



DAYBREAK

UNIT
1

Genesis, Exodus, Job



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| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 1:1—2:3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 37:1-36 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 27:1-21 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 3:1-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 39:1-23 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 29:1-46 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 4:1—5:32 | <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 40:1—41:36 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 30:1—31:18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 6:1—7:5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 41:37-57 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 32:1-35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 7:6—8:22 | <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 42:1—43:34 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 33:1-23 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 16:1-16 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 4:18—5:21 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 40:1-38 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 18:16—19:38 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 9:1-35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Job 6:1—7:21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 20:1—21:7 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 10:1—11:10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Job 8:1—10:22 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 26:1-35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 17:1—18:27 | <input type="checkbox"/> Job 25:1—26:14 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 32:1—33:17 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 22:16—23:9 | <input type="checkbox"/> Job 38:1—40:5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 33:18—34:31 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 23:10—24:18 | <input type="checkbox"/> Job 40:6—42:17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 35:1-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 25:1-40 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 36:1-43 | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 26:1-37 | |

Daybreak is a personal Bible study continuum for the high school and adult levels. Scripture references are taken from the King James Version of the Bible. A companion series of Sunday school lessons, titled Discovery, is also available. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Daybreak is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.



Overview for Genesis

Purpose: To record God's creation of the universe and the origins of humankind, to track the beginning of a people called by God and set apart to serve Him, and to introduce the fundamental doctrines of God's Word.

Author: Commonly accepted to be Moses

Time Period Covered: Creation to 1805 B.C.

Date Written: 1450 B.C. – 1410 B.C.

Setting: The Middle East

Key People: Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Lot, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Esau, Joseph

Summary: The first five books of the Bible are known as the *Pentateuch*, which is a Greek word that means "five books." The title of the first book, Genesis, is from the Greek word *geneseos*, which has within its definition the words "origin," "history," and "genealogy."

The first chapter of Genesis gives the account of God creating the universe, living matter, creatures, and man in six literal days. At the end of the sixth day, God looked on all that He had created and pronounced it to be "very good" (Genesis 1:1-31).

The Holy God enjoyed a close personal fellowship with His creation until sin shattered that relationship. Genesis records the fall of humanity (Genesis 3:1-7), but also introduces the hope of restoration to God (Genesis 3:15), thus establishing the foundation for

all of Scripture. Many of the great themes of the New Testament have their origin in the Book of Genesis.

Adam and Eve's sin plunged humanity into a depraved condition. Within a few generations, man's wickedness became so great that it grieved God that He had created man. God sent a worldwide flood that destroyed every living creature except for righteous Noah, his family, and the animals, which were saved by means of an ark Noah built at God's direction (Chapters 6-8).

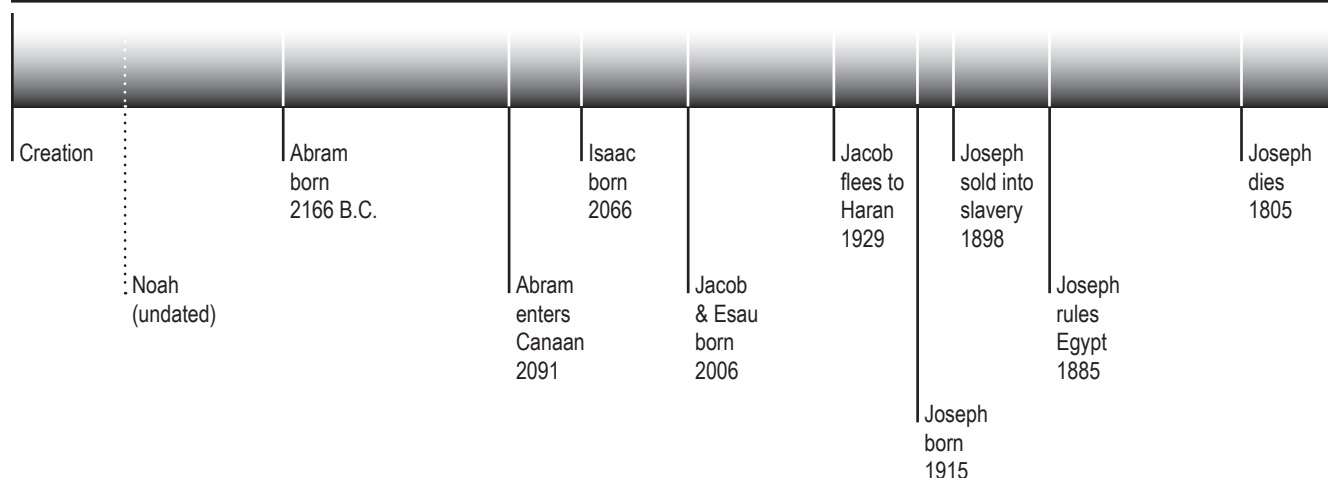
After the Flood, as mankind began to multiply again, they sought to make a name for themselves by building a tower in the land of Shinar that would reach to Heaven. The Lord confounded their language so the people could not communicate with each other, and soon man was scattered throughout the whole earth (Genesis 11:1-9).

The remainder of the Book of Genesis focuses upon a man named Abram and his descendants. Abram was called by God to leave his land and people and go to a new land where God would make his descendants a great nation. This 750-mile journey took Abram, who would later be called Abraham, from Ur of the Chaldees in the western part of present-day Iraq, to the land of Canaan in present-day Israel.

As the early history of the Jewish nation unfolds with the accounts of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and finally Joseph, we see how God used ordinary people in extraordinary ways to accomplish His purpose.

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. The early history of the human race (1:1 — 11:9)
 - A. The creation of man (1:1 — 2:25)
 - B. The fall of man (3:1-24)
 - C. The posterity of Adam (4:1 — 5:32)
 - D. The judgment upon mankind (6:1 — 8:22)
 - E. The renewal of mankind (9:1 — 10:32)
 - F. The scattering of mankind (11:1-9)
- II. The early history of the chosen race (11:10 — 50:26)
 - A. Abraham (11:10 — 20:18)
 - B. Isaac (21:1 — 26:35)
 - C. Jacob (27:1 — 36:43)
 - D. Joseph (37:1 — 50:26)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31)

When I was growing up, my father had a job that required our family to move every couple of years as he was transferred to different cities. For me, it was exciting to move to a new location. Before each move, our family would wonder how the surrounding countryside would look and what the city would be like. We would discuss our “new” house and anticipate settling in. After a move was accomplished, we would get introduced to our new school and begin to explore the neighborhood. As we did so, it seemed that at every turn there was something we had not noticed before. Each of those first days in a new location was full of discoveries that we would quickly share with one another.

Imagine how exciting it must have been for Adam in the brand-new world that God had created! The Garden of Eden was a perfect paradise, free of pollution, disease, or decay. Adam was fully mature and endowed with intelligence, so he must have been awe-inspired and amazed as he explored the world around him. No doubt every moment brought new and fascinating experiences. And think of the creative wonders Adam came across as he explored his environment! He could go from appreciating the majesty of a lion, to being awestruck by the beauty of a valley, to observing the tremendous size of the elephant, and then refreshing himself with a perfectly ripe watermelon. Perhaps, like God himself, this first man often said, “It is very good!”

The beauty of God’s handiwork still surrounds us today. A spectacular sunset spread across the western horizon, the wonder of a newborn baby drawing his or her first breath, or the intricacy of a spider web glistening with morning dew, all speak of God’s awesome creative power. When we gaze at a towering redwood, the delicate petal of a rose, or the sliver of a pale moon set against the backdrop of myriad stars, we reflect on the words recorded in our focus verse, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” And we agree! Given the amazing world around us, how could we do otherwise?

BACKGROUND

The first chapter of Genesis gives the source and origin of all that exists. The Holy Scriptures open

with the declarative statement, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Thus we know that before Creation, God existed in His eternal state. The chapter then proceeds to give the account of Creation. This account is not a scientific theory, but rather, a factual record of the origin of everything that is material, everything that is animate, and of the beginning of mankind.

The chronology of world history accepted by most Bible scholars was formulated by James Ussher (1581–1656), who concluded that Creation occurred in 4004 BC. John Lightfoot (1602–1675) further narrowed it down, asserting that the exact date was October 23, 4004 BC.¹

Whatever the precise date, the Bible record states that the first act of Creation was bringing material substance into existence, which occurred when God created the Heaven and the earth. God then gave His first recorded command, “Let there be light,” and that happened instantly, for the next phrase states, “and there was light” (Genesis 1:3).

Three recorded statements establish that the days of Creation were twenty-four-hour time periods. First, God divided the light from the darkness, naming the light “Day” and the darkness “Night.” Second, He referenced the established daily cycle by concluding His first day with the phrase, “the evening and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5). This phrase is repeated after each successive creative act, through the sixth day. Finally, God declares in verse 14 that the sun, moon, and stars will be used for “signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years,” indicating how humanity would mark the passage of time.

A further validation that the time periods of Creation were literal days is found in a study of the Hebrew word *yom*, translated *day* in Genesis 1. The word *day* can have a variety of meanings, both in Hebrew and in the English language. However, in this chapter both a number and the phrase “evening and morning” are used to describe each “day” of creation. The same usage (*yom* with a number) occurs in Scripture 359 times—and in *every* instance, it means an ordinary, twenty-four-hour day. There is no reason to assume that the *yom* in Genesis 1 would be an exception.

After giving shape and definition to the inorganic substance on day two, God created organic matter on the third day, bringing forth vegetation that was complete in all of its distinctive and regenerative characteristics. On day four He created the “lights in the firmament.” On the fifth day, the Creation account

moves from the organic to the animated stage—God created the “moving creatures that have life,” populating the earth with fish, fowl, and whales. On the sixth day, He made the land animals and insects.

At verse 26, the account changes from acts in which God created by commanding, “Let there be . . .,” to His final act of creation in which He used the words “Let us make . . .” Verse 26 relates that God made man, the crowning jewel of creation, “in our image, after our likeness”—a clear reference to the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead, in which the separate and distinct Persons of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are perfectly united in One.

The phrase “in our image, after our likeness” indicates that God endued man with some of His own characteristics. Man is a spiritual being in that he possesses an immortal soul; he is a moral being in that he has the capacity for holiness; he is an intellectual being with the ability to reason and act upon his original thoughts; he is an emotional being with the capacity to feel and express a range of emotions; and he is a responsible being with power of choice and action. All these attributes separate man from the animals.

The first mark of God’s image in man was the dominion or lordship which man was given over all living creatures. The God-given instructions, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (verse 28), point to the fact that humankind was endowed with the intelligence to plan, organize, and govern.

There was no evolutionary process involved in the Creation. Chapter 2, verse 1, states: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” God completed His Creation in six days, and “he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made” (Genesis 2:2). The word translated *rest* is from the Hebrew word *shabath*, from which we get the word *Sabbath*. God “blessed” the seventh day, setting it apart from the six days that were used for work, and indicating that it was to be regarded as sacred and holy.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The early history of the human race
 - A. The creation of man
 1. A summary of Creation (1:1 — 2:3)
 - a. Prologue (1:1-2)
 - b. The first day—light (1:3-5)
 - c. The second day—firmament (1:6-8)
 - d. The third day—land, seas, and vegetation (1:9-13)

- e. The fourth day—sun, moon, and stars (1:14-19)
- f. The fifth day—Sea and bird life (1:20-23)
- g. The sixth day—Animals and man (1:24-31)
- h. The seventh day—God rested (2:1-3)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What phrases are repeated throughout today’s text?

2. Why do you think God instructed man to exercise dominion over the rest of the living creatures?

3. What elements of nature have particularly impressed you as indicators of God’s creative genius?

CONCLUSION

The origin of the universe does not require a complex explanation. We believe that God created the beautiful and amazing world around us in six days, and when He was done, it was very good.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” (Genesis 2:18)

Just days after their marriage on February 5, 1812, Adoniram and Ann Judson set out to India as missionaries. It was unthinkable in that era for a young woman to work among the heathen in primitive surroundings, but Ann had carefully considered the promise she made in taking the marriage vow, and was determined to support her husband in what she knew God had called him to do.

Ordered by the government to leave India shortly after their arrival, the young couple began their missionary work in Burma, a land of over fifteen million people who had never heard the message of salvation. Their work was stressful, and initial results were almost non-existent, but Ann’s purpose to support her husband never wavered.

In 1823, war between Britain and Burma broke out, and Adoniram was thrown into the death-prison at Ava along with other missionaries. Surrounded by the vilest criminals in the Burman capital, the men suffered unspeakably for nine months. Chained together with iron bands about their ankles, and laying in filth like pigs in a sty, their unbearable situation was alleviated only by the efforts of Adoniram’s caring wife.

Ann was unrelenting in her self-sacrifice during this horrendous time, proving her devotion to her husband in spite of incredible personal danger. She hid his translation of the New Testament so that it was preserved for the Burman church. Heedless of threats against herself, she traveled in blazing sun from office to office and valiantly pled with government officials for her husband’s life with such earnestness that at one point even the rough old governor of the prison was moved to tears. In spite of the fact that she was pregnant at the time, she secretly brought supplies and food to Adoniram and his fellow prisoners, who had been left to starve and die. Her sweet face and gentle presence so won over the hearts of the people that she was called the “angel” of the prison. What a comfort and encouragement she must have been to her suffering husband!

In today’s text, we read the account of God creating the first woman, Eve, to come alongside the first man, Adam, and be a helper to him. Just as Adoniram Judson had many opportunities to thank

God for the helper God gave him in his wife, men and women through the ages of time have proved the wisdom and beauty of God’s designed plan for marriage. When God’s plan is honored and practiced, the result is always the same: one man and one woman living together in a union of mutual support, respect, and loving care until death separates them.

Today, think about the beauty of God’s plan for marriage, and like Ann Judson did, purpose in your heart to uphold the principles He has ordained for this unique and precious union!

BACKGROUND

In this text block, greater detail is given about what God had already created.

Verses 4-6 describe a greenhouse-like effect, where condensation in the form of a dew-like mist watered the ground.

Verse 7 offers additional details about the creation of man, recording that man was formed from the dust, or soil, of the ground. The word translated *formed* indicates a shaping by hand, as a potter would shape clay. Man was unique among all of God’s creation, for it is specifically noted that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”—something that was not done in the creation of the animals.

A description of the Garden of Eden is provided in verses 8-14. Despite the identification of some familiar landmarks, such as the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, the exact location of the Garden of Eden is unknown. Included in this section is the first mention of the “tree of life” as well as the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

In verses 15-17, God instructed Adam to dress and keep the Garden of Eden. God also commanded man not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Hebrew negative used in verse 17 indicates a permanent command, and the restriction was indicative of man’s subordinate relationship to God, his Creator. The importance of God’s command was revealed by the severity of the punishment.

Verse 18 records the only time in the creation account when God announced that something was “not good”—and that was the fact that man was alone. The remainder of the chapter describes God’s creation of woman to be a suitable or “meet” helper for man. She was not formed from the earth, as Adam was, but “made” or “built” from the rib of the man. The rib contained all the genetic code God had already created in Adam, and thus the first man’s genetic code was supernaturally transmitted into the first woman.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

- I. The early history of the human race
 - A. The creation of man
 2. The particular of creation—man (2:4-25)
 - a. Prologue (2:4-6)
 - b. The creation of man (2:7)
 - c. The placement of man (2:8-15)
 - d. The responsibilities of man (2:16-17)
 - e. The companion of man (2:18-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

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CONCLUSION

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9)

Some time ago my husband and I decided to travel to Ontario, Oregon, to visit my nephew. We had never been in that part of the state before, so I sat down at our home computer and pulled up driving directions. The starting point in mapping out our trip was to fill in our home address. Then I inserted my nephew’s address in the destination field and clicked on the button marked “Get Directions.” Within seconds, I had a clearly defined route, along with the information that our trip would take us five hours and fifty-six minutes, and that we would be driving 367.99 miles.

While the ease of plotting a trip electronically intrigues me, I realize that ancient and modern travelers alike have used inventions to assist them in their travel planning. Such inventions include maps, compasses, sextants, and global positioning systems (GPS). With any and all of these devices, our starting location is critical in determining direction or a course of action. Even if we have a destination in mind, until we know our starting point, we cannot determine the way to get there.

This is also true in spiritual matters. In our focus verse, God asked Adam a question (to which He already had the answer) so that Adam would consider his spiritual location. After his admission of being fearful and hiding, God asked other questions. All were aimed at helping Adam know where he was spiritually.

Like Adam, we also need to determine our location in relation to God. While we may know that we want Heaven to be our final destination, determining how to get there must begin with a starting point. God has given us the Bible as a map, compass, and spiritual positioning system. Once we understand our spiritual location, we are in a position to receive directions toward an eternity in Heaven with Him.

Those who realize they are lost and separated from God can be “found” through salvation because God’s offer to cover sins with the shed Blood of Jesus is made to all. God is also willing and eager to direct believers who long to walk closer to Him in their journey of faith. After salvation, He offers sanctification and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Day by day, He is near, ready to give His people direction.

Where are we today in our spiritual journey? If there is uncertainty in our hearts about how to answer that question, God will help us pinpoint the answer. While He likely will not give us specific information about how long our trip will take or how many “miles” we will need to cover, He is more than willing to give us very clear instructions about how to reach our spiritual goal. We can look to Him to help us establish our spiritual location, and then purpose to follow His directions until we reach it!

BACKGROUND

Today’s portion of text describes the Fall of Man, as the beauty of the Creation account related in the first two chapters of Genesis was marred by disobedience, guilt, punishment, and eventually, physical and spiritual death.

The chapter begins with an account of how Satan, in the form of a serpent, beguiled Eve. Note that the woman was tempted from without, by the devil’s insinuation, rather than from within. Satan preyed upon her natural, God-given desires (physical hunger, appeal of beauty, desire for knowledge) which were pure desires as long as they were governed by subjection to God. By sowing doubt as to the truth of God’s words and maligning His character and motives, Satan deceived the woman and she disobeyed God. Her husband chose to do likewise.

Sin brought shame, fear, and guilt. Up to that moment, Adam and Eve had experienced intimacy with God and had only known good. While given free choice regarding their actions, humankind did not originally possess a sinful nature. Adam and Eve’s disobedience introduced sin, resulting in immediate spiritual separation from their Creator—an event that theologians refer to as the “Fall of Man.” After choosing to disobey God, the inherent nature of human beings changed from holy to carnal, and this sinful nature (also referred to as the “carnal nature,” the “Adamic nature,” or the “root of sin”) was passed on to all successive generations.

Verses 14-19 detail the response of God, relating the punishments that were meted out to the serpent, the woman, and the man, along with the impact on all of creation. Verse 15 is the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible—the initial glimmer of the hope of restoration offered by a loving and merciful Creator. “The seed of the woman” is a reference to Jesus Christ, who would ultimately “bruise” Satan’s head. The Hebrew word translated *bruise* actually means “to grind, crush, and destroy.” Thus, the Son of God

The final verses of the chapter outline the expulsion of man from the Garden. In this segment, Adam named his companion “Eve” (which means “life”), seemingly as an indication of his faith in God’s promise that she would continue to live physically, and that from her would come posterity that would include a Savior. God gave Adam and Eve clothing made from skins. The fact that innocent animals had to be slain to cover them may have been an introduction to the concept of animal sacrifice, although the text does not specifically say this. Likewise, it is considered by theologians to be a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- ## A CLOSER LOOK

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NOTES

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.” (Genesis 4:7)

The excited words, “Daddy, Daddy!” greeted me when I arrived home from work. Before I could even take off my coat, my little daughter pulled me to the kitchen where she proudly displayed a gift she had made for me. Lying on the kitchen table, in all its resplendent beauty, was a crayoned picture of a *very* pink horse. My daughter was quick to point out how painstakingly she had colored inside the lines. She had been learning that the “acceptable” way to color images was to keep inside the lines, and she had clearly put her very best effort into this picture. My heart was warmed with the knowledge that she had spent so much time and care in making sure her gift would please me. I knew it was truly a gift from the heart!

In today’s text, we read that the first two sons born to Adam and Eve brought gifts, or offerings, to God. We can quickly distinguish which of the two brothers, Cain or Abel, had a true desire to please God. While they both were aware of the need to offer sacrifices, only Abel’s offering was pleasing to Him. We read that God “had respect” unto Abel and his offering, but “unto Cain and his offering, he had not respect” (Genesis 4:4-5).

We know that if Cain had “done well,” his offering would have been accepted. In Cain’s case, his heart attitude was evident in his offering, and was outwardly demonstrated in his reaction to God’s rejection of it. He was wroth, and unmoved by the questions God asked him, which were indicative of God’s care and desire for Cain to examine himself and come to repentance. His nature was further revealed when he rose up and murdered his righteous brother, Abel.

