Him like a nuisance in our day or someone we are obligated to serve?
- Abraham also showed honor, respect, and love to the Lord by giving Him the best of what He had. If someone you love and respect is coming to your home, you give up the best of what you have for them, perhaps your bed, or your food, or your time, or your resources. Do you and I respond to God in this manner?
- Abraham did this just to bless and honor God. He did not eat of this food himself but stood by taking the position and posture of a servant. He did not honor God for what he would get out of it, and he honored God because He is worthy of honor, because of Who He is. We have to ask ourselves, are our hearts conditioned in this way as well? Or have they become hard or sickened toward Him in any way?
- After eating this meal, the next interaction drew me to ask the next main diagnostic question about our spiritual health. How is your follow through with His word?

How is your follow through with His word?

- So after they had this meal, they turned to Abraham and asked this question:

Gen 18:9 NIV

“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said.

- So what kind of question is this? Now we must remember who is asking this question (the Lord). He is not asking because He does not know the information. He asks this question to draw Abraham’s attention to Sarah and his relationship with and responsibility toward her.
- I think this question is along the lines of when God asks Adam, “where are you (Gen. 3:9)?” This question was asked not because God did not know the location of Adam, as if He lost him. He was asking this question to point out the separation in the relationship, that there was now distance between them. God also asks a question like this to Cain, after Cain killed his brother Able, “Where is Able your brother (Gen. 4:9)?” God already knew what happened, but He brought it up by asking this question. Or it is like when I told my girls to make sure they put their bikes in the garage when they were done, and I come home from work and see their bikes in the front yard and then go in and ask them, “girls, where are your bikes?” It is not that I am looking for the information, but I am holding them responsible for what I had told them.
- By asking this question of Abraham, God is bringing to Abraham’s attention his relationship and responsibility to both Sarah and God. The Lord knew where she was. He wanted Abraham to

draw His attention to where she was and then said this, and I imagine He did so in a louder voice, so Sarah was sure to hear and Abraham knew what He was doing.

Gen 18:10a NIV

The Lord said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

- Now, this was not new information to Abraham because God had already told Abraham this explicitly not too long ago (Gen. 17:21). But I believe that Abraham had failed to tell this information to Sarah because:
 1. God came way out of His way to tell him this (He was going to Sodom)
 2. of the timing of the communication (before she was pregnant)
 3. of how He addresses Abraham (where is your wife Sarah?)
 4. of her location (in the tent directly behind him)
 5. of what He communicates (this time next year, your wife will have a son – same information)
 6. of how Sarah responds to hearing this news (with laughter, doubt)
 7. of how God holds Abraham accountable for her response (by directing a question to him).

Gen 18:10b-14 NIV

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

- By the way that God addressed Abraham, it seems that Abraham did not tell Sarah perhaps because he was having a hard time believing it himself. It could also be because it did not end well the last time he talked to her about a child. Or perhaps it would again bring up this painful fact that she did not have a child of her own. God held Abraham responsible for her response because God asked him, “why did Sarah laugh” and did not direct the question to her.
- The text also points out that Sarah laughed to “herself” (quietly) and then *thought*, not spoke, what was in her mind. God knew what was in her heart. And then God met the doubt with the truth, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”
- When it comes to God being able to fulfill His promises to us, there is nothing and no one who can or will stop Him. There are only three other places in scripture where God says this. One place is Jeremiah 32:27 in the context of God being able to fulfill His promise in bringing the people back into the land after He lets the king of Babylon destroy the place and take them away. Another time is when the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the true seed of Abraham, Jesus, to Mary; when she asked how could this be since she was a virgin, the Angel explained what would happen and then said, “Nothing will be impossible for God” (Luke 1:27). The third time is when apostles were asking Jesus about who can be saved, and Jesus replied, “with man

this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (See Matt. 19:26, Mark 10:27, Luke 18:27), which means that when it comes to God fulfilling His promise, no one or nothing can stop Him, and in all of these cases it had to do with redemption and restoration.

- That being the case, the word of the Lord will stand. When God says something to you through His word, you have a responsibility to Him and to it. So then I have to ask the spiritual diagnostic question again, how are you following through with what God has told you? Are you responsive to Him by being responsible for what He tells you to do? Perhaps you are doing well in this, or perhaps you have areas that you haven't followed through with, and it is hurting you and hindering others.
- Now we come to our final main question in our spiritual checkup. Are you being honest with God, yourself, and others?

Are you **being honest** with God, yourself, and others?

- At some point after the conversation between the Lord and Abraham, which Sarah overheard, she must have come out to try to cover for Abraham and herself. The text reads:

Gen 18:15 NIV

Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.” But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

- Now perhaps Sarah did not know truly who this person was, but I will tell you this, it never pays off to lie to God because God always knows the truth, and God does get to the bottom of what is going on in our hearts. Sarah and Abraham had a problem with lying. But that was not the root of the problem. The root of the problem was fear, and because they were afraid, they chose to lie to protect themselves versus owning the truth and trusting themselves to the results.
- God always points to the truth of our hearts; He does this because He loves us and wants us to deal with these things so we don't continue to hurt ourselves and others, so that we can be healed. If we refuse to deal with the truth of our hearts and continue to hide and harden ourselves toward Him, we stand in judgment for these things.
- The best thing for us to do is to truly ask God to examine our hearts to see what is in there, to deal truthfully with what is there to be free and get better. So be honest with God and yourself by owning up and telling the truth about what is really going on in your heart.

Conclusion

- Our conclusion is going to be a time of reflection on these three spiritual health questions:
 - ***How is your relationship with God?***
 - ***How is your follow through with His word?***
 - ***Are you being honest with God, yourself, and others?***
- Take time to pray through and reflect on these things, ask God to illuminate your heart, and then ask Him what to do next. You may be doing really well on these things, be thankful, humble, and keep going and growing. You may be doing okay but need to address some items more intentionally. Then after this time, make a plan and do what you know to do. Some of you may not be doing well at all. Now is the time to make significant changes. If you would like prayer, please seek it out or come up to the front, and we will be happy to pray with you.
- Closing prayer and song.