When we know what it takes to please God and yet refuse to give what He requires from us, we will not be accepted by Him, and sin “lies at the door” of our lives, waiting to overwhelm us. Thankfully, that does not have to be the case for anyone. We can choose to follow the example of righteous Abel, and bring an offering to God that we know will please Him, from a heart of obedience and worship. When we do so, we can be assured that we will be accepted by Him.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 4 begins with the birth of Adam and Eve’s first two sons, Cain and Abel, and moves directly into an account of their offerings and God’s response to them (verses 1-7). Abel’s sacrifice was accepted and Cain’s rejected. Insight as to why this was the case is found in Hebrews 11:4, where the Apostle Paul relates, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.” Abel chose a lamb from his flock as a sacrifice, and the shedding of blood prefigured the Blood of the Lamb of God, which was to take away the sins of the world. Hebrews 12:24 refers to “the blood of sprinkling,” and states that it “speaketh better things than that of Abel.” “The blood” in this verse was not Abel’s own blood which was shed by his brother, but the blood that he offered, and by means of which he “obtained witness that he was righteous.”

Verses 8-16 record Cain’s jealousy and subsequent murder of his brother, and God’s ordained punishment: he was cursed, banished to a life of homelessness, and driven away from his agricultural vocation. The “land of Nod” referred to in verse 16 meant “land of wandering.” When Cain protested that he could not bear his punishment, God responded with mercy and set a mark upon him—a special sign as an assurance to Cain that he would not be killed.

Verses 17-24 give a brief genealogical summary of Cain’s descendants. Though Cain’s posterity were creative and possessors of varied talents and abilities, they were also godless.

The final two verses of the chapter record the birth of Seth, whose name meant “appointed” or “placed,” signifying that restoration would occur through this son.

Chapter 5 closes out the history of Adam, giving a list of his descendants. It is noteworthy that the list begins with the assertion in verse 3 that Adam’s son Seth was born “in his [Adam’s] own likeness” rather than “in the likeness of God” (verse 1) as Adam was created, thus indicating that successive generations were born with a fallen, depraved sin nature.

Their longevity notwithstanding, all but one of Adam’s listed descendants had something in common: they died, a verification of the effects of sin upon the human race. Notable in this genealogical record is the brief commentary on Enoch, who “walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (verse 24). Enoch’s testimony of intimate fellowship with God

brought about a delivering act of the Almighty (see also Hebrews 11:5).

The chapter concludes with the introduction of Noah, whose name meant “rest” or “comfort,” and whose account is developed in the next few chapters.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The early history of the human race
 - C. The posterity of Adam (4:1 — 5:32)
 - 1. The birth of Cain and Abel (4:1-15)
 - a. Their birth (4:1-2)
 - b. Their offerings (4:3-7)
 - c. The murder (4:8)
 - d. The judgment (4:9-15)
 - 2. The family of Cain (4:16-24)
 - 3. The birth of Seth (4:25-26)
 - 4. The family of Seth (5:1-32)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What curse did God pronounce upon Cain for murdering his brother?

2. What can we surmise about Cain’s character from the way he treated his brother?

3. What steps can we take to be sure that our offerings to God are acceptable?

CONCLUSION

Let us purpose to be sure that our offerings to God are done from a heart of true consecration and worship.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.” (Genesis 6:22)

Roy Frymire was stationed in England with the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II. He served in one of twelve mobile repair units; his group’s responsibility was to fix damaged B-17s that were coming back from daylight raids over Europe. In order to get quick medical attention for the wounded men, these planes landed at the first airport they found once they were over England. It was the duty of the mobile units to fix those planes sufficiently so they could fly back to their designated bases.

One particular day, Roy’s unit was repairing a damaged plane. A part was needed from a similar plane being dismantled for salvage at the base, and Roy was sent over to get it. Men were working inside the plane, and he was standing under it looking for the crew chief of that group so he could get permission to take the part that was needed. Suddenly he heard the words, “Get out from underneath this plane!” He obeyed instantly, and he had just stepped out from under that plane when it crashed to the ground. He later testified, “While I do not know what made the 34,000 pounds of metal fall, I do know that God spared my life that day.” Obedience to the command was his salvation.

In today’s text, we learn of another man whose life was spared because of his obedience. Noah was a lone star in a world darkened by sin and corruption—the power of darkness could not overpower the presence of God in his life. In verse 9, we read that Noah was “a just man” and that he “walked with God.” He clearly was sincere in his desire to do God’s will, and proved it by his obedience in what seemed an impossible and incomprehensible task. Because of that obedience, God saved him and his family from a horrific flood that destroyed every other living being on earth.

Noah’s obedience was not based on a complete understanding of what God was going to do. Although God revealed to this righteous man that He would destroy all those upon the earth, He did not explain all the details of how this would happen. For example, He told Noah to build an ark, but Noah had never seen an ark before. Still, Noah stepped out in faith and obeyed God.

Like Noah, we must be obedient to the Lord if we are to be saved from God’s judgment. Let us purpose

in our hearts to walk in obedience to God, whether or not we fully understand what He requires of us. It will be a life-saving decision!

BACKGROUND

Sixteen hundred years had elapsed since man had first sinned in the Garden of Eden, and by this chapter in Biblical history, sin had totally enveloped the earth. Verses 1-4 of our text suggest how the mingling of the righteous and the unrighteous—the “sons of God” (worshipers of the Lord, thought by some Bible scholars to be descendants from the godly lineage of Seth) commingled with ungodly women (perhaps the descendants of unrighteous Cain). Corruption was the result, and in time, the people of the world abounded in evil imaginations, thoughts, and actions (verse 5). God’s grief at man’s sinfulness caused Him to “repent” that He had made man, and He determined to destroy the whole earth (verses 5-7). As used here, the word “repent” means a change of relationship, with God turning from fellowship to judgment.

Verses 8-22 relate that one man—Noah—was an exception. Noah made an effort to please God in spite of the ungodliness around him, and for that reason, he “found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” In Hebrew, the word *grace* comes from a root meaning “to bend or stoop.” Thus, grace is the condescending or unmerited favor of a superior person to a lesser one. This is the first occurrence of this word in Scripture.

God forewarned Noah of the coming destruction, and ordered him to build an ark for the safety of himself and his family. He gave specific instructions regarding the dimensions of the ark and the manner in which it should be constructed. The ark that Noah built was comprised of three floors. It was approximately 450 feet long (the length of one-and-a-half football fields), 75 feet wide, and as high as a four-story building (45 feet). These proportions are exactly those necessary for a barge-like vessel. Being a huge wooden box, it was designed for flotation, not navigation.

In verse 18, God promised to establish a covenant with Noah. (The covenant was actually established in Genesis 9:9-17). This is the first time a covenant between God and man is mentioned in Scripture.

Though God delayed His judgment for 120 years while the ark was being built, the people did not take advantage of the time God gave them to repent of their sins. God was about to execute judgment by destroying all of the people in the world, but He preserved Noah and his family and established

the new world population through Noah and his descendants.

In the first five verses of chapter 7, God issued the invitation for Noah and his family to come into the ark, a place of safety and salvation. Noah also was instructed to take designated animals, clean and unclean, into the ark. In all this, Noah did as God commanded.

Noah was not an insignificant character in the Bible; he is mentioned fifty times in nine different books. Perhaps the best known of these references is found in Hebrews 11:7, “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The early history of the human race
 - D. The judgment upon mankind
 - 1. The cause for judgment (6:1-7)
 - 2. The exception to judgment—Noah (6:8—7:5)
 - a. His righteousness (6:8-12)
 - b. His refuge (6:13—7:5)
 - (1) The ark commissioned (6:13-22)
 - (2) The ark entered (7:1-5)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What explanation did God give to Noah regarding why he was to build an ark?

2. What similarities do you see between the attitudes and behaviors of the people of Noah’s day and the people in our world today?

3. What can we do to ensure that the ways and values of the sinful world do not filter into our lives?

CONCLUSION

Like Noah, we can be obedient to God and escape the divine judgment that will one day come to those who choose to continue in disobedience.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.” (Genesis 7:23)

Some saw it as divine intervention, others attributed it to a simple quirk of fate, fortune, or physics. Whatever one’s viewpoint, a nine-year-old boy’s amazing survival in an air crash in Libya in 2010 added another name to a very short list of individuals who have lived through an aviation disaster that claimed all other lives on board. The boy, Ruben van Assouw, suffered multiple fractures when the plane he and his family were on crashed at the Tripoli International Airport, killing all other passengers and the crew members. President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, was among those who termed the boy’s survival a “miracle.” Though his injuries required lengthy hospitalization, young Ruben was expected to eventually make a full recovery.

Accounts vary of how many sole survivors there have been in the aviation industry’s relatively short history, but the event is so rare that the numbers are thought to be in the tens rather than the hundreds. Most of these escapes have been attributed to unique circumstances.

Thousands of years ago, a tiny band of eight survivors escaped a horrific event that dwarfs any disaster in history, and their escape certainly can be attributed to unique circumstances. When every living creature in the whole world was destroyed by the Flood, our focus verse relates that “Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.” Safe inside the ark that God had directed him to build, this righteous man and his family were preserved by the mercy and grace of God.

God’s mercy had been extended to all upon the earth. When He resolved to destroy man and all living things as a result of man’s abhorrent sins, He did not carry it out immediately. For 120 years, the people heard from Noah about God’s impending judgment, yet they took no positive action to mitigate God’s just anger. Even after Noah and his family went into the ark—their place of safety and salvation—God waited seven days before sending the rain. At last, however, judgment fell, and all mankind perished except for Noah and his family.

We probably will never know why young Ruben was spared. However, we do know why Noah and his family survived: it was because Noah was righteous and he believed and obeyed God. These are priceless attributes! Let us determine to believe God’s Word and follow Him. If we do so, we will be spared the judgment that will someday come upon this world.

BACKGROUND

This text relates Noah’s entry into the ark with his family and pairs of every kind of animal (verses 7-9), the chronology of the Flood (verses 10-24), and the events immediately following (chapter 8).

The rain, coupled with untold tons of subterranean waters, brought disaster to the unrighteous populace—a universal judgment of God upon a universally wicked society. Verse 7:20 indicates that the water rose 15 cubits, which is approximately 22½ feet. The chronology of the Flood reveals that the period of time between when the rain began to fall until the earth dried (Genesis 8:14) was a total of 371 days.

The “mountains of Ararat” (verse 4) where the ark came to rest are thought by most researchers to refer to a range of mountains located in Eastern Turkey on the borders of Iran, Armenia, and Nakhchivan. The range is in the ancient territory of Urartu (*Ararat* is the newer Armenian name of *Urartu*), a region which covers thousands of square miles and has hundreds of mountains. Mount Ararat, the highest peak in that range, is a volcanic mountain with an elevation of 16,945 feet; it rises far above the surrounding plains that are 2,000 to 3,000 feet high.

When Noah and his family left the ark at God’s command, God reiterated the directive initially given to mankind (see Genesis 1:28) to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” It is noteworthy that Noah’s first action, after having been shut in the ark for over a year, was to build an altar to the Lord.

The statement that God “smelled a sweet savour” indicates that God approved of Noah’s action. He responded with a promise that He would never again totally disrupt the natural processes of life on earth. Included in this declaration of mercy was recognition of the carnal condition with which all are born, “for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). As descendants of Adam, the eight individuals who had found refuge from divine retribution in the ark still had been born with sinful natures, and thus their descendants would continue to exhibit carnality.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The early history of the human race
 - D. The judgment upon mankind
 - 3. The nature of judgment (7:6-24)
 - 4. The aftermath of judgment (8:1-22)
 - a. The recession of the waters (8:1-14)
 - b. The departure from the ark (8:15-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How old was Noah when the Flood began?

2. What does Genesis 8:21 reveal about man's nature?

3. What kind of offerings can we make to the Lord?

CONCLUSION

God's provision of a place of safety for faithful Noah and his family should inspire us to also be faithful and obedient to God.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.” (Genesis 9:12-13)

Promises are a familiar part of our lives. Business agreements, international treaties, political alliances, and legal settlements appear every day in the news. Personal commitments are made and financial deals negotiated. Warranties and guarantees accompany purchases, bargains are advertised, and pledges are made. Some of these many promises are kept, some are not.

Promises made by God, however, are certain to be kept. We read in today’s passage about the covenant God made with Noah following the Flood. A covenant is an attestation that goes beyond a promise. It is defined as “a formal agreement of legal validity, especially one under seal.” When the God of the whole universe makes a covenant with man, it is the most venerable agreement, because embedded in the covenant is the full weight of the name, honor, character, and deity of God. It is awe-inspiring to consider the security given to Noah, as the recipient of a covenant with God!

When Noah and his family came out of the ark, they discovered a world very different from what it had been prior to the Flood. The surroundings they knew had become a wasteland. While in the ark, no doubt their focus had been on the raging waters surrounding them, their survival, and the thousands of animals that were with them. After the Flood, the waters that covered the earth obscured the vast devastation for a few more months. However, when the waters receded and the inhabitants of the ark first assessed the changed world around them, it is likely this lone family felt uncertain and vulnerable. It was true that the Lord had saved them from the Flood, but the desolation was now part of their history. They knew that since it happened once, it could happen again. Perhaps they wondered how long it would be before another flood would come, and what its outcome would be.

The Lord was attentive to their concerns, just as He is attentive to our concerns today. He responded by establishing a covenant with them, promising that He would never again destroy the world with water.

From that day forward, the rainbow would be visible as a seal of His promise.

God’s promises are sure! The earth’s order and seasons are still preserved, and the beauty of rainbows—in every part of the world, and to every generation—still remind us of God’s faithfulness to His Word.

BACKGROUND

When Noah and his family came out of the ark, the eight survivors ushered in a new beginning for the human race. Chapters 9 and 10 of Genesis cover the latter life of Noah and his descendants.

Chapter 9 begins with God’s second command to Noah to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” (See also Genesis 1:28 and 8:17.) Though mankind had sinned and judgment had fallen, God’s divine purpose still included man: he was still to reproduce and fill the earth with his kind. God reminded Noah that he had been created “in the image of God” (verse 6) and thus had a unique status. He reestablished man’s dominion over the animal kingdom, and sanctioned the eating of meat, but with the prohibition that man was not to eat flesh in which the blood remained.

In verses 8-17, God established a new covenant with Noah and his descendants, giving the pledge of the rainbow as a sign of this covenant.

Verses 18 through 27 begin the account of Noah’s sons. This passage relates the breakdown of respect for human dignity within Noah’s family. Honor for parents and the cohesiveness of the family unit rapidly deteriorated, and the corruption of moral standards were evidence of the carnal nature of man that continued on in Noah’s descendants.

Verse 21 indicates that Noah “drank of the wine.” Commentators observe that this is the first time the production of wine is referred to in Scripture. Thus, Noah possibly did not comprehend the intoxicating power of fermented juice.

In verse 25, Noah prophetically cursed Canaan, the son of Ham, who had disrespected him. Ancient literature and archaeological remains verify that in the years that followed, Canaanite religion included child sacrifice, idolatry, religious prostitution, and divination. God expressly warned Israel against copying Canaan’s ways. Noah also blessed Shem and Japheth. Chapter 9 concludes with the death of Noah.

Chapter 10 documents the spread of Noah’s family. While all of Noah’s descendants were important to God, He focused especially on the line of

Shem. The blessing Noah bestowed upon this son (see Genesis 9:26) was significant, for those in Shem's lineage had a major role in bearing the message of redemption to the world. Abram, the man God chose to be the founder of the Jewish nation, was a descendant of Shem.

Archaeological findings give details of the nations that descended from Noah's sons, which were established between the Flood and the time of Abraham. The oldest known villages were farming communities with walls and wells. Each community developed its own cult and gods, with much of the worship tied to the cycle of seasons. Eventually these communities began to unite into religious states or empires.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The early history of the human race
 - E. The renewal of mankind (9:1 — 10:32)
 - 1. The new decrees (9:1-7)
 - 2. The new covenant (9:8-17)
 - 3. The failure of Noah (9:18-27)
 - 4. The death of Noah (9:28-29)
 - 5. The posterity of Noah (10:1-32)
 - a. Prologue (10:1)
 - b. Japheth (10:2-5)
 - c. Ham (10:6-20)
 - d. Shem (10:21-31)
 - e. Epilogue (10:32)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did God forbid the shedding of another man's blood?

2. What does God's covenant with Noah tell you about God's nature, personality, and values?

3. What are some promises of God that you have leaned on?

CONCLUSION

God's promises are unchangeable and His covenants are unbreakable. In a world of turmoil, what security we find in this assurance!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:4)

Art Blank grew up in a small, one-bedroom apartment in Queens, New York. He reflects that he first realized he was a self-starter when playing outfield in a baseball game. He wanted to be the catcher instead so he could have a part in every play! His drive carried over into his school years. In college, in addition to being president of his senior class, Art launched his own landscaping company, a laundry business, and even found time to babysit on the side. A few years later, after he was unceremoniously fired from his place of employment, he and a friend mapped out a business plan on a paper napkin in their favorite coffee shop. They had almost no capital, but a lot of enthusiasm. Today their national chain—the Home Depot—has more than two thousand stores bringing in billions of dollars in annual profits!

Art, along with others who have achieved success in entrepreneurial ventures, is recognized for his accomplishments. The fact is, most of us admire ambition. We respect those who have the internal drive that results in accomplishment. We honor those who press ahead in spite of obstacles to achieve a dream. That is natural and appropriate. However, if industry and ambition are based on wrong motives, they can become an addiction—an all-consuming focus squarely rooted in self. That’s what happened at Babel.

The people whose story is recorded in today’s text had a dream. The vision that drove them to stir the mortar and pull bricks from the kiln was a tower. The thought that motivated them as they shouldered their load of bricks upward, one step at a time, was a structure that would be a great human achievement, a wonder of the world. Sadly, they had no intent to glorify God. Their efforts were not rooted in a desire to find Him, but to build a monument to themselves. Note how many times the phrase “Let us . . .” appears in the first four verses of this passage. Clearly, their purpose was to make a name for themselves. They had ambition and industry, but their motives were wrong.

In a society that honors achievement, there is a danger of slipping into a “Babel” mentality. While we

are probably not out building towers in our backyards, it pays to observe carefully what motivates our investment of energy and attention. Monuments can come in many forms. If our time and energy are spent to define our identity or support our self-worth, we are in danger of falling into the same trap that brought about the ruin of Babel.

Today, what “towers” are we building? What consumes our time and attention, and what is our motivation? The human attitudes portrayed in this account, and God’s response to them, offer a warning that we must take to heart. Let’s make sure our efforts center on the glory of God and promotion of Him, and not on ourselves.

BACKGROUND

This passage opens with the statement that the whole earth was bound together by one language. One hundred years had passed since the end of the Flood. Noah’s family had been divided into tribes, or colonies, to settle in different directions, thus replenishing the other regions of the earth. However, as the population increased, they all migrated together. It appears their journey took them down Mount Ararat, then along the plains of the Euphrates River, and finally to the land of Shinar—which was probably in modern-day Southern Mesopotamia, near where Babylon would be built later.

Verses 3-4 relate that these new inhabitants of Shinar proposed an action that was in opposition to the will of God (see Genesis 9:1). They desired fame and security, and purposed to achieve these goals through their own efforts. God was left out of their plans. Verses 5-7 describe how God took notice of these rebellious actions and made an evaluation. In verses 8-9, the method He used to bring their efforts to an end is detailed.

The tower built at Babel is thought to have been a ziggurat—a pyramid-like structure built in successive levels that were recessed so one could walk to the top on “steps.” Usually the top was a special shrine dedicated to a god or goddess.

It is likely that the incidents chronicled in chapter 11 actually preceded those in chapter 10, and that the scattering described in chapter 10 was the consequence of God’s judgment at Babel. Some commentators suggest that the sequence in Genesis was so arranged to lead into the genealogy of Shem, which in turn leads into the genealogy of Abraham. This would make the arrangement literary rather than chronological.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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Let's learn a lesson from the people of Babel. We must guard against ever thinking our ways are better than God's ways!

- ## NOTES

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ... So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.” (Genesis 12:1,4)

Elmer and Helen Luka were a young couple with two little boys when God called them to move from their home and familiar surroundings. The church they were attending taught salvation only, and although the two were saved, they had begun to feel the need for something more in their spiritual lives. Elmer related, “One day, the Lord laid it on our hearts to find a people who preached the whole Word of God. My wife and I sold our home and furniture and piled everything else in a panel truck and a trailer that we pulled along behind. We strung two little hammocks in the back of the truck for our boys to sleep in. A friend had sent us literature from an Apostolic Faith Church in Los Angeles, California, so we headed west across the country, looking for the people of God.

“I will never forget the Sunday morning we opened the doors of the Apostolic Faith Church in Los Angeles, California. It was as though a Voice spoke from Heaven saying, ‘This is it! This is what you have been looking for!’ God gave us that witness. Brother Loyce Carver was preaching that morning on the subject of sanctification—the very experience our hearts had been hungering for, though we did not know it at the time. Some of the people said the sermon was so strong that they thought we would never come back. Well, we came back!”

They certainly did. Elmer and Helen both received their sanctification at the first camp meeting they attended in Portland, Oregon, and a short time later, both were filled with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Over the following years, they raised their children in the Gospel with the Lord as their Friend and Healer. Elmer became a minister, and in time he pastored at three Apostolic Faith churches, enjoying the blessing of God upon their lives for the rest of their days.

Like Abram in today’s text, Elmer and Helen proved that when we walk in obedience to the Lord, we can confidently rely on Him to direct our steps and reward our obedience. God called Abram to leave his homeland in Ur of the Chaldees and journey to an

unknown land. He followed God’s instructions, even though he had no knowledge about where he was headed. It was Abram’s absolute and unquestioning obedience that endeared him to God, and his long journey from Ur to Canaan was fueled by faith. Let us always obey and step out in confidence at God’s direction, though it may seem as though there is nothing but swirling mist ahead of us. We will find solid ground under the tread of faith.

God’s instructions to Abram were accompanied by great promises: that his descendants would become a great nation, and that through these descendants all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Did Abram even dream what this promise meant? Someday, through his lineage, Jesus Christ would be born as the Savior for all mankind. Through Christ, the people of all nations would be able to enjoy a personal relationship with God and be forgiven of their sins.

God may be trying to lead you into a place of greater blessing and usefulness for Him, just as He did for Abram of old, and for Elmer and Helen Luka. Don’t let the comfort and security of your present position make you miss God’s plan for you. As you step forward in obedience to God, you can be assured of God’s blessing on your life.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text marks a pivotal division in the Book of Genesis. Prior to this point in Scripture, God had dealt with the entire human race, but at this juncture, He centered His attention upon the man Abram and his family. The name *Abram* means “exalted father,” and the meaning of his name is reflected in fact: Abraham is honored by three major religious faiths—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Beginning with verse 10 of chapter 11, the descendants of Shem are traced for ten generations, concluding with Abram (verse 26). This genealogy establishes the background of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve patriarchs, and later, David and Solomon, as well as the ancestry of the Messiah.

Chapter 12 begins with an account of Abram’s call, his obedience to that call, and the blessings promised to him by God (verses 1-3). God called Abram from the godless city of Ur to the region of Canaan, where He would establish a God-centered, moral nation through Abram’s offspring. The exact location of Ur is not known, but Bible scholars and archeologists generally suppose it to be the renowned Sumerian city of Ur in southern Mesopotamia, which was under the rule of the Chaldeans. On today’s map,

that would place the location in southern Iraq, about one hundred miles northwest of the Kuwaiti border.

Verses 4-9 relate Abram's obedience in journeying to Canaan, the renewal and strengthening of God's promise, and Abram's building of altars to worship the Lord in each place where he went.

While in southern Canaan, a famine struck the land. Verses 10-20 record that as a result of the famine, Abram traveled down into Egypt. Fearing that the Egyptians would kill him for his wife, Sarai, he instructed her not to admit to being his wife, but only his sister. The danger that Abram anticipated was real, for Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's house. God responded by plaguing Pharaoh and his household on Sarai's account. Eventually Pharaoh discovered the truth, reprimanded Abram, and expelled him from the country.

As a result of the events recorded in this text, the region of Canaan, though small in terms of its geographical boundaries, became the epicenter for the rise of Christianity. This parcel of land, granted by God Himself to the man Abram, has had an incredible impact on world history.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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II. The early history of the chosen race

A. Abraham

1. Introduction (11:10-32)
 - a. Lineage from Shem through Terah (11:10-26)
 - b. Lineage of Terah (11:27-32)
2. The call of Abraham (12:1-3)
3. The journey of Abraham (12:4-9)
 - a. From Ur and Haran (12:4)
 - b. To Canaan (12:5-9)
4. The sojourn in Egypt (12:10-20)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many times do the words "shall" and "will" occur in Genesis 12:1-3? What can we conclude from this?

2. How did the call of God to Abram impact him in these areas of his life?

His family

His home

His future

3. How can Abram's experiences in this portion of text encourage us to trust God more fully with our needs?

CONCLUSION

Wherever God calls us to go, He will go before us and will meet us at the point of obedience with His divine blessing.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.” (Genesis 13:10-11)

Decisions that are based solely on short-term advantages are not always the best ones. For instance, suppose you need a new vegetable peeler. In the kitchen utensil aisle of your grocery store, you find a simple stainless model for \$1.99. However, in looking over the options, you also see an Oxo Good Grips I-Series Swivel Peeler for \$11.89. At that point you are faced with making a decision: which peeler should you buy?

If you are only concerned with the short-term advantages, you will pick up the inexpensive peeler—after all, you would save \$9.90! But if you are concerned about the long-term results of your decision, you will evaluate. Does it cost or does it pay? Is the \$9.90 you would save warranted? You don’t want to be frustrated each time you use the peeler. Would you find yourself replacing it a few weeks later because you just couldn’t put up with how poorly it functioned? Would that cushioned handle on the Oxo peeler be appreciated each time you had to peel more than one potato? How much easier would the swivel head make your task?

Decisions about vegetable peeler options are of little importance. However, other choices will have a significant impact on our immediate future, and perhaps even affect the rest of our lives. We find that point substantiated in today’s text.

Our focus verses record a choice that faced Lot, the nephew of Abram, and it was one that had an unforeseen impact on Lot’s future. God had blessed the two men with prosperity, and the area where they resided was no longer big enough to sustain all of their combined livestock. Abram generously suggested that Lot choose where he wanted to settle, saying that he would take whatever area was left.

Lot looked at the well-watered plains of Jordan and decided that area was the most promising dwelling place. Instead of preferring his uncle, he decided to take the best land for himself, even though it meant living near Sodom.

In the short term, Lot’s choice may have seemed a good one, but it did not prove to be so in the long term. His decision to pitch his tent toward Sodom ultimately destroyed his home and family. Even though the lifestyle of Sodom is not what drew Lot initially, something eventually attracted him enough that he moved into the city. The New Testament does refer to him as “righteous Lot” and indicates that his soul was vexed by the evil around him. However, the credibility of his testimony was destroyed, for when he warned his family of impending doom, they failed to heed his words. Perhaps the decision to locate his family in a city where they would be influenced continually by the sinful lifestyle around them was the fatal error.

Many times, decisions made without consulting God lead individuals into grave spiritual danger, both to themselves and to those whose lives they impact. When making decisions, we need to look to God and ask for His guidance. When our hearts are open to His divine direction, our decisions will lead us closer to God—not further away.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 13 opens with Abram returning to Canaan after his deportation from Egypt (verses 1-4). The first place he went upon his return was Bethel, where he initially had built an altar, and there he “called on the name of the LORD” (verse 4).

Verses 5–9 present the dilemma that then faced Abram and Lot. God had blessed the two men materially; verse 6 states that “their substance was great.” Commentators suggest that their possessions probably included more than one hundred tents, one hundred camels, and one thousand sheep and goats. The land of Bethel could not support all of their flocks, and their herdsmen began to quarrel over the limited water supply. It grieved Abram that there was strife within the family, and separating seemed to be the best solution.

Verses 11–13 record the choice Lot made. Being the elder of the two, Abram had every right to settle in the area of land he wanted. Instead, he selflessly allowed Lot to choose first. When Lot compared the well-watered plain of Jordan—then a verdant area that was watered by abundant springs—to the semi-arid mountain ranges of central Canaan, he chose the more attractive and fruitful land. However, the location of the plain put Lot in proximity to the wickedness of Sodom. Verse 13 indicates that Sodom was a morally evil city, for its men “were wicked and

sinner before the LORD exceedingly.” Lot no doubt knew of the reputation of Sodom and Gomorrah, but he pitched his tent in the direction of the evil city. It is possible that Lot had visited there earlier and was attracted by the business potential of the large urban markets.

In the conclusion of this chapter (verses 14–18), God appeared to Abram and renewed His prior promises, confirming that the land was a gift to his descendants, who would be impossible to number. In response, Abram characteristically built an altar to the Lord at Hebron, showing his gratitude and devotion to God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - A. Abraham
 - 5. The separation from Lot (13:1-18)
 - a. Return to Bethel (13:1-4)
 - b. The strife (13:5-7)
 - c. The separation (13:8-13)
 - d. The renewal of the promise (13:14-18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. After leaving Egypt, where did Abram go?

2. How did Lot’s choices affect his entire life?

3. Looking at Lot’s choices, what lessons can we learn from the mistakes he made?

CONCLUSION

The choices we make have a significant impact on our spiritual walk, and ultimately, on our eternal destiny. It pays to make those decisions carefully, and at God’s direction!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And he [Abram] brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.”
(Genesis 14:16)**

A while back, an article in a Newfoundland newspaper told about a lawyer who looked out the window of his office and observed someone breaking into his car and taking items from it. Shouting to his secretary, “Call the police!” he ran out of the building and pursued the man on foot. He chased the thief for several blocks, and when he finally overtook him, he wrestled the man to the ground and held him there until the police arrived. As a result of his efforts, that lawyer retrieved what had been stolen from him.

In today’s text, when Abram heard that his nephew Lot and his family had been taken captive, he set out to rescue them. God was with him, and as the focus verse reveals, Lot, the other captives, and the goods were retrieved.

Sadly, many today are being held captive in sin by the enemy of their souls. God offers deliverance and freedom, but who is going to go down to the camp of the enemy and rescue the unsaved? It was Abram’s love for Lot and his family that caused him to take action, and we too must have a love for lost souls and a burden to take part in this recovery action.

Just as Lot no doubt hoped that Abram would come to rescue him, people who are held captive by sin often wish they could be free. In their hearts, they may hope that someone is praying for them. Are we doing everything in our power to make sure they are set free? Of course the ultimate decision to accept God’s offer of deliverance is an individual choice, for every person has a free will. However, we can intercede before God on behalf of those who are held captive by sin. God wants us to have compassion for them and do our part to retrieve them from that bondage.

God used Abram to bring about a miraculous deliverance, and He wants us to reach out to captive souls in our time. We can pray that God will help us be used of Him as Abram was, and that spiritual freedom for those in sin will be the result.

BACKGROUND

This chapter describes how four kings from the vicinity of Mesopotamia came to fight against five kings near the Dead Sea. Lot and his family were

captured, but God helped Abram and his company to free them.

In ancient times, kings ruled a city, a tribe, or a significantly large territory. They often warred against similar rulers, and sometimes formed alliances so they could invade and control more area. In this account, four kings from the north (including one from Shinar which later became Babylon, and one from Elam which was to the east of Babylon) had united and become strong, and they were able to seize control of five kings in Canaan. There were copper mines in the area near the Dead Sea, and scholars believe that might have been the motivation for the invasion. After twelve years, the kings in Canaan rebelled, but the northern kings returned to make a sweeping victory, killing and plundering even more territory.

The slimepits mentioned in verse 10 were wells or geysers of pitchy liquid that was similar to asphalt, and was used as mortar or cement. The original text indicates there were many of these pits, making this treacherous territory for a battle.

Lot and his household were among those taken as captives. Abram took 318 servants—perhaps his herdsmen who were trained to protect his livestock—and his confederates (Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre) and traveled north over one hundred miles, where God gave them victory in an attack at night against the enemy.

As Abram and his men returned with the retrieved captives and goods, they were met by two kings—Melchizedek, king of Salem, and the king of Sodom. *Salem* was an early name for Jerusalem, and the name *Melchizedek* is interpreted, “king of righteousness” or “king of peace.” The fact that Melchizedek worshiped the true God is indicated by his reference to “the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth” (verse 19). Even though the nations about them were heathen, these people understood who God was and how to relate to Him. Melchizedek acted in a priestly role when he blessed Abram, and Abram gave Melchizedek tithes of the spoils he had taken. This is the first reference in the Bible to paying tithes, and Abram’s act showed his understanding that God was supreme and that Melchizedek had the authority to function as a priest.

Although little is written in the Bible about Melchizedek, what is said is significant because it relates to the Messiah. Psalm 110:4 says the Messiah would be a priest “after the order of Melchizedek,” who lived long before the Law and the priestly role of Aaron and his descendants were established. The

writer of Hebrews quoted this verse from Psalms and showed that Jesus Christ was able to do more than bless; He could “save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Hebrews 7:25).

The king of Sodom was not a righteous man like Melchizedek. Abram’s refusal to take personal wealth from the retrieved spoils showed his honor and appreciation for God’s help, and kept him unobligated to the king of Sodom.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - A. Abraham
 - 6. The deliverance of Lot (14:1-24)
 - a. The capture of Lot (14:1-12)
 - b. The defeat of Chedorlaomer (14:13-16)
 - c. The king of Sodom and Melchizedek (14:17-24)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Who was Melchizedek, and what was his role?

2. What can we learn from Abram’s refusal to take gifts from the king of Sodom?

3. God helped Abram win a great victory. What types of battles might God help us win today?

CONCLUSION

Let us purpose to do what we can to bring about the deliverance of those who are held captive by sin.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” (Genesis 15:5-6)

Studying the stars has been an interest of mankind for thousands of years. As technology has improved, more has been learned about the stars, planets, nebulae, and galaxies around us. The Hubble Space Telescope was put into orbit in April, 1990, and in the years since then it has brought new discoveries to astronomers. They estimate that the universe now visible to scientists has seventy sextillion stars (70,000,000,000,000,000,000,000). Yet researchers say this number is only an estimate. “This is not the total number of stars in the universe, but it’s the number within range of our telescopes,” said Simon Driver of the Australian National University. “The real number could be much, much, larger still—some people think it is infinite.”¹

Even if we are not skilled astronomers, we can do a little star study of our own on a clear night. How many stars can we count? It does not take long to realize that those twinkling lights are impossible to number. Yet in our focus verse, God promised that Abram’s seed would be like that vast array spread out across the sky—and Abram believed Him, in spite of the fact that he and his wife were well past child-bearing years!

Just as God had wonderful plans for Abram, He has perfect plans for us. Since we are not able to see the whole picture of our lives at any given moment, we must exercise faith, and trust God to lead us one step at a time. This may not always be easy, but it was not easy for Abram, either. In this chapter he asked God for reassurance (verse 8), and God responded by entering into a covenant with him.

Like Abram, we can choose to believe God, to follow Him, and then see Him work in our lives. We may not have as many descendants as there are stars, but we are sure to have God’s blessing and direction.

BACKGROUND

In today’s text, God reassured Abram of His protection, and reiterated His promise that Abram would have a son. In the previous chapter, God had given Abram and his people a great victory. Perhaps

Abram was fearful that the powerful kings who had been defeated would come back to fight again. In verse 1, God promised to protect Abram (“I am thy shield”) and to be gracious toward him (“and thy exceeding great reward”).

God had promised Abram that through him and his descendants all families of the earth would be blessed (see Genesis 12:1-3). In this chapter, Abram expressed his lack of understanding of how the promise could come to pass since he had no son. In Abram’s native culture, someone who had no children could make a servant his heir. Eliezer was a trusted servant from Abram’s household who worked as an administrator (see Genesis 24), but God told Abram that he would have a child of his own and descendants beyond number like the stars of the heavens.

Verse 6 is the first time the word *believed* occurs in the Bible; it means “to be firmly established or rooted.” Abram was firmly convinced of God’s faithfulness and reliability, and God “counted it to him for righteousness.” This verse is one of the most important passages in all of the Old Testament because it shows that Abram was not justified by works, but because of his faith in God. This relationship to God by faith was in place before circumcision was instituted, illustrating that Abram’s justification was not a result of that ceremony.

As evidence of the promise, God entered into a covenant with Abram (verses 9-17). At that time, a covenant was a way of showing strong determination by both parties to fulfill their promise. As part of the covenant ceremony, sacrificial animals were divided and the covenant participants walked between them. After making his sacrifice, Abram kept the birds away from the carcasses. When the sun was going down, God came and told Abram that his seed would spend approximately four hundred years in another nation before they inherited the promise. Some scholars believe the “horror of great darkness” (verse 12) and the “smoking furnace” (verse 17) looked ahead to the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt. The burning lamp passing between the pieces of the offering was indicative of God ratifying the covenant with Abram.

In a summarizing statement (verses 18-21), God revealed to Abram for the first time the geographical boundaries of the land his descendants would possess: they would stretch from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. The area is further clarified by a list of the ten people groups which dwelt in that area during Abram’s time. On today’s map, the area described would include all of Israel, the Palestinian territories,

Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, as well as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., Oman, Yemen, most of Turkey, and all the land east of the Nile river.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - A. Abraham
 - 7. The promise of an heir (15:1-21)
 - a. Abraham's faith stated (15:1-6)
 - b. The covenant made (15:7-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What were the three promises that God made to Abram in this chapter?

2. What spiritual parallel can you make between Abram's driving the birds away and our actions in consecrating to God?

3. What differences will having the Lord as our shield and reward in every circumstance make in our lives?

CONCLUSION

If we choose to believe God, we are certain to be glad we did.

NOTES

1. Beale, Bob, "Number of visible stars put at 70 sextillion," ABC Science, July 25, 2003, <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2003/07/25/910295.htm>, accessed 7 Jan. 2013



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.” (Genesis 16:2)

A number of years ago, our family desperately needed a house that would accommodate our growing needs; another baby was on the way. My wife and I began to study real estate ads and check out homes we thought sounded like good options. After many weeks of research—and a number of disappointments when properties that sounded promising proved to be less than described—we came upon what we thought was the perfect house. It was immaculate, attractively decorated, and in a nice neighborhood. We quickly decided this was the house for us, and without much deliberation, made an offer.

However, someone else also liked the house! To our dismay, the other offer was accepted instead of ours. We were disheartened to say the least, and our search resumed. Thankfully, God had the whole matter under control, as He always does. A few months later, my wife and I were able to purchase a much larger, well-built house for our family. Now we realize that the first house would not have been as comfortable for us.

We have probably all had occasions in our lives when waiting on God was hard and we took matters into our own hands, trying to work out situations according to what seemed right to us. That human tendency is clearly illustrated in today’s text. While Abram and Sarai believed God’s promise of a son, they were seemingly frustrated by the passing years. It was difficult to patiently wait until He fulfilled His promise in His own time and way! Sarai stated that “the LORD hath restrained me from bearing.” She was disappointed, and there was even a hint of blaming God in her attitude. Eventually, she took matters into her own hands and devised a strategy for “fulfilling” God’s promise. In doing so, she demonstrated doubt in God’s ability to provide the promised heir—and created some serious challenges for herself and her husband.

When we surrender and consecrate our lives to the Lord, we need to believe He will direct us as we remain committed to Him. It is our responsibility to allow Him to guide us in His own way and in His own time—even when that means waiting on Him. It is

not necessary to present God with a list of options as to how He could meet our needs; He already has the perfect solution! And He does not require our help to bring that solution about. Our part is to simply trust and obey.

Today, let’s learn a lesson from Sarai and Abram’s experience. God has the solution for whatever faces us, and He will never be late. We can leave our concern with Him and know that He will work everything out in the best way at the best time!

BACKGROUND

At the beginning of chapter 16, ten years had passed since Abram and his family had arrived in Canaan. At this point, Abram was eighty-five years old, and Sarai was seventy-five.

Verses 1–4 relate how Sarai contrived her own solution to her continuing inability to bear children. In accordance with the custom of the ancient Near East, Sarai provided her husband with an Egyptian servant woman, Hagar, as a substitute wife to produce offspring. Though Hagar did conceive, use of this legal provision resulted in friction between the two women. Verse 4 says that Sarai was “despised” by Hagar, indicating that the servant woman became arrogant toward her mistress and ignored the basic principles of respect that should have governed her conduct.

Verses 5–6 indicate that Sarai responded by blaming and upbraiding her husband. Abram declined to punish Hagar, but allowed Sarai to treat the servant woman as she pleased. Although the law prohibited the wife from expelling a substitute wife after she conceived, Sarai “dealt hardly” (humbled, afflicted, or mishandled) with Hagar, and this harsh treatment ultimately caused her to run away.

In verses 7–14, God shows His compassion and concern for Hagar and her unborn child. While Hagar was on her way to her homeland, Egypt, the angel of the Lord came to the servant woman at a fountain near the wilderness of Shur and counseled her to return and submit to her mistress. In return, she was promised multiple descendants through her child. He would be named Ishmael, which means “God hears”—a reminder that God had indeed heard her cry of desperation. Hagar responded with gratitude and worship, naming the well where she rested “Beer-lahai-roi,” which could be translated “Well of the One who lives and sees me.”

Verse 7 is the first reference to the “angel of the LORD” in Scripture. He is generally believed to be

the preincarnate Christ, as He clearly exercises the characteristics and abilities of deity. He is mentioned frequently throughout the Old Testament.

The final two verses of the chapter record the birth of Ishmael, the father of the Arab nations. Abram was eighty-six years old at this time.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - A. Abraham
 - 8. The birth of Ishmael (16:1-16)
 - a. Sarah's defective plan (16:1-6)
 - b. Hagar's flight (16:7-14)
 - c. Ishmael's birth (16:15-16)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What action did Sarai suggest to her husband in verses 2-6?

2. What do you think Hagar learned about God as a result of the events in our text?

3. What might be some indicators that we are trying to devise our own solutions to the problems that face us?

CONCLUSION

At times we must wait on the Lord for resolution to the situations that face us. Let's remember that no problem is too complicated for God if we are willing to let Him give us His solution in His time.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” (Genesis 17:1)

We have heard it said, “Nobody’s perfect. After all, we’re only human.” One bumper sticker makes a joke of perfection, saying, “If you think you’re perfect, try walking on water!” Yet, God told Abram to be perfect. Was He requiring the impossible? Of course not! The secret to understanding God’s command is found in an accurate definition of the word *perfect*. In the original language, the word means “entire, whole, complete, or without blemish.”

In the physical sense, perfection relates to being at the proper stage of development. Consider a newborn baby being presented to delighted grandparents for the first time. In all likelihood, they inspect the tiny feet, unwrap the fingers that instinctively grasp theirs, smooth the wisps of hair, remark on the shape of the nose and chin, and proclaim, “He (or she) is *perfect*!” Ten years down the line, those grandparents would not expect to see their grandchild still wrapped in a blanket, crying when he or she needed to be fed, and unable to sit up or speak. However much they might love the child, they would know that development had not progressed as it should. One expects a “perfect” newborn to possess certain characteristics, but the expectations are very different for a ten-year-old.

In the spiritual realm, God does not want us to think that we are finished or completed, with no possible room for improvement. Perfection in our Christian lives begins with receiving forgiveness for our sins through justification, and then dealing with our carnal nature through the experience of entire sanctification, which brings heart purity. Even after receiving these experiences, we will need to grow and mature as Christians. As long as we are on this earth, God will be working with us. He may ask us to do some difficult things, such as forgive someone who has wronged us, or He may simply ask us to live for Him through the small affairs of everyday life. As we serve Him faithfully from the heart and to the best of our abilities, we are perfect in His eyes.

Some people confuse Christian, or moral, perfection with absolute perfection. Absolute perfection is to be perfect as God is perfect, and no human achieves that level of perfection. However, we can achieve the level of perfection that God demands,

which is dependent upon the condition of our hearts. A heart that is continually yielded and completely obedient to Him is perfect in His eyes.

For Abram, perfection was walking in continual obedience and complete devotion to God. In return, God promised to bless Abram and his descendants in bountiful ways. God’s requirement is the same today. When we meet that requirement and completely yield our hearts to Him, we can be assured that we are “perfect” in our Father’s eyes!

BACKGROUND

Twice before, God had discussed His covenant (solemn agreement) with Abram (Genesis 12 and 15). In those instances, fulfillment was not to be for some time, and Abram had to wait in faithful trust. In verses 1-8 of today’s text, thirteen years after the Lord’s last recorded appearance to Abram, God promised Abram that (1) he would have many descendants, (2) many nations would spring from these descendants, (3) God’s covenant would continue to apply to these descendants, and (4) the descendants would occupy the land of Canaan. Jesus Christ, the Savior of all mankind, came from these descendants.

Abram’s part of this covenant was to be perfect before the Lord. He was also to initiate the ordinance of circumcision upon all the males in his extended family, including himself (verses 9-14). Circumcision was to be the sign that Abram and his descendants were God’s people, set apart from other nations. At this time, God changed Abram and Sarai’s names to Abraham (meaning “the father of a great multitude”) and Sarah (meaning “princess”).

In verses 15-22, God promised that in the course of time, Sarah would give birth to their long-awaited son. Abraham laughed when he was told that Sarah was to give birth to a baby in her old age. Though this was a seeming impossibility, the writer of Romans tells us that Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Romans 4:20-21). God did not forget Ishmael; although the covenant was not to be established through Abraham’s son by Hagar (an Egyptian servant), God indicated that Ishmael would be the ancestor of twelve princes, and the father of a great nation.

Abraham did not waver when told by God to circumcise those of his household. Verses 23-27 indicate that he immediately put into effect God’s commandment. There were no class distinctions in

this commandment: the servants of the household were circumcised just as the free men were.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - A. Abraham
 - 9. The reaffirmation of the covenant (17:1-27)
 - a. The promise of fulfilling the covenant (17:1-8)
 - b. The sign of faith in God's covenant (17:9-14)
 - c. The avenue of fulfilling the covenant (17:15-21)
 - d. The exercise of faith in God's covenant (17:22-27)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What specific promise did God make about Sarah in this text?

- 2. What does Abraham's immediate obedience regarding the rite of circumcision indicate about his relationship with God?

- ---

- 3. How can we have perfect hearts before the Lord?

CONCLUSION

God never requires the impossible. Perfection in His sight is possible by the help and grace that He promises to provide.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”
(Genesis 18:14)**

Bonnie Davis has proved that there is nothing too hard for the Lord. A number of years ago, a biopsy revealed cancer in her body. The doctor told her that she needed to have an immediate operation or she would die, but she felt personally led to refuse surgery and look to God alone in faith for her healing.

In the weeks following the biopsy, the cancer spread like wildfire throughout her body. The pain became more intense, and she grew weaker and weaker. It seemed her life was ebbing away, but God would speak to her heart, saying, “Have faith! Keep holding on! Keep believing.” That is just what she did.

She testifies, “One day, I felt as though I were choking to death. I was almost overcome with pain, but I cried out, ‘Lord, I am dying. If it is Your will, heal me, so I can take care of my loved ones.’ Then came the discouraging thought: You cannot live; you are full of cancer. I kept right on pleading for my life, making deeper and deeper consecrations. Once again I prayed, ‘God, please heal me for Thy honor and glory.’ Back came the answer, ‘I am the Lord that healeth thee.’ I knew those words came from Heaven, and I grabbed hold of that promise and held to it.

“I told the Lord that if He would help me, I would go to church and ask the ministers to pray for me, as the Bible instructs. That night, though in much pain and very weak, I went to church. After the service, the ministers anointed my head with oil and prayed for me. And the Lord instantly healed me!”

The next day, the cancer began passing from Bonnie’s body. It continued doing so for several weeks, and she felt stronger and stronger. When the time came for another checkup, four of the best specialists in the city analyzed her case but they found no trace of cancer. Today, many years later, she is still free of that disease.

In today’s text, an announcement came straight from Heaven: at the appointed time, Sarah would give birth to the promised son, though she was decades past child-bearing years. In the natural, this seemed impossible, but God asked Abraham the question, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”

If the same question were put to us, how easily the answer, “Of course not!” would roll from our tongues.

Still, how much more difficult it is to grasp hold of that truth when we face battles we cannot possibly win in our own strength! However, the all-powerful nature of God is a bedrock foundation for our faith. When God makes a promise, we can depend on the fact that He will not fail. We can learn to lean and trust.

What problem confronts you today? What is it that you need most? Try placing your specific need into this question posed to Abraham. Ask yourself, “Is this financial struggle I am facing right now too hard for the Lord?” “Is this decision I am struggling to make too hard for the Lord to guide me through?” “Is this crushing sorrow that is gripping my heart too much for the Lord to handle?”

God can do what no one else can do. He can fix the unfixable. He can solve the unsolvable. He can move the unmovable. If God makes a promise, we can be absolutely assured that He has the power to fulfill it. Both Abraham and Bonnie proved that, and we can too. With God, there are no hopeless cases!

BACKGROUND

Verses 1–8 of this chapter describe Abraham’s hospitable care of strangers, which was in accord with the custom of the land. When three visitors approached Abraham around noon—an unusual event, since few people traveled in the heat of the day—he gave them a hearty welcome. He urged them to allow him to fetch water to wash the dust from their feet, relax in the shade, and partake of food which would be prepared for them.

After extending the invitation to the three men, Abraham did not merely turn the necessary work over to his servants. Genesis 14:14 indicates that Abraham’s household included 318 trained men-servants, but in spite of his sizeable staff, Abraham took personal charge of these proceedings. He ministered to his guests immediately, rising up from his rest to greet them. He acted speedily, hastening into the tent to discuss with Sarah the plans for the meal. He offered generously, requesting that bread be baked from “fine meal” and providing meat that was “tender and good.” And he ministered humbly, bowing to his guests and calling himself their servant.

Verses 9–15 record the revelation regarding the birth of Isaac. The text does not indicate when Abraham began to be aware that he was entertaining the Lord himself, along with two angels, all in human form. At some point during or after the meal, the announcement was made that Sarah would have a

In verse 14, the Lord asked Abraham, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” and then reasserted that Sarah would indeed bear a son.

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- ## A CLOSER LOOK

- 2.** How could the Lord's response to Sarah's laughter be considered both a reprimand and an encouragement?

CONCLUSION

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he [the Lord] said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.” (Genesis 18:32)

In October of 1892, John Hyde sailed to India as a missionary. His early years in that country were marked by persecution, and there were few conversions. Longing to see the hand of God move, Hyde began interceding for India. So compelling was his call to prayer that by 1899, he was spending entire nights face down before God. In a letter home he wrote: “Have felt led to pray for others this winter as never before. I never before knew what it was to work all day and then pray all night. In college or at parties at home, I used to keep such hours for myself, or for pleasure. Can I not do as much for God and souls?”

In 1908, at a convention for missionaries, John Hyde felt led to pray what seemed an impossible request: that during the coming year in India one soul would be saved every day—365 people converted, baptized, and publicly confessing Jesus. Impossible—yet it happened! By the next year, Hyde had prayed more than four hundred people into God’s kingdom, and when the convention assembled again, he doubled his goal to two souls a day. Eight hundred conversions were recorded that year, and still the missionary showed an unquenchable passion for the lost.

At the 1910 convention, those around Hyde marveled at his faith as they witnessed his supplications, “Give me souls, oh God, or I die!” Before the meetings ended, John Hyde revealed that he again was doubling his goal for the coming year. As the year progressed, if on any day four people were not converted, Hyde said at night there was such a weight on his heart that he could not eat or sleep until he had prayed through to victory. The number of new converts continually grew.

When his health began to fail, doctors warned Hyde that unless he got complete rest he would be dead in six months. Still he could not cease from his travail for sinners. And “Praying Hyde,” as he had come to be known, lived for nearly two more years—long enough to see revival sweep through India. Only eternity will reveal how many souls were born again through the prayers of this one man!

Intercession is defined as “holy, believing, persevering prayer whereby someone pleads with

God on behalf of another or others who desperately need God’s intervention.” We find a Biblical example of intercessory prayer in today’s text. Because of Abraham’s intercession for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, God did not allow destruction to transpire until Lot and as many as would accompany him had escaped.

An intercessor must have a personal relationship with God that is strong and deep—close enough to learn the “secrets” that are shared between those with an intimate connection. Notice that God said about Abraham, “I know him . . .” (Genesis 18:19). The implication was, “He is my intimate friend.” Can God say that about us?

Remember, it isn’t a question of whether individuals deserve God’s mercy, but is a question of how greatly they need it. Intercessors must have compassionate hearts and a deep concern for the salvation of the lost.

Are we passing along the blessing of intercession by praying earnestly for others?

BACKGROUND

The three heavenly visitors introduced in the first part of chapter 18 had come to make a firsthand inspection of the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. If it proved to be as bad as reported, destruction would follow. In verses 16-22, having concluded their meal, the guests took their leave and started toward Sodom to make their investigation. Abraham, as a courteous host, accompanied them.

The question asked in verses 17-18, which apparently the Lord addressed to Himself, is answered in verse 19. The Lord referenced the unique relationship He shared with this man He had chosen to be the father of “a great and mighty nation.” He had confidence in Abraham because He knew Abraham would teach his children to promote justice (often translated as *righteousness*, meaning “adherence to proper standards”).

The word *cry* in verse 20 was not an expression of sorrow or a plea for mercy, but rather a demand for punishment because of sin. The people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were exceedingly wicked (see Genesis 13:13), engaging in perverted sexual practices. The words *sodomy* and *sodomize* are taken from this ancient city’s name.

Verses 23-33 describe Abraham’s intercession for the city. He based his request upon the mercy of God rather than His justice. Beginning with the number fifty, the patriarch inquired whether the Lord would

spare Sodom for that many righteous. When God agreed, Abraham reduced the number by increments until he received assurance that if there were just ten righteous in the city, God would spare it from judgment.

Chapter 19 begins with a description of the angels' visit to Lot's home in Sodom. Verses 1-14 depict the awful vileness of the sexually perverted inhabitants of the city. The angels told Lot to take his family and flee, but Lot's sons-in-law rejected his warning of coming destruction, seemingly viewing it as a joke.

Verses 16-29 tell of Lot's departure from Sodom at the urging of the angelic visitors, and the judgment of fire and brimstone which rained down upon the evil city. Lot's wife ignored the divine warning not to look back, and became a pillar of salt.

The concluding verses of chapter 19 relate how Lot and his two daughters fled to a cave in the mountains near the city of Zoar, and the immoral but successful scheme of the two women to ensure children.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - A. Abraham
 - 10. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
 - a. The visitation of Abraham
 - (2) The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah foretold (18:16-21)
 - (3) The intercession of Abraham (18:22-33)
 - b. The visitation of Sodom (19:1-38)
 - (1) The immorality noted (19:1-11)
 - (2) The warning of Lot to flee (19:12-22)
 - (3) The destruction of the cities (19:23-29)
 - (4) The progeny of Lot and his daughters (19:30-38)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many times did Abraham approach the Lord in his intercession for Sodom?

2. What is revealed about the nature of God and His values through the events recorded in today's text?

3. What are some ways in which we can make a difference in our communities or nations?

CONCLUSION

Never underestimate the power of intercessory prayer. It can move the hand of God!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.” (Genesis 21:1-2)

It is considered honorable to keep a promise, and it is often thought especially remarkable when a person goes to great effort to fulfill one. In his book *Up from Slavery*, Booker T. Washington gave an example of such a situation in his account of a conversation he had with an ex-slave from Virginia.

Mr. Washington related, “I found that this man had made a contract with his master, two or three years previous to the Emancipation Proclamation, to the effect that the slave was to be permitted to buy himself, by paying so much per year for his body; and while he was paying for himself, he was to be permitted to labour where and for whom he pleased. Finding that he could secure better wages in Ohio, he went there. When freedom came, he was still in debt to his master some three hundred dollars. Notwithstanding that the Emancipation Proclamation freed him from any obligation to his master, this man walked the greater portion of the distance back to where his old master lived in Virginia, and placed the last dollar, with interest, in his hands. In talking to me about this, the man told me that he knew that he did not have to pay the debt, but that he had given his word to the master, and his word he had never broken. He felt that he could not enjoy his freedom till he had fulfilled his promise.”¹

If a person can be this exemplary in keeping his word, how much more God will do what He has said! Today’s focus verses state that “the LORD visited Sarah as he had said.” After years of waiting, countless prayers, and a multitude of events and accompanying emotions, Abraham and Sarah received the son who had been promised twenty-five years before. Once again the Lord proved Himself faithful to His Word. What a day that must have been for the aged couple!

We may face situations or trials in our lives when it seems that God is taking a very long time to fulfill His promises. The enemy of our souls would tempt us to despair, to think that the promises are not for us, or to lose hope. However, we can encourage ourselves with the knowledge that God will not fail. If men can go to laudable measures to keep a promise, God most certainly will keep His Word. He did it for Abraham, and He will do so for us also.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text covers two important events in Abraham’s life. Chapter 20 tells of Abraham’s sojourn in Gerar and his deception of Abimelech regarding Sarah. Chapter 21 begins with the birth of their promised son, Isaac.

Abraham had been living in Mamre, but at this time traveled south to Gerar, an area controlled by the Philistines. *Abimelech* was a title rather than a name. It meant “My father, the king,” and indicated respect and reverence.

In Abraham’s native culture, marriage to a half-sister was not wrong. However, fear motivated Abraham to be deceptive regarding his relationship to Sarah. He was afraid those who were strong politically would kill him so they could have Sarah as a part of their harem. When he came to Gerar, Abimelech did take Sarah into his household, but the text is clear that he did not “come near her.” God stepped in and spoke to Abimelech by a dream, and Abimelech took immediate action to obey the warning, demonstrating that he and his people respected and honored God.

Abimelech addressed Abraham directly on the matter and reprimanded him. Abraham confessed his fear and explained the marriage practices of his country. Abimelech also reproved Sarah. At God’s direction, Abraham prayed for Abimelech, and the barrenness that God had brought upon the women of Abimelech’s household was reversed.

The first verses of chapter 21 recount the fulfillment of the long-anticipated promised son for Abraham and Sarah. Abraham was one hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety. They followed God’s previously established commandment and circumcised Isaac when he was eight days old.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - A. Abraham
 - 11. The deception of Abimelech (20:1-18)
 - B. Isaac
 - 1. The birth of Isaac (21:1-7)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did God reprimand Abimelech for taking Sarah into his harem? In contrast, how did Abimelech rebuke Abraham for deceiving him?

[illegible]

We can trust God to keep His promises. He always has and always will!

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.” (Genesis 21:19)

About forty years ago, a lady in our church was widowed when her three children were young. In time, taxes were due on her house and her car transmission needed repair, and she did not have enough money for either one. One morning as she left her house to catch a bus to work, she noticed an envelope on the ground just outside her front door. She hurriedly picked it up and, seeing that it was addressed to her, put it into her purse. Then, realizing that the children had probably dropped it when they brought in the mail the previous evening, she pulled the envelope back out and opened it as she walked. Inside were seven \$50 bills! She was so astonished that she almost dropped it. The money had been folded inside a small note card that said simply, “Jesus loves you, and we do too!” That money was enough to finish paying the taxes and get the transmission repaired.

God was watching out for His child, and He is ever mindful of His own. In today’s text, Hagar and Ishmael had been sent away from Abraham’s home with bread and water, and they went into the desert. When their provisions were gone, it seemed that death was imminent, but God heard the boy’s cry. Deliverance came—as the focus verse says, Hagar saw a well and they were sustained.

When we face life’s difficulties and it seems there is no solution, we can look to God. Our circumstances have not escaped His notice. He cares about each one of us just as He cared about this widow, and Hagar and Ishmael. The answer will probably not come for us in the same way it did for them, but God will come through. We will find Him to be a very present help. As we serve Him day by day, He will sustain us and be our comfort and strength. We can cry out to Him with any need, and trust Him to answer our prayers.

BACKGROUND

This segment of Genesis 21 covers two key events in Abraham’s life: the separation from Hagar and Ishmael, and his covenant with Abimelech.

Ishmael, Abraham’s son by Hagar the Egyptian handmaid, was fourteen years old when Isaac was

born (see Genesis 16:16 and 21:5). Scholars believe that Isaac may have been three years old when he was weaned, which would mean that Ishmael was about seventeen at the time of the events in today’s text. A celebration feast at the time of weaning was a common practice. In the course of the celebration for Isaac, Ishmael “mocked” the child, apparently with spiteful intent (see Galatians 4:29).

Until Isaac’s birth, Ishmael had been Abraham’s heir and would have led the family upon Abraham’s death. In Abraham’s culture, as the son of a bondwoman, Ishmael forfeited that position to Isaac, who was the son of Abraham’s wife. Sarah referenced this custom in verse 10 and, angry at Ishmael’s mocking, demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be cast out. This was grievous to Abraham because he loved Ishmael, and in their culture both boys would have been reared under his care. God settled the matter with a reminder that the covenant would be fulfilled in Isaac. Though Hagar and Ishmael were to leave the family, God promised Abraham that a great nation would come from Ishmael.

Abraham obeyed, and after giving Ishmael and Hagar provisions, sent them away. They went to the wilderness of Beersheba, which was south of Hebron. When their supplies were gone, it appeared that Ishmael would die, but the angel of God directed Hagar toward a well and stated God’s promise that Ishmael would become a great nation.

In time, Ishmael dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, which was further south toward what is the Gulf of Aqaba today, and Hagar “took him a wife out of the land of Egypt” (verse 21).

Verses 22-33 tell of Abraham’s covenant with Abimelech. Because both men had flocks and herds, grazing areas and water privileges could be a source of conflict. Abimelech suggested an agreement, and Abraham took the opportunity to resolve the issue regarding ownership of the well at Beersheba. He gave Abimelech seven ewe lambs as a witness to the fact that he had dug that well. The name Beersheba means “well of seven” or “well of swearing.” Abraham spent much time in that vicinity, which was in the southern part of Canaan.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - B. Isaac
 - 2. The expulsion of Ishmael (21:8-21)
 - 3. The pact with Abimelech (21:22-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why was it necessary for Hagar and Ishmael to leave Abraham's house?

2. What did Abimelech's request show about Abraham's testimony?

3. How can we exhibit faith in God when we find ourselves in unpleasant circumstances?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

God is watching out for us, and we can rely upon Him to bring us through whatever challenges we experience.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”
(Genesis 22:18)**

Our seven-year-old daughter took the twenty-dollar bill that I handed her as we were walking through the toy department of a Fred Meyer store. Her eyes sparkled, and I knew she felt really important. She had never been responsible for a twenty-dollar bill before, so she listened attentively as I gave her instructions on what she was to do with it. She needed to choose a small birthday gift for a friend and some crayons for school. She could use part of the leftover money on a piece of candy for herself, and the rest was to be given back to me. That part, I could tell, did not excite her. It was clear that she wished she could spend all the leftover money on more than one piece of candy and maybe even a toy for herself! But I remained resolute, and encouraged her to follow the instructions given. I knew this was an important lesson in obedience and not giving in to temptation.

In today's text, God gave Abraham an opportunity to be obedient in a much more heart-rending matter than spending a twenty-dollar bill. God asked him to sacrifice Isaac, his son, who was born miraculously when his wife, Sarah, was decades past childbearing age. God did not send this test to trip Abraham and make him fall. Rather, it was a trial of his spiritual loyalties, designed to confirm his willingness to obey. And Abraham passed the test, promptly demonstrating his intention to follow through to the end of the ordeal. Through his obedience, Abraham proved that he trusted God completely. That pleased God and caused Him to reaffirm the promise that He had made to Abraham earlier in his life.

Often, we also are faced with situations that allow us to prove whether we will be obedient. We know that God wants us to obey Him, yet at times our own desires or reasoning may pull us in a different direction. This is where we are tested. Will we follow what God wants for us, or will we pursue our own way? God wants us to trust Him and let Him accomplish His will for us. We can only do that if we practice yielding to Him every day.

The enemy of our souls would like to minimize the importance of obedience to God—especially prompt obedience. However, God loves and rewards one who is determined to follow Him at any cost. Will you do things God's way today?

BACKGROUND

This text recounts an extreme test for both Abraham and Isaac. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son of promise.

The word *tempt* in verse 1 is a translation of the Hebrew word *nissah*, which means “to test; to prove; or to put on trial.” It does not mean to entice to evil.

This is the first mention in Scripture of Mount Moriah. This mountain is not a single peak, but rather an elongated ridge located in the area which would one day become Jerusalem, about forty-two miles from Beersheba where Abraham was living. Mount Moriah is the location of Ornan the Jebusite's threshing floor which David purchased, and is where Solomon later built the Temple (2 Chronicles 3:1). Today the Dome of the Rock, an Islamic holy place, is located there.

Scholars are unanimous in recognizing how heart-wrenching this occasion was for Abraham. Hebrews 11:19 gives the insight that he believed God could raise Isaac from the dead, but faith would not have overshadowed the pain. Added to the emotional cost, there would have been a moral and intellectual struggle as well. Sacrificing his son would have been a poor testimony to the surrounding pagan community, it contradicted the promises of God, and it would have been a terrible blow to Sarah, who had waited so long for this son.

Isaac also exemplified faith. Although his age at this time is unknown, many scholars believe he was between twenty-five and thirty-six years old. Since he was able to carry the wood for the sacrifice (verse 6), he likely could have overpowered his father who was one hundred years older than he.

When Isaac asked about the lamb for the sacrifice, Abraham's response in verse 8 illustrated faith, but it was also prophetic. “My son, God will provide himself a lamb” looked ahead to Jesus, God's only Son, who would be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

When the knife was poised above Isaac, and it was clear that Abraham was determined to obey God completely, the angel spoke. Through God's unfailing provision, a ram was caught in a thicket nearby, and it was sacrificed instead of Isaac. A restatement of God's promise of blessing was given, and Abraham and Isaac traveled home together.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - B. Isaac
 - 4. The sacrifice of Isaac (22:1-19)

A CLOSER LOOK

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.” (Genesis 23:1-2)

One of the most difficult times in my life was waking up one Sunday morning to learn that my grandmother had passed away. She had been the spiritual rock in my life from my earliest recollection. She was faithful to encourage all of her unsaved family members and acquaintances to turn their hearts toward God. After the Lord saved me when I was twenty-one years old, I moved in with this grandmother. It was a privilege to have her guidance for the first two years of my Christian walk.

Although I knew that my grandmother had gone to be with the Lord when she died, the loss seemed almost unbearable. However, even though I was grieving, I realized that her passing provided the opportunity to reach out to many unsaved individuals among our family and friends. As a young Christian, that experience showed me God’s ability to cause good to come out of the most difficult of circumstances.

Abraham had followed God faithfully for many years, and God had blessed him as He had promised. Now, in the twilight of Abraham’s life, he suffered a great loss. He did not blame or question God as to why. He knew that losing a loved one is part of the lot of the human family. Abraham accepted Sarah’s passing with a resolute and responsible attitude by standing up “from before his dead” (Genesis 23:3) and addressing the inhabitants of the land. He handled her burial with thoughtfulness and care.

Like Abraham, we too have a responsibility to handle both the good and challenging circumstances of our lives in a manner that glorifies God. A necessary part of living is grieving the loss of people we love. In those times, may we endeavor to exhibit godly virtues as Abraham did. If we do, God will give us His strength and take us through the hard times, just as He did Abraham.

BACKGROUND

The last verses of chapter 22 list the descendants of Abraham’s brother, Nahor. It is probable that this list was included in Scripture in order to show the

family connection with Rebekah, who would become Isaac’s wife.

Chapter 23 gives the account of Sarah’s death at 127 years old. The Bible does not record the age at death of any other woman. Sarah had been with Abraham since before God called him to leave his country, and they had been together in the land of Canaan for over sixty years. Along with Abraham, she had believed God and received the son of promise. She was ninety years old when Isaac was born, and Isaac was thirty-seven years old when she died.

Because of the needs of his many flocks, Abraham moved about in Canaan, but apparently he often stayed in Beersheba and Hebron. In his own words, he was “a stranger and a sojourner” (Genesis 23:4), and as such, he began a negotiation process to purchase a burial place. The children of Heth were Hittites, and they treated Abraham with admiration and respect. They called him “a mighty prince” (verse 6), which could be translated “a prince of God.”

The Hittites offered to share their sepulchers, but Abraham wanted to own the property. He chose the cave of Machpelah, which was near Hebron. Ephron, the owner, asked an extremely high price for the land. In that culture, it was common for the seller to name a price that was twice the value of the property, expecting the purchaser to come back with a price halfway between. However, Abraham did not seek to make a good deal. He paid the asking price—four hundred shekels of silver. Today’s value for this silver is unknown, but “current money with the merchant” (verse 16) indicates it was the rate used by the local merchants. Verse 17 resembles the legal description on a title deed. Thus Abraham purchased his first piece of property in the land God had promised him.

In the process of time, Abraham also was buried in this cave of Machpelah (Genesis 25:9), as were Isaac, Rebekah, Leah (Genesis 49:31), and finally Jacob (Genesis 50:13). Throughout history, the Jewish people have honored this location. A monument was constructed over the site during the time of Herod the Great. This 200-by-10-foot structure, which resembles Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem, is still intact today.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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II. The early history of the chosen race

B. Isaac

5. The progeny of Nahor, Abraham’s brother (22:20-24)
6. The death of Sarah (23:1-20)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. When Abraham asked the Hittites if he could purchase a burial plot for Sarah, how did they first react?

2. In Abraham's day it was considered very important to be buried with one's ancestors. What did Abraham's choice of a burial site for Sarah and himself reveal about his convictions?

3. What are some ways we can deal with grief in a way that glorifies God?

CONCLUSION

God promises to be near us in our grief, helping us to honor Him in that time of difficulty, just as He does in more joyful times.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”
(Genesis 24:4)**

Choosing a marriage partner is a major life decision, and it is vital that we let God direct in this matter. My parents’ story is an example. In their late twenties, they were acquainted with each other through church-related activities. Dad observed Mom and was interested, but she rejected his initial approach. It wasn’t that she disliked him, but she was not interested in getting married. She was dedicated to the Lord’s work and felt called to full-time service. She was concerned that marriage would jeopardize that commitment. Dad, however, was persistent, and he said, “Well, I’ve been praying about it, and I feel it’s the Lord’s will.” She agreed to pray about the matter.

After a while, Mom confided to her brother, “I’ve been praying about this, and I want the Lord to say no, but the more I pray, the more I feel that the Lord wants me to say yes.” Since her brother was a devout Christian, he encouraged her to keep praying and trusting that the Lord would show her definitely what He wanted her to do. One day after a youth service, she went to her brother and told him that the Lord had let her know that this was His will. Some months later they were married. Rather than finding that marriage was an encumbrance, their union was a source of spiritual strength and blessing to both of them. They had almost thirty-nine years together before God called my mother home to Heaven.

Isaac’s situation was somewhat different than that of my parents. In the culture of that time, the father typically would arrange the marriage, and today’s text gives the profound account of how God directed in the selection of a bride for Isaac.

Abraham recognized that the choice of a bride for his son was crucial. He instructed his servant, “Thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac,” impressing upon him the extreme seriousness of the mission. When the servant suggested that perhaps the woman of choice would not be willing to leave her home and family, Abraham responded that God would send His angel before the servant. Clearly, this faithful man of God had unshakable confidence that God would direct.

Abraham’s servant set forth, looking to the God of Heaven to guide through an ordering of events

which would indicate His direction. The servant’s confidence was not misplaced. The miraculous unfolding of events which pointed to Rebekah as the woman of God’s choosing was beyond question. The servant met with Rebekah’s father and brother, who accepted the servant’s proposal. Rebekah heard the proposition, and when the servant wanted to return home immediately, she said, “I will go,” without hesitation. Her heart had grasped the plan of God, and she was willing to follow it.

While times and customs have changed, the principle found in this compelling account is timeless. In the realm of human relationships, none is more important than the one between husband and wife. How vital it is, when we face this and other life-changing decisions in our own lives, that we obtain God’s guidance!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 24 contains the beautiful and amazing account of the seeking, selecting, and securing of a bride for Isaac.

When Abraham was 140 years old, he set about obtaining a bride for Isaac, who was forty years old. Arranged marriages were common in that culture. Abraham knew that God had called him to Canaan, and it was of prime importance to him that Isaac stay in that land. Yet Abraham wanted the woman to be God-fearing and not a local pagan.

Verses 1-9 tell how Abraham commissioned “his eldest servant” to secure a bride. Although the servant is not named, many scholars believe it may have been Eliezer (Genesis 15:2). If so, he had been Abraham’s foremost servant for at least fifty-four years, since before Ishmael was born. Abraham required his servant to vow that he would not pick a Canaanite woman. By placing his hand under Abraham’s thigh, the servant was performing an ancient eastern custom which pledged obedience. Abraham was not oblivious to the possibility that the girl would refuse to come, but he believed God would go with the servant and bring about His will.

The account of the servant’s expedition is given in verses 10-27. Abraham’s relatives were living in and near Haran, which was between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Scholars believe the city of Nahor could have been to the southeast of Haran, and may have been named after either Abraham’s brother or grandfather. It was about 470 miles from where Abraham lived, and it took the servant approximately seventeen days to travel there.

The well mentioned in verse 11 was located in a central area that many young women frequented. The prayer of the servant reflects the impact that Abraham's faith had upon his household. The servant asked for God's direction to be shown through specific events transpiring in a specific order. The original Hebrew word for *kindness* (verse 12) was *chesed*, which also means "faithfulness to a promise" and "mercy." The servant's prayer was quickly and precisely answered.

A camel can easily drink twenty to twenty-five gallons of water in a few minutes, so Rebekah volunteered to draw as much as two hundred gallons of water for the ten camels.

Verses 28-61 tell of the servant's dealings with Rebekah's family. She was a granddaughter of Abraham's brother, Nahor, and her family was receptive to the servant's proposal. Rebekah herself responded positively to the servant's request that they leave for Canaan the next day. She was accompanied by her nurse, Deborah (Genesis 35:8), and "her damsels," the number of which is unknown.

When they arrived in Canaan, Isaac was in the field meditating (verses 62-67). There were probably no wedding ceremonies in that day, but rather, great wedding feasts that lasted for days. God blessed the union with love.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - B. Isaac
 - 7. The choice of a bride for Isaac (24:1-67)
 - a. The commission of the servant (24:1-9)
 - b. The sojourn of the servant (24:10-49)
 - c. The consent of Rebekah (24:50-60)
 - d. The marriage of Isaac (24:61-67)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the servant's concern when he heard Abraham's command?

2. What can we learn from the servant regarding how we should respond when prayer is answered?

3. What are some steps we can take to ascertain God's will in our daily lives?

CONCLUSION

Just as God directed in the choice of a bride for Isaac, He will guide us in important life-decisions as we commit ourselves to finding His will.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.” (Genesis 25:32-33)

Disregard for a spiritual heritage and the blessing of salvation can lead to disastrous consequences. George Burton can attest to that. Though he had been saved as a boy, in his early teens he became rebellious and turned away from God. He left his godly home, and moved to Wabush, Labrador, Canada, where his sister was living. There he adopted a lifestyle that was completely contrary to his Christian upbringing. Soon he was drinking alcohol, smoking, and addicted to gambling. In time he married, and he and his wife loved dancing and partying.

One night George was at a party for a friend who was getting married. When he did not come home at the appointed time, his wife went looking and found him with the other men. George and his wife left the party together, but she walked ahead because she was upset that he had been drinking and had not come home when she had expected him. After a while, she looked back and realized that George was no longer behind her. It was snowing hard, the snow was drifting, and the temperature was forty degrees below zero, but she retraced her steps to the club to see if he had returned to the party. That took her about ten or fifteen minutes, but George was not there, so she started home again. As she walked, she noticed a mound in a snow bank. She went over to investigate and discovered George, asleep and already partially snowed over. She had to shake him roughly to awaken him. If she had walked on home without noticing that mound, he would have frozen to death before she could have gotten back to where he was.

George's disregard for his early training and his childhood experience of salvation nearly put him into a lost eternity. Thankfully, God was merciful and spared his life. A short time later, George returned to God by praying for forgiveness, and God answered by saving his soul.

In our text today, Esau showed utter disregard for his birthright as the eldest son of Isaac and Rebekah. In a moment of hunger, he took a step that he would one day desperately regret—he sold his birthright for a bowl of pottage. Considerable prestige, power, and property came with the birthright, but though he knew

its value, he gave it away to satisfy his immediate desire.

As we study this account, we can learn a lesson. A Christian heritage, though it does not guarantee us a place in Heaven, is a tremendous blessing. A personal relationship with God is even more precious. However, we can throw that blessing away if we do not value it properly. Decisions that may seem unimportant can head us in a disastrous direction. We want our choices to be God-directed, and we want to treasure a right relationship with Him, guarding it carefully and realizing its tremendous importance.

BACKGROUND

This text tells of Abraham's final days and lists some of his descendants. Abraham had six sons with Keturah, his second wife. Various Arabian tribes descended from these sons, of whom the Midianites are the most well known. Abraham kept in mind that God's covenant was to be fulfilled through Isaac's posterity. Therefore, he was careful to bestow gifts upon the other sons and send them eastward, away from the land that was promised to Isaac.

Verses 1-4 and 12-18 show that God fulfilled His promise to give Abraham many descendants. The Lord had said that Ishmael would father a great nation (Genesis 17:20), and this chapter indicates that also came to pass. Ishmael's offspring were a nomadic people who lived in the area from Egypt to Assyria.

Abraham died at 175 years of age, and Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah where Sarah was buried.

After approximately twenty years of marriage, Isaac and Rebekah remained childless, and the long-term promise seemed to be in jeopardy. Isaac prayed fervently to the Lord, and God sent them twin sons. Meanings of names were important in ancient times. The meaning of the name Esau is “hairy,” and some scholars believe that his hair was red. The meaning of the name Jacob is “heel catcher” or “supplanter.” The text is clear that Isaac favored Esau, and Rebekah favored Jacob.

In Esau and Isaac's day, being the firstborn was a sacred position. The oldest son inherited the birthright from the family patriarch. A double portion of the family's goods went to this son. He also had authority over the entire household, including sons, daughters-in-law, unmarried daughters, and grandchildren, being responsible for their spiritual and material well-being. The position was transferable, but only the one who was to receive the blessing could give it to another.

Verses 27-34 tell how Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. The pottage that Jacob made was a stew or soup. Jacob was an opportunist and seized the moment, working it to his own advantage. However, no matter how long Esau had gone without food, he was responsible for his casual attitude toward his birthright. He had a lack of reverence for spiritual things. As a result, he looked only at the short-term picture and completely disregarded the long-term implications of what he was doing. Esau's lack of concern about important spiritual matters continued throughout his life.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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II. The early history of the chosen race

B. Isaac

8. The last years of Abraham (25:1-34)
 - a. His progeny from Keturah (25:1-4)
 - b. The preeminence of Isaac (25:5-7)
 - c. The death of Abraham (25:8-11)
 - d. His progeny from Hagar (25:12-18)
 - e. His progeny through Isaac (25:19-34)
 - (1) The birth of Jacob and Esau (25:19-26)
 - (2) The diversity of Jacob and Esau (25:27-28)
 - (3) The selling of Esau's birthright (25:29-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Jacob's response to Esau's request for food?

2. How should Jacob have handled Esau's request?

3. What are the benefits of waiting on God to fulfill His plans rather than trying to implement our own?

CONCLUSION

Let us be sure that we properly value the spiritual blessings God has placed in our lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.” (Genesis 26:22)

Several years ago, I built a new house for our family. My wife and I were excited about our new home, but the neighbors on one side of the property were not so enthusiastic about our construction project. It seemed that every time they talked to us, it was to complain about something.

After we finished our house, the man next door complained that we had cracked his driveway with one of the dump trucks; he wanted us to pay for a new driveway. I could see that the cracks were old and had not resulted from anything we did, but I told him we would call in a professional to take a look. Later, the same neighbor complained that our fence posts were too close to the property line. We had already set the posts in concrete, but I told him we would move the posts anyway. After all, we were new to the neighborhood, and wanted to get along with everyone. Another time he complained about our sprinkler system because when the wind blew, some of the mist floated onto their car. That time I had to ask him to repeat the problem. I could not quite believe I had heard right the first time! However, I told him it was no problem and that I would adjust the sprinkler. In each case, my wife and I could have stood up for our rights, but it was our desire to live the Gospel in front of these neighbors.

Then one summer, the man said, “I need to talk to you.” I expected another complaint, but instead, he told me that the Lord had been speaking to his heart. He apologized for causing trouble, and said he wanted to have a good relationship with us. I thanked God that He had helped us to be patient during our interactions with this neighbor.

Like Isaac in today’s text, all of us will face times when people make unreasonable demands or behave unkindly toward us. Sometimes it may be a direct attack on our Christianity. In other cases, it may be simply behavior that is annoying. There is not much we can do to change the conduct of others. However, like Isaac, we have a choice in how we react. Isaac modeled a godly response when he gave up his right to the wells his father had dug and moved on in order to keep peace with the neighboring tribes. Will we

follow his example? In the interest of living peaceably with others, are we willing to give up our personal “rights”?

May we learn a lesson from Isaac, and ask God for the wisdom to know how to respond rightly. He can give us the grace to be a peacemaker!

BACKGROUND

Today’s chapter gives details of Isaac’s life and of God’s assurance to him of the promises given to Abraham.

Because of a famine, Isaac and his household relocated to Gerar, a Philistine town that today is a district in south central Israel. It is possible that there was one hundred years between the famine in Abraham’s time (Genesis 12:10) and this one. “Abimelech” is thought to have been a title for Philistine rulers, so this may have been a descendant of the king which Abraham had dealt with.

God was emphatic that Isaac was not to go to Egypt; He stated that obedience would result in his seed being “as the stars of heaven” and a “blessing to all the nations of the earth.” This was the first recorded occasion when God directly gave Isaac these promises, which had initially been given to Abraham.

Out of fear for his life, Isaac hid the fact that Rebekah was his wife; he said that she was his sister. When Abimelech observed unexpected behavior for a brother-sister relationship, he challenged Isaac for the full truth, and then chastised him.

As God had promised, He blessed Isaac, giving him abundant crops and many flocks, herds, and servants. Consequently, the Philistines were afraid of him and plugged his wells. Water was a critical and precious commodity in the semi-desert, so Abimelech made it clear to Isaac that he was to move on and not settle down in that area (verse 16).

The strife continued even though Isaac relocated. This is indicated by the names Isaac used for the wells: Esek means “strife,” and Sitnah means “feud.” Even though Abraham had originally dug these wells, Isaac gave up his rights, moved again, and dug another well. Because there was no contention about this well, Isaac called it Rehoboth, which means “room.”

In Beersheba, God appeared to Isaac and restated the Abrahamic promises (verse 24). Verse 25 contains the first Biblical record of Isaac making an altar. In verses 26-33, Abimelech, his army captain Phichol (Phichol was probably a title rather than a name), and his friend Ahuzzath came seeking a treaty because

Isaac had become so great. Isaac obliged them, and when his servants found water that same day, he called the well Shebah, which means “oath.”

Verses 34-35 relate how Esau disregarded his godly parents and married Hittite women. Beerli and Elon, his fathers-in-law, are thought to have been influential men in the Canaanite society, and Esau may have become acquainted with them while he was hunting. Esau demonstrated no concern for Isaac and Rebekah’s feelings or values, but followed his own desires.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - B. Isaac
 - 9. Isaac’s deception of Abimelech (26:1-11)
 - 10. Isaac’s fortunes in Gerar (26:12-22)
 - 11. Isaac’s return to Beersheba (26:23-25)
 - 12. Isaac’s covenant with Abimelech (26:26-33)
 - 13. Esau’s Hittite wives (26:34-35)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. In how many places did Isaac dig wells?

2. At times it may be challenging to be peacemakers and yet hold true to our convictions regarding what is right. How can we know what to do when we face such dilemmas?

3. What might some of the results be if we handle irritating situations in a godly way?

CONCLUSION

God is pleased and honored when we make every effort to live peaceably with those about us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: and she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.” (Genesis 27:15-17)

Have you ever heard it said, “The end justifies the means”? Seemingly, that was Rebekah’s perspective in this sad segment of the chosen family’s history. When she heard that Isaac was preparing to bestow a blessing on Esau, she took matters into her own hands.

Since the birthright had already been promised to Jacob, there was no need for Rebekah to connive. God had the situation under control, no matter what Isaac’s intention was concerning his sons. Perhaps Rebekah thought that if she did not step in, something would circumvent what God had promised. Whatever her reasoning, she devised her own plan and resorted to doing wrong to try to bring about what God had already said would happen.

No matter how worthy we think our goals, we must be careful about how we attempt to achieve them. God has a perfect plan for each of our lives, and if we submit to Him, He will bring that plan to pass—sometimes in ways that later amaze us!

At times, we may find it difficult to wait on God’s will. We may wonder if He has forgotten about us (even if only momentarily) and the temptation may come—as it apparently did for Rebekah—to “help” God work it out the way we think it should be, or according to our timetable.

There is nothing wrong with taking action toward reaching a goal, but first we must be certain that the goal is part of God’s plan for us. Then, any action we take toward that goal should be at God’s direction. We must never step out on our own, feeling that because the goal is so good, any effort made in that direction must be justifiable. It is never right to “cut” moral or ethical corners.

Would God approve of the goals you are reaching toward? Would He approve of the methods you are using to attain them?

BACKGROUND

Although Jacob and Esau were twins, they were very different—not only in appearance, but also

in lifestyle and character. Esau, the hunter, was his father’s favorite. Jacob, whom the Bible describes as a “plain man dwelling in tents” (Genesis 25:27), was the clear favorite of his mother. Rebekah overheard Isaac’s intention to bless Esau, and urged Jacob into an elaborate deception to ensure by human means that he would receive the blessing, as God had promised.

As was the custom of the day, before Isaac passed from this world, he called his elder son to him to give the blessing. Isaac was 137 years old at this time, and apparently thought he was near death, although he lived for another forty years (see Genesis 35:28). Esau and Jacob were seventy-seven years old. No doubt Isaac was aware that before his sons were born, God had told Rebekah, “the elder shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). It is unknown whether Isaac was aware that Esau had earlier sold his birthright to Jacob for pottage.

With the blessing came the leadership of the family, and Isaac’s benediction included rich crops (verse 28) and the rule over nations (verse 29). The pronouncement closed with, “Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.”

Once the blessing had been bestowed, it could not be retracted. When Esau discovered that Jacob had received the birthright, he pled for a blessing. Isaac told him, “Thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth” (verse 39). Commentators indicate this could actually read, “Away from the fatness.” The Edomites, who were Esau’s descendants, lived in an area that was not as productive as Canaan, and in later years Israel often ruled Edom. No doubt this statement added to Esau’s hatred and desire for vengeance against his brother.

To deliver Jacob from Esau’s wrath, Rebekah developed another plan. Although she thought Jacob would be gone only “a few days” (verse 44), it was twenty years before he returned to Canaan. Most scholars believe Rebekah had died by that time, for there is no reference to Jacob ever seeing her again.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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II. The early history of the chosen race

C. Jacob

1. Jacob’s deceiver’s procurement of the blessing (27:1-46)
 - a. Isaac’s request (27:1-4)
 - b. Rebekah’s deception (27:5-17)
 - c. Jacob’s deception and blessing (27:18-29)
 - d. The plot discovered (27:30-40)
 - e. Esau’s animosity (27:41)
 - f. Rebekah’s advice (27:42-46)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Isaac want Esau to make for him?

2. What do you think Rebekah should have done when she heard Isaac's directions to Esau?

3. What is the danger in trying to “help” God in the situations we face?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Man can never improve on God's way and God's timing. We want to remember that we can trust Him to work out the details of our lives.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God.” (Genesis 28:20-21)

A Christian upbringing is a great blessing. However, a heritage alone is not enough to secure salvation. Each person must establish his or her own connection with God.

Kristi, a young mother in our church, testifies, “My mom was raised in the Apostolic Faith Church, where my grandfather was a minister. She loved the Lord as a child and was saved at a young age. My dad’s mother also loved God and raised Dad and his siblings the best that she knew how. When Dad was older, he was invited to special services at the Apostolic Faith Church in Puyallup, Washington. There he heard the Gospel explained more fully, and soon gave his heart to the Lord.

“My parents provided my siblings and me with a loving, Christian home. My sister, brother, and I were taken to Sunday school and church from the time we were babies. Our parents were faithful to read the Bible to us and pray with us, and we learned that Jesus died for us and how much He loves us. The Easter Sunday morning when I was six years old, I knelt at the altar of prayer in our church in Chehalis and gave my heart to God. I remember picturing Jesus on the Cross and truly realizing what He did for me. At such a young age, I certainly did not have a lot of sinful things in my life, but I told Jesus I was sorry for anything I had done to hurt Him, and that I wanted to serve Him the rest of my life. Later, God sanctified me and then baptized me with the Holy Spirit. Those three experiences are such an important foundation, and I appreciate how they have helped keep me on the right path.”

In today’s passage, Jacob came into direct communication with the God of his grandfather and father. The covenant promises that God had given to Abraham and Isaac were passed on to him, extending them to the third generation. However, Jacob had to establish his own personal relationship with God as well. He was blessed with an amazing dream, in which the Lord himself communed with him. This revelation was a defining moment in Jacob’s life. He responded to the dream with a voluntary declaration

of loyalty, and the vow he made in our focus verses became a landmark in his personal history. Jacob had schemed and deceived, but at this point he pledged his future to God and determined to allow Him to govern his life.

Each of us also must have a point at which our personal relationship with God is established and we submit ourselves to His will. Life will be different from that point forward, and we will thank God for that day.

BACKGROUND

In today’s chapter, the focus of the Abrahamic promise shifts from Isaac to Jacob, who becomes the leading figure in the sacred history of the Jewish people. Directed by his father to go to Padanaram to seek a wife, Jacob left Canaan and soon had a personal and life-changing encounter with God.

As noted at the end of the previous chapter, Esau was so angry over Jacob’s deception that he determined to kill him. Rebekah entreated Isaac to send Jacob to her homeland, stating that she did not want him to marry a local woman.

Verses 1-5 tell of Isaac’s blessing and charge to Jacob. Isaac’s words indicated his understanding that the promises given first to Abraham and then to himself were to be carried out through Jacob and his posterity. Isaac knew from his own experience the importance of a wife from the family line rather than the nearby pagan tribes, so he sent Jacob to his uncle Laban in their ancestral homeland, though Haran was over four hundred miles from Beersheba, where they were residing.

Esau’s actions in verses 6-9 were an effort to please, rather than defy, his parents. Ishmael, Isaac’s half-brother, had been dead for about thirteen years at this time, so the phrase “then went Esau unto Ishmael” means he went to Ishmael’s family.

It seems that Jacob traveled alone toward Haran, which is located in modern-day Turkey. The Bible makes no reference to anyone being with him, and in Genesis 32:10, he said, “With my staff I passed over this Jordan.” The “certain place” in verse 11 was Bethel, previously called Luz, which was located between forty and seventy miles from Beersheba.

In Jacob’s dream (verses 12-15), God communicated with him, personally giving him the same promise that had been given to Abraham and Isaac. Jacob and his seed would possess Canaan; his seed would be “as the dust of the earth,” would spread in every direction, and would bless all the peoples

of the world; and God would be with him. Pagans of that era believed that each god had power only in a particular region, but God promised to protect Jacob wherever he was, and to bring him back again to the land he was leaving behind.

Verses 18-22 relate Jacob’s response. He set up the stone he had used for a pillow as an altar to God and poured oil upon it, signifying his prayer and reverence to God. He called the place Bethel, which means “house of God.” Then he made a vow to God, showing his contrition and dependence upon God for all his temporal needs, and concluding his vow with the solemn promise to give tithes of all that God blessed him with.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - C. Jacob
 - 2. Jacob’s departure to Padamaram (28:1-22)
 - a. The blessing and command of Isaac (28:1-9)
 - b. Jacob’s dream (28:10-17)
 - c. Jacob’s vow (28:18-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Jacob do the morning after he arose from his night’s sleep at Bethel? Why was this important?
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-
-
-

2. Name one of the promises God made to Jacob at Bethel.
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3. How can we ensure that the promises of God come to pass in our lives?
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CONCLUSION

Each of us must make a personal and lasting commitment to the living God.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.”
(Genesis 30:26)**

As an employer, one of the first qualities I looked for in prospective employees was the trait of loyalty. Many individuals who applied for jobs tried to impress me with their knowledge, experience, or strengths, but I was interested in something deeper. What did their prior track record reveal about whether they would show faithfulness and allegiance to our company? Experience had taught me that loyal employees made it a point to be supportive of the organization, showed up on time, did their best to produce consistently good work, and were willing to go the extra mile in terms of effort. Their commitment was evidenced by their approach to the job.

Employees without loyalty were often tardy, invested the minimum amount of effort in any task, frequently had complaints and a negative attitude about job requirements, and generally produced work below the quality they were capable of. Ultimately, I often had no choice but to dismiss them.

In our focus verse, Jacob was reminding Laban of his loyalty and faithfulness to him. Jacob had agreed to work seven years in order to have Rachel as his wife, and the time had gone by quickly for him because of his deep love for her. When Laban deceived him and substituted Leah, Jacob had agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. He had been faithful to that commitment and fulfilled his agreement with Laban. His uncle acknowledged that Jacob had served him well when he responded to Jacob's request by saying, “I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake” (Genesis 30:27).

Loyalty is vital not only in work situations, but also in marriages, families, and friendships. Without it, these relationships will ultimately collapse. There must be a commitment to the interests of others. Yet, while loyalty to spouse, family, church, and job are important, our prime loyalty must be to God. We need to be loyal to Him because of who He is, and because of His great love which He has shown toward us—even when we did not deserve it!

Does your life show that you are loyal to God? Are you faithful and true to Him, honoring Him through your words and deeds, and doing your best to

please Him in every way? If so, you can be sure that He notices and appreciates your devotion to Him.

BACKGROUND

Today's chapters tell of the formation and growth of Jacob's family, and the wealth he began to accumulate.

Haran was more than four hundred miles from Beersheba, so if Jacob traveled twenty miles each day, his trip would have taken him about three weeks. The first people he met in the area of Haran were shepherds who knew Laban, Rebekah's brother. Though Jacob referred to Laban as “the son of Nahor” in Genesis 29:5, Laban was actually a grandson of Nahor; in Hebrew writings, “son” merely indicated the family line. The custom mentioned by the shepherds of waiting until all the flocks were gathered at the well may have been so the water could be distributed fairly, or because the stone was so large that combined effort was needed to move it.

When Rachel told her father about Jacob, Laban reacted in a manner typical of the culture. Family members, though previously unknown, were welcomed, entertained, and housed. After a month in the household, Jacob knew what he wanted. When Laban offered wages, Jacob was ready with an answer. He had nothing to give for the customary dowry to obtain Rachel as his wife, so he offered seven years of work.

Laban did not reveal to Jacob the custom of the area which dictated that an older daughter must be married before a younger. The bride was given in the evening, and she also wore a veil, so Laban was able to substitute Leah for Rachel at the marriage ceremony. When Laban said “fulfill her week” (Genesis 29:27), he referred to the customary week of marriage festivities. When that week was fulfilled, Rachel was given to Jacob, who was eighty-four years old, and he worked another seven years for her. The statement that “Leah was hated” (Genesis 29:31) indicated that Jacob loved her less than he did Rachel, which is confirmed in verse 30.

At first, God blessed Leah with children, but Rachel was barren. The mandrakes mentioned in Genesis 30:14-16 are thought to have been yellow berries from a *mandragora vernalis*, which were believed to promote fertility. By the time God blessed Rachel and allowed her to conceive and bear Joseph, Jacob had finished serving his seven years for her.

The children of Jacob's two wives and their handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah, were the ancestors

of the twelve tribes of the great nation of people that would one day be called Israel. The names given the sons reflected the disharmony that was present in Jacob's home.

Jacob wanted to return to Canaan, but Laban was well aware that he had profited financially as a result of Jacob's service. Again they negotiated. Most goats in that area were dark brown or black; sheep were white. The flocks and herds that Jacob had been caring for belonged to Laban. They separated out the animals with unusual colors, and Laban's sons took them to another area. Jacob was left with those that were the usual colors, and Laban agreed to give him any oddly colored animals that were born to these herds that were left. Jacob began selective breeding, and God blessed him abundantly by increasing the number of oddly colored offspring that were produced.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - C. Jacob
 - 3. Jacob's sojourn with Laban
 - a. His arrival (29:1-12)
 - b. His service for Rachel (29:13-20)
 - c. His deception by Laban (29:21-30)
 - d. His children (29:31-30:24)
 - (1) From Leah (29:31-35)
 - (a) Reuben (29:31-32)
 - (b) Simeon (29:33)
 - (c) Levi (29:34)
 - (d) Judah (29:35)
 - (2) From Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid (30:1-8)
 - (a) Dan (30:1-6)
 - (b) Naphtali (30:7-8)
 - (3) From Zilpah, Leah's handmaid (30:9-13)
 - (a) Gad (30:9-11)
 - (b) Asher (30:12-13)
 - (4) From Leah (30:14-21)
 - (a) Issachar (30:14-18)
 - (b) Zebulun (30:19-20)
 - (c) Dinah (30:21)
 - (5) From Rachel: Joseph (30:22-24)
 - e. His increased wealth (30:25-43)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why were there hard feelings between Rachel and Leah?

2. What are some of the lessons Jacob might have learned while working for Laban?

3. What might be some possible evidences of our loyalty to God?

CONCLUSION

If we have loyalty toward God in our hearts, it will be evident in our lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.” (Genesis 31:3)

A promise from God can carry us through difficult circumstances. One morning as Saviour Nnodim, one of our Nigerian pastors, was praying, the Spirit of God prompted him to pray a Bible promise about protection. That evening when he left his office to go home, he was accosted by four armed robbers who shot at him many times, aiming at his head and body. He slumped to the ground, and the robbers sped away in his car. A few minutes later, God commanded him to stand up. When he obeyed and stood on his feet, the people nearby who had been watching were amazed. Once he arrived at home, he saw that none of the bullets had penetrated his body. God let him know that He had protected him in order that men might glorify His holy Name. God protected just as His Word had promised.

In today's text, Jacob was also in dangerous circumstances. Jacob knew that Laban was a treacherous and selfish man and had turned against him. Seemingly afraid for his life, he sought God's direction. God gave him permission to return to the land of his fathers, so Jacob and his family left Padanaram without letting Laban know they were going. Laban pursued when he learned of Jacob's departure, but God had given Jacob the promise recorded in today's focus verse, and He was fully aware of what was happening. God warned Laban not to harm Jacob. Divine protection was in place, just as it had been promised.

The Lord is faithful to keep His Word to each one of us as well. We can depend upon His promises! At times we may face difficulties, trouble, or danger, but we can know that He is with us. If we are following His will and directions, we can be sure of His care for us in the situations we face. God allows everything that comes to us, and He will fulfill His promises in our lives in His time and way.

BACKGROUND

Jacob had spent twenty years working for Laban when God told him to return to Canaan. Realizing that Laban would not be willing to let him go, Jacob chose to leave secretly.

The wealth of Jacob had increased. Laban's sons were resentful of this, and Laban himself was

not kind toward Jacob. God promised Jacob that He would be with him as he went back to Canaan. When Jacob called for Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field, he may have been making sure that they were some distance from their main camp. Perhaps he felt the space would help maintain secrecy and avoid some of Laban's family overhearing.

Without hesitation, Rachel and Leah agreed to go to Canaan. Their father had treated them wrongly, just as he had Jacob. The custom was for the benefits of the dowry to go to the bride and her husband. This would mean that Rachel and Leah should have received the benefits of fourteen years of Jacob's labor. When their father did not give them this, they knew there would not be anything coming to either of them from him. Thus, they were happy to leave with Jacob.

While Laban was away shearing his sheep, Jacob and his family left Padanaram. They went south to a place near the Sea of Galilee—a distance of approximately three hundred miles—before Laban overtook them. Once Laban reached them, he could not fault Jacob for his actions over the past twenty years. When the flocks had been attacked, Jacob had personally borne the loss, and he had continued working diligently when Laban changed his pay.

People of this culture often kept small idols called *teraphim* that were made of metal or wood. Rachel had taken her father's *teraphim* (verse 19) and hidden them in the “camel's furniture”—a saddle with areas for carrying items.

Verses 44-54 tell of the agreement that Laban and Jacob came to. They followed the typical procedures for a covenant—setting up a stone, making a heap of stones, taking an oath, and eating together. They agreed that Jacob would not ill-treat Laban's daughters, that Jacob would not marry any other women, and that neither of them would travel beyond the place of the covenant with the intent to harm the other. The men named the place *Jegarsahadutha* in Aramaic, Laban's language, and *Galeed* in Hebrew, Jacob's language. Both names meant “the heap of witness.” They also called it *Mizpah*, which means “watchtower,” stating that God would watch to see that neither of them crossed the agreed upon boundary with the intent of harm.

Once Laban left, there is no further record in the Bible of any of Jacob's family having communication with him or traveling back to Padanaram.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - C. Jacob
 - 3. Jacob's sojourn with Laban
 - f. His flight from Laban (31:1-55)
 - (1) Laban's behavior and God's command (31:1-16)
 - (2) Jacob's secretive flight (31:17-21)
 - (3) Laban's search and accusations (31:22-30)
 - (4) Jacob's reply (31:31-42)
 - (5) Jacob and Laban's covenant (31:43-55)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why was it possible for Jacob to take all his substance and leave without hindrance from Laban?

2. Why was the covenant between Jacob and Laban a positive action?

3. What can we do to encourage ourselves to hold on to God's promises during hard times?

CONCLUSION

If you face challenging circumstances, take courage! God knows where you are, and He will be faithful to keep His promises to you.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.” (Genesis 32:24-25)

Sometimes God must get us to a point of total submission before He can answer our prayers. Wayne Butler, now a pastor, experienced this when he was praying to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As he sought God earnestly in prayer, he eventually reached a point of complete yielding to whatever he felt God asked of him. “God had me on His terms,” he relates. “If He told me to raise my hands, I did it. Before that, I would say, ‘I don’t need to raise my hands,’ and my progress in prayer would get stuck until I obeyed what I felt God was requiring of me. Eventually I realized that He wanted to see if I really was willing to do *anything*. One time God told me to sing. There was another person praying near me, so I fought it. God kept saying, ‘Sing,’ so finally I did. I couldn’t even finish the first verse, because God began to bless me for obeying.

“On the last Sunday of a camp meeting, I thanked and praised God for everything that He had already done for me. Then I felt like I was hit by a wave. It went through my whole body, and I knew it was the Holy Spirit. He took control of my tongue, and I spoke in a language that I did not know. It was the witness that He had filled me with His Holy Spirit.”

Like Wayne, Jacob had to become fully yielded to God. Through the years, Jacob had always tried to help God. He had relied on his own schemes and maneuvering to accomplish what God had promised—unnecessary manipulations since God is well able to fulfill His promises in His own way and time. However, in our text today, Jacob was at the end of himself and his own self-effort, and was desperate for something only God could give. Exhausted and helpless under the mighty hand of God, his submission was complete. In desperate dependence he cried out, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Genesis 32:26). Jacob’s inner man underwent a tremendous change that night. The man who had once been an ambitious deceiver became Israel, the prince who struggled with God and prevailed.

Like these men, we must meet God on His terms. We do not want to resist and struggle when God

shows us something we need to do, or tries to deal with our innermost character. Rather, we want to submit willingly and let Him work in our lives. He will reward our submission and obedience with His blessings.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text contains one of the most significant episodes of Jacob’s life. Fearful of reuniting with his brother, Esau, he spent the night wrestling in prayer, and had an experience that changed him forever.

After Jacob and Laban parted, the angels of God met Jacob. The name Mahanaim means “double camp” or “two camps,” indicating Jacob’s camp and the angels’ camp. Although it is unclear exactly why these angels appeared, they may well have been there to assure Jacob of God’s protection. Jacob knew that years before, when he had been fleeing from Canaan, Esau had been plotting his death.

The tone of Jacob’s initial message to Esau was one of humility. The request to “find grace in thy sight” (Genesis 32:5) may have been a way of asking for forgiveness. Esau lived in Edom, which was south and east of the Dead Sea. He had been married to his two Hittite wives for over fifty years and to his Ishmaelite wife for twenty years, so his family was large. Isaac had foretold that Esau would “live by the sword” (Genesis 27:40), and aggressive actions were possibly common to Esau and his entourage of four hundred men.

The Bible does not say what Esau’s intent was, but the report of the messengers made Jacob fearful and he divided his household and belongings into two bands. Then he prayed and reminded God of His promises, gratefully acknowledging how God had helped and blessed him.

Next Jacob organized a gift of livestock, which was delivered to Esau in installments. Jacob hoped this valuable present would “appease” Esau. In the original language, the word translated *appease* in Genesis 32:20 meant “cover,” showing that Jacob was seeking to atone or obtain forgiveness for his past actions toward Esau.

The Jabbok was about twenty-four miles north of the Dead Sea and flowed into the Jordan River. Jacob sent all of his possessions and his family across this brook and lined them up in procession for the next day. Alone on the north side of the Jabbok, Jacob wrestled with a man until dawn. Many scholars believe he wrestled with the Lord himself, for Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face” (Genesis 32:30).

The thigh is vital to strength, and having it out of joint not only caused much pain but also disabled Jacob, yet he held on for a blessing. However, the sought-for blessing could not be given until he confessed his name. Jacob meant “supplanter” or “heel catcher” and was typical of his early life. Israel meant “one who prevails with God.” Jacob named the place Peniel (or Penuel), which meant “face of God.”

Genesis 33:1-17 tells of the meeting of Jacob with Esau. Jacob organized his family by groups from the least to the most beloved, and then he went ahead of them to meet Esau. His bowing seven times indicated submission and showed the same honor that people of his culture gave to kings. The progression in verse 4—the description of how Esau ran, embraced, fell, kissed, and wept—depicts an emotional and joyful reunion.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - C. Jacob
 - 4. Jacob's encounter with Esau (32:1 — 33:17)
 - a. Jacob's vision at Mahanaim (32:1-2)
 - b. Jacob's anxiety (32:3-21)
 - (1) His message (32:3-8)
 - (2) His prayer (32:9-12)
 - (3) His plans (32:13-21)
 - c. Jacob's wrestling at Peniel (32:22-32)
 - d. Jacob's reconciliation with Esau (33:1-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many times in Genesis 32:13 through 33:15 does Jacob refer to himself as “thy servant” and to Esau as “my lord”? What does this indicate?

2. What do you think Jacob's limp reminded him of throughout the remainder of his life?

3. How might God show us areas of our lives that need to be more fully submitted to Him?

CONCLUSION

The examples of Wayne and Jacob can encourage us to submit ourselves fully to God and trust Him to work in our lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.” (Genesis 34:30)

Many times the wicked actions of an individual bring shame to an entire family. Edwin Thomas Booth (1833-1893) was a renowned American actor who played Shakespearean roles. As the lead character in *Hamlet*, he was famous for the “hundred nights *Hamlet*,” which was a record number of same-stage performances that was not broken until 1922. However, his life took a dramatic turn on April 14, 1865, when his brother, John Wilkes Booth, shot President Abraham Lincoln, who died the next day. As a result of the reproach caused by his brother’s action, Edwin retired from acting for some months. Although he later returned to that profession, his brother’s murderous deed continued to impact him for the rest of his life.

A *reproach* is defined as “a cause of blame or discredit.” It is sad enough when a person’s actions place a stigma on that individual’s family, but it is much worse when actions discredit God or Christianity. Every day, in subtle or brazen ways, the devil tries to bring shame into believers’ lives. He may falsely accuse us of being a party to a wrong action, or he may tempt us to actions or reactions that would be a reproach to the Gospel. Whatever attempts he makes, we must ask God to help us not do anything that would reflect negatively on our Christian testimony.

If a reproachful situation does occur, the best action is to go to God in prayer, asking Him to lead and show us the right path to follow. If we fail to take such a step, we may aggravate the problem, making a bad circumstance even worse. Such was the case regarding Dinah in today’s text. Shechem’s actions against her were impulsive and evil. However, it is not recorded that Dinah’s brothers brought the situation to God in prayer. Rather, seething anger boiled up in their hearts. Simeon and Levi took matters into their own hands, instituting a plan by which they slew all the males of the city. What terrible shame this heinous behavior brought upon Jacob’s family!

The problem of sin and violence will never be solved by more sin and violence. Though wickedness abounds, we must be careful not to react to evil and injustice in an ungodly manner, for that will bring reproach to the name of the God we serve. Rather, we should go to God in prayer, asking Him to show us the right response. He will direct our thoughts and actions so that our behavior is befitting of His followers.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text is the sad account of the violence which occurred between Jacob’s family and one of the tribes of Canaan.

After leaving Padanaram, Jacob and his family settled in Shechem, a city of Shechem. This area was about two-thirds of the way to Hebron, where Isaac, Jacob’s father, was then residing. The place was thought to have lush pasture and grazing land, so stopping there gave Jacob’s family and livestock an opportunity to rest for a while. The end of chapter 33 says he purchased land and built an altar at that location.

Because Dinah, Jacob’s only daughter, was close in age to Joseph, she was probably in her early teens when the events of chapter 34 transpired. Jacob was unfamiliar with the customs and behavior of the people of this area. The young women of Haran seemingly had significant freedom to move about with safety (as shown by the accounts of Rebekah and Rachel) but that apparently was not the case in Shechem. Among the tribes of Canaan, crimes and vices may have been more prevalent. While Dinah was out in a field, Shechem, a Hivite prince, kidnapped and raped her.

At Shechem’s demand, his father, Hamor, entered into negotiations with Jacob so that Dinah might become Shechem’s wife. Jacob’s family was smaller than the local tribes, and his sons resorted to deceit by agreeing to let Dinah be married if the local men would be circumcised. They claimed to be defending their family against reproach, but their pretense degraded a ceremony that was sacred to Abraham’s descendants.

While the men of Shechem were incapacitated, Simeon and Levi (who were sons of Leah and therefore full brothers of Dinah) killed them. Then the other brothers joined in taking spoil from the city. These actions of Jacob’s sons brought a reproach to him, and made him afraid that local tribes would take revenge and kill them all.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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II. The early history of the chosen race

C. Jacob

5. Jacob and the massacre at Shechem (33:18 — 34:31)
 - a. The arrival at Shechem (33:18-20)
 - b. The defilement of Dinah (34:1-3)
 - c. The proposal of Hamor (34:4-12)
 - d. The demand of Jacob's sons (34:13-24)
 - e. The massacre at Shechem (34:25-29)
 - f. The fear of Jacob (34:30-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Hamor and Shechem propose to Jacob's sons?

2. Why might an impulsive response to a troubling situation be unwise?

3. When the Spirit of God checks you regarding the spiritual example you are setting to those around you, how should you respond?

CONCLUSION

We can ask God to help us avoid reproach and to respond to wrong and injustice in a manner that glorifies Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.”
(Genesis 35:14-15)

One of the most recognized structures in Washington DC is the Washington Monument. Built to honor the man who was the military leader of the American Revolution and the first president of the United States, the structure is just over 555 feet tall. It is designed in the style of an Egyptian obelisk and has 896 steps up to an observation level where it is possible to see for over thirty miles. The cornerstone of the monument was put in place in July, 1848, but construction was not completed until December, 1884. For well over a century, this structure has remained a popular attraction for those visiting the United States capital.

Organizations and countries around the world spend time and money to build structures to honor heroes, remember victims of tragedies, or commemorate important occurrences. They are memorials—monuments to preserve the memory of people, deeds, and events which shaped a nation or influenced a community.

In today's text, God directed Jacob to go back to Bethel. Jacob had a personal memorial at that spot—it was the place where God had met him when he had fled from his brother's wrath. It was there that Jacob had witnessed the presence of the Lord, who said, “I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac . . . And, behold, I am with thee” (Genesis 28:13, 15). Now, many years later, God told Jacob to return to that place. Our focus verses record that when he arrived there, he built an altar to the Lord and made an offering. He remembered and honored the memory of what had taken place on that spot.

We need to have spiritual landmarks also—places where we know we communicated with God and He answered our prayers. What a blessing it is to go back to those “Bethels” from time to time, and rehearse how God met with us! Doing so can renew our spiritual vision, remind us that God is good and faithful, and encourage us to focus on the promises and power of God.

We never want to drift away from what has taken place between us and the Lord. He is coming soon,

and we need to maintain the close relationship with Him which He has established in our hearts. One way we can do this is to build spiritual memorials, and revisit frequently what God has done for us and what we felt as He blessed our souls!

BACKGROUND

This text tells how Jacob and his family continued toward Bethel, and gives an account of the deaths of Rachel and Isaac.

Because of the events of the previous chapter, Jacob was fearful of the neighboring tribes. God directed him to go back to Bethel and build an altar. Bethel was south of Shechem, and had formerly been called Luz. (While scholars differ on the exact location of Bethel, most now believe the site to be located at the Israeli settlement of Beit El, which is north of Jerusalem in the central West Bank.) Jacob had changed the name to Bethel, which means “house of God,” after God had appeared to him there when he fled from his brother, Esau. At that time, a covenant was made—God had promised protection, and Jacob had promised to pay tithes.

Jacob directed his household to prepare for this meeting with God (verses 2-5). Previously, Rachel had taken a teraphim from her father (Genesis 31:34). Apparently, Jacob was aware of other household idols, which may have been trinkets similar to good luck charms, but had not required his family to get rid of them. The earrings were also charms that related to heathen practices. At this point, Jacob wanted nothing to distract his family from a focus on the true God. He instructed his people to cleanse themselves and change their garments; these were ceremonies signifying purification and a change of heart. The cleaning of the household was a solemn preparation that was made before they attended to the ordinance of God.

The Bible does not indicate when Deborah, Rebekah's nurse (verse 8), moved from Isaac's household to Jacob's. This may indicate that Rebekah had already died. The family must have been attached to Deborah because the name of her burial place, Allonbachuth, means “oak of weeping.”

At this second meeting with God at Bethel (verses 9-15), God stated again that Jacob's name would be Israel, and reaffirmed His promise to multiply Jacob's seed and give them the land of Canaan. Jacob responded by setting up a stone as a public witness or tribute to God, presenting a drink offering, and pouring oil upon the stone.

Verses 16-20 record the death of Rachel, the wife Jacob loved most. *Benoni* means “son of sorrow” but *Benjamin* means “son of the right hand” or “son of the south.” Jacob may have chosen this name to show that this last son of Rachel’s was especially beloved, or it may have been an indicator that this was the only one of his twelve sons who was born in Canaan.

The chapter closes by telling of Isaac’s death. Abraham and Isaac had both lived in Hebron, which was south of Bethel and Bethlehem. The fact that Esau and Jacob together buried their father shows they had remained on good terms from the time of their reunion.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - C. Jacob
 - 6. Jacob’s journey toward Hebron (35:1-29)
 - a. The blessing at Bethel (35:1-15)
 - b. Rachel’s death in childbirth (35:16-20)
 - c. Reuben’s error with Bilhah (35:21-22)
 - d. The statement of Jacob’s sons (35:23-27)
 - e. The death of Isaac (35:28-29)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What did God promise to Jacob?

- 2. Why do you think God reminded Jacob in verse 10 that his name had been changed to Israel?

3. What can we do to preserve spiritual landmarks in our lives?

CONCLUSION

Jacob remembered the landmark at Bethel and prepared for God’s blessing. God did not disappoint him. If we do our part to prepare ourselves, we too will receive God’s blessing.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob. For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle.” (Genesis 36:6-7)

We have all heard predictions about the future. Some were right. And some were so patently false that they are humorous now!

- In 1773 King George II said that the American colonies had little stomach for revolution.
- Charles H. Duell, Commissioner at the U.S. Office of Patents, stated in 1899, “Everything that can be invented has been invented.”
- Marshal Ferdinand Foch observed in 1911, “Airplanes are interesting toys, but they have no military value.”
- In 1912, an official of the White Star Line, speaking of the firm’s newly built flagship, the *Titanic*, declared that the ship was unsinkable.
- Robert Millikan, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1923, said, “There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom.”
- Economist Irving Fisher observed on October 16, 1929, “Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.”
- Three days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Frank Knox, U.S. Secretary of the Navy, stated, “Whatever happens, the U.S. Navy is not going to be caught napping.”
- A *Business Week* article in 1958 predicted, “With over fifty foreign cars already on sale here, the Japanese auto industry isn’t likely to carve out a big slice of the U.S. market.”

Clearly, man’s predictions about the future can be wrong! However, today’s text is proof that when God indicates what the future will hold, He is always precisely and completely accurate. He looks ahead with perfect foreknowledge. This chapter records the fulfillment of God’s revealed purpose concerning Esau, and Isaac’s inspired words for his eldest son when he pled bitterly for some blessing from his father (Genesis 25:23; 27:39-40).

What is the lesson for us in this text? Simply this: all of God’s predictions are totally accurate and will

come to pass exactly as He said. We live in troubling times, but we can find assurance in the Word of God about our future. Take heart! God always does what He says He will do. Esau is proof of that.

BACKGROUND

This chapter gives a concise history of Esau and his family. Because God’s covenant was with Jacob, the Scriptures focus primarily on him and his offspring. Esau, who was also called Edom, was the ancestor of the Edomites. While this brief account of Esau’s descendants basically concludes Esau’s part in the Biblical narrative, other places in the Bible give accounts of trouble between his descendants and the Israelites. Israel shared its southern border with Edom, and there was bitter animosity between the two nations. When the city of Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians, the Edomites did not come to help but actually rejoiced when the city was destroyed (see Psalm 137:7). Edom is frequently alluded to in prophetic writings about the end times and the final destruction of world powers in the Day of the Lord. (See Jeremiah 49:14-22; Amos 1:11-12; Obadiah 8-16; Malachi 1:2-4).

This chapter, in conjunction with other chapters in the Bible, reveals the accuracy of Isaac’s words concerning Esau, given in Genesis 27:39-40. At that juncture, in response to Esau’s pleading, Isaac conferred a blessing of sorts upon his eldest son. Isaac said: “Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth . . .” Esau prospered materially, though he did not inherit the Promised Land. Then Isaac spoke of the nation of Edom, saying, “By thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother . . .” The Edomites were first defeated by King Saul (1 Samuel 14:47), and then subjugated by King David (2 Samuel 8:14). They also had a failed revolt under Solomon (1 Kings 11:14-22). Finally, they rebelled from Joram, but were subdued once more by Amaziah (2 Kings 14:7 and 2 Chronicles 25:11-19). In the concluding words of Isaac’s blessing, he predicted that eventually “. . . thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck” (Genesis 27:40). This took place in the time of Jehoram (2 Chronicles 21:8-10), and again, under Ahaz (2 Kings 16:6 and 2 Chronicles 28:16-17). So the words of Isaac to his two sons were fulfilled.

Six lists make up chapter 36, beginning in verses 1-8 with the wives of Esau and their respective sons. Both Jacob and Esau were wealthy, with enough livestock that it was necessary for them to separate. Esau moved to Mount Seir, which was also called

Edom. This was land that was on the east side and to the south of the Dead Sea. In some places it is three thousand feet high, and much of it is rocky. However, it includes some land that can be cultivated, and this was probably where the majority of the population resided.

Verses 9-14 list the sons and also the grandsons of Esau. One grandson was named Amalek, and his posterity became a fierce enemy of the Israelites. In time, Esau's descendants formed clans that were headed by dukes (verses 15-19).

The Horites (verses 20-30) lived in Edom before Esau's family arrived. The meaning of the word Horite is "cave dweller," which probably indicates that their ancestors made their homes in caves.

The fifth list, in verses 31-39, is of the kings of Edom. These kings were elected, no doubt for their leadership ability, rather than inheriting the position. Some Bible historians believe the phrase "before there reigned any king over the children of Israel" (verse 31) was added as an editorial comment long after Moses first wrote Genesis. Other scholars feel that since there is no reference to the death of Hadar, the final king listed in verse 39, he may have been the king of the Edomites at the time of Moses.

The final list of this chapter, verses 40-43, connects the dukes of Edom to the geographical locations where they settled.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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II. The early history of the chosen race

C. Jacob

7. The descendants of Esau (36:1-43)
 - a. Esau and his immediate family (36:1-8)
 - b. Esau's sons and grandsons (36:9-14)
 - c. Chiefs descended from Esau (36:15-19)
 - d. Chiefs of the Horites (36:20-30)
 - e. Kings of Edom (36:31-39)
 - f. A final list of chiefs (36:40-43)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Esau leave Canaan?

2. Why do you think God granted Esau material prosperity in spite of the fact that he had little regard for his birthright?

3. What lesson can we learn from the fact that God's predictions about Esau's future were completely fulfilled?

CONCLUSION

Those who anchor their trust in God will find that He always does what He said He would do.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again . . . And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.” (Genesis 37:22, 26-27)

Some circumstances in life require that we stand for what is right in spite of the personal cost. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian, was arrested by the Gestapo during World War II for his opposition to Adolf Hitler’s euthanasia programs and genocide against the Jews. In April of 1945, knowing that his death at the hands of the German SS was imminent, Bonhoeffer penned the following words as a final communication of his convictions: “Faint not nor fear, but go out to the storm and the action, trusting in God whose commandment you faithfully follow . . .” Twenty-three days before the Nazis’ surrender, inside the walls of the Flossenbürg concentration camp, guards marched into Bonhoeffer’s cell and led him away to the gallows. To his last moment of life on earth, this brave man remained committed to standing against evil.

An SS doctor who witnessed Bonhoeffer’s execution wrote, “I was most deeply moved by the way this loveable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer . . . He climbed to the steps of the gallows, brave and composed . . . I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.”¹ Bonhoeffer took a courageous position against the evil of the Nazi regime, and paid the ultimate price for doing so.

Contrast Bonhoeffer’s stand against what he knew was wrong with Reuben and Judah’s actions in today’s text. Our focus verses reveal that both Reuben and Judah were reluctant to accede to the plan to slay Joseph. Reuben intervened initially, and Judah actually persuaded his brothers to abandon their plan to kill Joseph outright. However, both men failed to protect their younger brother by taking a firm position against the evil intentions of the others. And they both joined in the conspiracy to cover up the fact that Joseph had been sold into slavery, and deceived their aged father into thinking his son was dead.

There may come a time in your life, or perhaps there already has, when you will witness a wrongdoing or be pressured to do the wrong thing, and will have to make a choice. Will you stand against wrong and risk judgment, persecution, or embarrassment by doing so? Or will you choose to sidestep the issue, pick a solution that seems “the lesser of two evils,” or simply look the other way?

Standing fearlessly for right is the honorable and just thing to do. Let us learn from the courage of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and purpose to be people of integrity!

BACKGROUND

This chapter covers Joseph’s dreams and the resultant jealousy of his brothers, the selling of Joseph into slavery, and the brothers’ deceit of their father regarding Joseph’s disappearance.

The story of Joseph begins in verse 2 of this passage, opening a new section in the Book of Genesis. With this text, the narrative shifts to the next generation. Like his father Jacob, grandfather Isaac, and great-grandfather Abraham, Joseph was a chosen man. The hand of God on his life was evident in each situation, ruling and overruling the plans and decisions made by men.

Historians conclude that the “coat of many colors” given to Joseph by his father (verse 3) may have been a long, colorful, embroidered or striped robe with wrist-length sleeves. Ancient writings suggest that it may have been an ornamental tunic such as royalty might wear. The clothes worn by the brothers were no doubt utilitarian and appropriate attire for those who tended and protected the livestock. The finer coat given to Joseph could have indicated he would not be involved in such physical labor. Whatever the case, the coat was a symbol of Jacob’s preference for Joseph, and as such, was resented by his brothers. Joseph’s recitation of his dreams, which implied that he would one day rule over his brothers, intensified their hatred.

At his father’s bidding, Joseph traveled from Hebron to Shechem, approximately a three-day journey, to the area where his brothers were thought to be tending their flocks. Upon arrival, he found his brothers had gone on to Dothan, between thirteen and twenty miles to the north. Dothan lay along a major trade route to Egypt. There, the jealous brothers first plotted to kill Joseph but instead sold him into slavery.

The reference to Midianites and Ishmeelites (verse 28) could suggest there were two different

groups, but the terms refer to the same traveling merchantmen. The goods they carried included the gum of various plants that was used in Egypt as medicine and to embalm. The price of twenty pieces of silver was probably the average price of a slave.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 1. Joseph and his brothers' hatred (37:1-11)
 - 2. Joseph's mistreatment by his brothers (37:12-24)
 - a. The search by Joseph (37:12-17)
 - b. The plot by his brothers (37:18-24)
 - 3. Joseph sold into Egypt (37:25-36)
 - a. The Ishmaelites' bargain (37:25-28)
 - b. The lie and the sorrow (37:29-36)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What action of Jacob aroused the envy and anger of Joseph's brothers?

2. Why is it important that we take a stand against wrong?

3. What can we do to develop courage when taking a stand is necessary?

CONCLUSION

Standing up against evil is not always easy, but it is vital that we do what is right.

NOTES

1. Gushee, David P., "Following Jesus to the Gallows," *Christianity Today*, 3 April 1993, page 27;
Barnett, Victoria, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ecumenical Vision," *Christian Century*, 26 April 1995, page 454



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father’s house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father’s house.” (Genesis 38:11)

Broken promises have consequences. Failing to keep commitments—even those made in private—will have an effect on those around us.

When Ethel Hodson was in high school, her father’s craving for alcohol caused him to lose a good job and leave their home. In time, he sent her mother forty dollars and promised, “More when possible—God bless you all.” When no more money came, his family knew that he had broken his promise. Ethel relates in her testimony that the family lacked the things they needed, so that broken promise had an impact. It resulted in hardship and sorrow for everyone involved.

Happily, that is not the end of Ethel’s story. While staying in a cheap hotel in a run-down area of Portland, Oregon, her father heard some music. Following the sound, he listened to a group of people on a street corner telling about Jesus and the change He could make in a person’s life. Ethel’s father prayed and was saved, and his life was transformed. He obtained a job and then began to fulfill his promise by sending money to his family on the East Coast. In time, his wife was persuaded to bring the children to Portland, where their family was reunited. Ethel, a great-grandmother now, is a witness to how God can help a person keep his promises.

In the focus verse, Judah made a promise to his daughter-in-law, but he did not keep it. In the culture of his time, he was to arrange for her to marry his third son, and he indicated his intention to do this. When his daughter-in-law saw that he was not following through, she set about to reveal his negligence. The consequences were heartbreaking and long-lasting.

Promises should be kept. We need to follow through on what we tell our children, grandchildren, or other family members we will do. Business agreements and contracts need to be honored too. We must stand behind our word, and therefore it is wise to be cautious in what we promise. If we fulfill our agreements, our family, friends, and associates will be spared the detrimental effects that accompany broken promises, and God will be glorified.

BACKGROUND

This chapter gives the history of the family of Judah, which is important because the nation would one day carry his name, and also because Christ would come through his lineage.

While the events in this chapter seem to interrupt the story of Joseph, scholars hold varying positions regarding the timeframe. Some researchers believe that Genesis 38 gives the account of Judah during the years just following Joseph being sold into Egypt. Others think that the events of this chapter took place before or near the time of the episodes in chapter 34. It is possible that Jacob’s sons and grandsons married in their early to mid-teen years.

Wherever this account fits in the chronology, it illustrates the potential harm of the Canaanite influence that surrounded Jacob’s family. Adullam was a town about fifteen or twenty miles northwest of Hebron, which was Jacob’s home. Judah would have known the importance Abraham’s family placed on not marrying Canaanite women, but he ignored those values when he chose Shuah as his wife. The Canaanite influence from Shuah and her family must have been responsible in part for the wickedness of Judah’s sons.

Levirate marriage was a custom that many ancient cultures in that area followed. Webster defines *levirate* as “the sometimes compulsory marriage of a widow to a brother of her deceased husband.” The purpose was to provide for the widow and preserve the name of the brother who had passed away. Legally, the children of this marriage belonged to the deceased man, not the birth father. After the death of his elder sons, Er and Onan, Judah indicated his daughter-in-law would be given to his third son, Shelah, once he was old enough.

When Tamar saw that Judah was not keeping his word, she set out to entrap him. In the Canaanite culture, sheep shearing included feasts and extravagant entertainments. Tamar heard where Judah had gone to shear sheep and that his wife was dead, so she went there dressed as a prostitute. The original word translated “harlot” in verse 15 was *zonah*, and indicated a common harlot. The word *qedeshah* is also translated “harlot” in verses 21-22, and was a term used for temple prostitutes. Whichever role Tamar assumed, her scheme was successful.

The collateral Tamar required until payment could be made was Judah’s signet, bracelets, and staff (verse 18). Signets of that time were cylinder shaped

with a carved seal. The bracelets were cords that went through the center of the signet so it could be worn about a person's neck. The staff was likely engraved and was a leadership symbol. These were Judah's personal items which gave clear proof of his identity.

Three months later, when Judah learned Tamar was with child, he called for her execution. When she identified him as the father, he admitted his guilt. He knew he had broken his promise to have his son Shelah marry her. In verse 26, the Hebrew word *tsedeqah* that is translated "righteous" has a legal sense; according to the levirate custom, she had a right to have a child by her deceased husband's relative.

Verses 27-30 tell of the birth of Tamar's twin sons. God's plan to send His Son Jesus Christ through Judah's lineage was not altered because of this immoral act (see Matthew 1:3).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 4. Judah and his family (38:1-30)
 - a. His sons by a Canaanite (38:1-5)
 - b. His childless progeny (38:6-11)
 - c. His intercourse with Tamar, his daughter-in-law (38:12-26)
 - d. His two sons by Tamar (38:27-30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What steps might Judah have taken to avoid being drawn into marriage in the Canaanite culture?

2. How long after Judah went to the prostitute did he find out who she was?

3. What steps can we take to be sure that we keep any promises we make?

CONCLUSION

God can help us to be true to our word. Let's make keeping our promises a priority!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And Joseph’s master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.”
(Genesis 39:20)**

For as long as I can remember, my aunt, who is now in her nineties, has done needlework. Embroidery and counted cross-stitch were two of her favorite activities until failing eyesight made such projects impossible. In fact, I have a bookmark that was one of her last embroidery projects. It is a quote from Psalm 119 embellished with flowers—but you would never know that by looking at the underside of the project. On the back of my bookmark, the threads cross over each other with seemingly no order or purpose. That is true of many types of hand-created needlework. Often the most beautiful work has the most knots and crossed threads on the underside.

Sometimes life is like a piece of needlework. While God is creating a beautiful picture, we see only the underside—the crossed threads, knots, and apparently random bits of color and pattern. God has a special plan that He is working out from His divine perspective, but very possibly it makes no sense to us.

At the time of the focus verse, Joseph could have felt that way. He had faced many perplexing obstacles during the preceding years, and he might have been tempted to think God had forgotten him. Sold into slavery by his own brothers, falsely accused by the wife of a man he had served faithfully, and being put in prison—none of these events seemed to be comprehensible from a human standpoint. But in all of these circumstances, God was there, keeping watch over Joseph. He was allowing and orchestrating the events that were to prepare His young servant to fulfill God’s own plan. What may have appeared to be “knots” and “crossed threads” to Joseph were, in reality, God’s training for Joseph to assume a position of honor and usefulness.

God has promised that if we serve Him, all the events in our lives will work out for good. During a trial we may not be able to see anything beneficial at all, but those times are when we exercise faith. As we look at examples such as Joseph, we can be encouraged that God is in control and that He has a definite purpose for us. As we trust that life’s circumstances are working out God’s special plan, we can be assured it will all be for His glory if we remain faithful.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text begins the account of Joseph in Egypt. This chapter tells how he was sold to Potiphar, falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, and put into prison.

Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, who was “captain of the guard” (verse 1). Potiphar was a military chief or possibly the leader in charge of executions. He was an Egyptian aristocrat who had a high position in that society and favor in Pharaoh’s court. Potiphar observed Joseph’s conduct and character and promoted him. God’s blessing was on Potiphar’s household because of Joseph.

Rich families in Egypt during this era enjoyed many luxuries. Often their homes had two or three stories, expensive furnishings, balconies, and lovely gardens. They ate delicacies from dishes of gold. Frequently the first floor was for the servants, and the wealthy family used the upper portion of the house.

The affluent women of Egypt had a great deal of freedom and were often loose morally. The actions of Potiphar’s wife may not have been unusual for a woman of her social status. Joseph’s resistance was based on two convictions, which he verbalized to the woman: he was grateful and loyal to his master who had treated him well, and, more importantly, what she asked would be a sin against God.

Angry at being thwarted, Potiphar’s wife falsely accused Joseph, and Potiphar put him in prison. The wealthy often had prisons in or near their palaces. However, Joseph was incarcerated where government prisoners were held. Since the crimes of these men were state offenses, it is thought that extra security and punishment may have been inflicted. Joseph had his feet put in fetters (see Psalm 105:18). However, God’s blessing was upon Joseph in the prison. God caused the keeper of the prison to respect him and put him in a position of authority. Like Potiphar, the warden turned everything over to Joseph, and he was put in charge of all the other prisoners.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 5. Joseph’s sojourn in Egypt
 - a. As a servant (39:1-18)
 - (1) The trust of Potiphar (39:1-6)
 - (2) The temptation of Potiphar’s wife (39:7-18)
 - b. As a prisoner
 - (1) The imprisonment (39:19-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Joseph do when faced with temptation?

2. How did God turn Joseph's situation around when he was in prison?

3. What can we learn from Joseph's response to temptation?

CONCLUSION

Are you in the middle of an incomprehensible circumstance? Remember that God has a plan in mind. If you trust in Him, He will work out every aspect of your life for His glory.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”
(Genesis 41:16)**

Samuel Morse, famous inventor of a single-wire telegraph system and co-inventor of Morse code, was never one to take glory to himself, but pointed his admirers to the Source of all wisdom. Proof of that is his first telegraph message, sent on May 24, 1844, over a wire strung between Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington DC: “What hath God wrought?”

One time Morse was asked if he had ever encountered situations where he did not know what to do. He responded, “More than once, and whenever I could not see my way clearly, I knelt down and prayed to God for light and understanding.” Though Morse received many honors because of his invention of the telegraph, he felt undeserving of the acclaim that came his way. He said, “I have made a valuable application of electricity not because I was superior to other men but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone and He was pleased to reveal it to me.”

In our focus verse, Joseph’s words to Pharaoh reflect the same spirit of humility. Like Samuel Morse, Joseph was undoubtedly greatly gifted and highly intelligent. However, he made no attempt to impress Egypt’s ruler or to improve his personal circumstances by taking any glory for interpreting Pharaoh’s dream. Just as he had told the butler and baker earlier, he declared to the heathen ruler that the power came from God.

Humility is an essential attitude for success in the spiritual life. Any self-importance, whether based upon intelligence, abilities, material advantages, position, or the praise of others, is an obstacle on the path. Humble people are willing to have their names and talents eclipsed so that God’s glory may be increased. Their attitude is, “Let me decrease; let Christ increase.” They fully recognize that they have no ability in and of themselves, and view all their accomplishments and abilities as gifts from God. God is the Source, and they are only the channel.

May we all have and show a true spirit of humility that glorifies God in all that we say and do.

BACKGROUND

In today’s text, dreams again played an important part in Joseph’s life as he interpreted the dreams of

the butler, baker, and Pharaoh. Approximately eleven years had passed since Joseph’s brothers had sold him and he had been brought to Egypt. Having been thrown into prison as a result of the false accusations of Potiphar’s wife, Joseph was made keeper of the other prisoners. Thus, the king’s butler and baker were placed in his charge when they were imprisoned.

The positions of chief butler and chief baker were eminent in the Egyptian court, as the men in these positions had the responsibility of supervising hundreds of people. Only individuals from noble and well-known families were appointed. The word *butler* means “cup-bearer,” and as such, he would have sampled food and drink to be certain it was safe before the king partook. In addition, he managed the court’s vineyards and wine storage. The word *baker* means “cook,” so he supervised all areas of the king’s food preparation. Having held trusted positions, the conversation of these men potentially taught Joseph a great deal about the political system of Egypt and the operation of the court.

After these men had been in the prison for an unknown period of time (Genesis 40:4 says “they continued a season in ward”), they had dreams that they sensed were important, and were troubled because there was no one to interpret them. Had they been free, they would have sought out a dream interpreter to tell them the meaning. Joseph asked the men to relate their dreams, and stated that God would give the interpretation (Genesis 40:8). What Joseph foretold came to pass in every detail, including the butler being restored to his former position. However, after his release the butler forgot Joseph’s request that his innocence be mentioned to Pharaoh.

Chapter 41 recounts Pharaoh’s dreams. The repetition and sense of foreboding that resulted from these dreams prompted the ruler to seek an interpretation. The river he dreamed about was the Nile. In Egypt at that time, cows (or “kine”) were symbols of fruitfulness, and “corn” referred to grain. The magicians and wise men Pharaoh called may have been experts in hieroglyphics, or men who studied science, the stars, and engaged in occult practices. When these men could not give an interpretation, the butler remembered Joseph.

At Pharaoh’s command, Joseph was brought out of the prison “hastily” (verse 14). However, cleanliness, shaving of both the beard and the head, and the wearing of appropriate attire were imperative to the Egyptians, so this was quickly accomplished. As Joseph stood before Pharaoh, he again gave God

all the credit for the interpretation of dreams. The Egyptians considered Pharaoh a god personified. Yet in Genesis 41:25, Joseph declared that Elohim—the supreme, eternal and one true God—had revealed what was soon to transpire. In verses 33-36, Joseph followed the interpretation with detailed advice on how to prepare for the coming famine.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 5. Joseph's sojourn in Egypt
 - b. As a prisoner
 - (2) The dreams of the cupbearer and baker (40:1-23)
 - (a) The setting (40:1-8)
 - (b) The cupbearer's dream and interpretation (40:9-15)
 - (c) The baker's dream and interpretation (40:16-19)
 - (d) The interpretation realized (40:20-23)
 - (3) The dream of Pharaoh (41:1-36)
 - (a) The dream (41:1-8)
 - (b) The cupbearer's remembrance (41:9-13)
 - (c) The dream rehearsed (41:14-25)
 - (d) The dream interpreted (41:26-36)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Joseph's connection with the butler and the baker?

2. Why do you think Joseph was so confident that God would give him the interpretations of the dreams?

3. How has God used the circumstances of your life to teach you to be humble?

CONCLUSION

A humble attitude will always make sure that the glory goes to God.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?” (Genesis 41:38)

If God is controlling our lives, those around us should be able to see that there is something different about us. This was true in the life of the young man who worked with Chic Beasley many years ago. Chic testified, “I was just a railer and a blasphemer when I came to God. I operated a big saw in a manufacturing plant. We worked on a bonus system; the faster you could put that material through, the more you made. I was pretty hard to get along with. I used to curse, rant, rave, throw things around, and act like a fool.

“A young man, sixteen years of age, from the Apostolic Faith Church, came to work across the machine from me, and the life he lived convicted me of my sins. As I watched him day after day, his life preached a silent sermon to me. One day I went around the machine and asked him, ‘What church do you belong to?’ He said, ‘I don’t belong to any church; I’m just a Christian.’ Then he began to tell me a wonderful story. He told how God could come into my life and save me. He told me about the Apostolic Faith people, and I attended a service for just one purpose—to see what God would do for me.” Chic prayed and God saved him and changed his heart . . . because a young man had the Spirit of God on his life.

In our text today, God’s Spirit was evident in the life of Joseph. Upon hearing Joseph’s plan for the preservation of Egypt, Pharaoh uttered the words recorded in the focus verse. How remarkable that even a pagan ruler could identify the source of Joseph’s wisdom! And the Spirit of God clearly continued to help Joseph, giving him the needed knowledge and organizational skills to implement the fourteen-year national survival plan he had detailed to Pharaoh.

Whatever our roles in life, we want the Spirit of God to shine through us, motivating kind words, merciful acts, a compassionate spirit, and wise advice. Perhaps we are facing challenges that seem way beyond our ability to handle. On the other hand, maybe the day ahead seems mundane and completely insignificant. Whatever the case, God’s Spirit can permeate our days and everything in them.

Are you letting His Spirit shine out of you in every endeavor, no matter how large or small? Think through a typical day in your life. Mentally review your interaction with family, coworkers, classmates,

or other associates. What can you do to make sure that each of them will recognize you as a person “in whom the spirit of God is”?

BACKGROUND

Because of Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dreams, as described in the previous portion of this chapter, Pharaoh and his servants decided that Joseph was the person to supervise the amassing and distribution of food stores.

Joseph was thirty years old at this time (verse 46), and had been in Egypt for thirteen years. In the space of one day, he was elevated from prisoner to second in command of the entire nation of Egypt. Even though the Egyptians were idolaters, they had known of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for many years. Pharaoh realized that it was this God who had revealed both his dream and its meaning to Joseph.

Pharaoh commanded that the Egyptians give Joseph respect and follow his directions. This authority was denoted in several ways. Joseph was given Pharaoh’s signet ring which was used to sign documents by impressing it into clay or wax. He was clothed in “fine linen,” and the gold chain on his neck was an official badge of his position. He was assigned the second chariot for public occasions, and the people were to show him honor (verses 42-43).

Joseph was given the name Zaphnathpaaneah. Various meanings for this Egyptian name have been suggested by historians, including, “the one who furnishes nourishment to the land,” “abundance of life,” and “revealer of secrets.” Joseph was also given the daughter of a priest as his wife (verse 45). This marriage elevated Joseph’s social standing because the priests were the top caste in the country. The city of On, which the Greeks named Heliopolis, still exists today as a suburb of Cairo. Joseph had two sons, whose names were also significant (verses 51-52): Manasseh (“one who forgets”) and Ephraim (“double fruit”).

One author says, “The life of Joseph as the Prime Minister of Egypt was a very splendid one . . . His palaces would consist of numberless rooms opening into spacious courts, where palms, sycamores, and acacia trees grew in rare luxuriance. Rare perfumes rose from vases of gold and bronze and alabaster; and the foot sank deep in carpets covering the floors.”¹ Although Joseph lived in luxury, had a wife who was the daughter of an idolatrous priest, ruled in a heathen country, and was surrounded by people with no belief in the true God, he maintained his faith in God.

Pharaoh's dreams were fulfilled, and Joseph organized the storage of grain as the land brought forth "by handfuls" (verse 47). Eventually so much was stored that they lost count of the exact amount. When the famine began, Joseph sold of this store to the Egyptians and also to foreigners.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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II. The early history of the chosen race

D. Joseph

5. Joseph's sojourn in Egypt

c. As an administrator

(1) The effective ministry of Joseph (41:37-57)

(a) His appointment (41:37-46)

(b) His oversight (41:47-49)

(c) His family (41:50-52)

(d) His plenty in famine (41:53-57)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Pharaoh call for Joseph?

2. Why do you think Pharaoh believed Joseph and placed him in such a responsible position?

3. How can we be sure our lives glorify God in every circumstance?

CONCLUSION

We want others to see by our attitudes and actions that the Spirit of God is in us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.” (Genesis 42:7-8)

During the reign of Napoleon, a soldier had twice committed a crime that was worthy of death. The day before the young man’s execution, his mother went to Napoleon and begged him to have mercy and spare her son’s life. Napoleon told her that because of the crimes that had been committed, the young man did not deserve mercy. The mother cried, “Sir, it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for.” Her reasoning and passion prevailed; Napoleon was moved to commute the sentence.

Mercy is a key element in today’s text. Joseph had suffered through years of bondage and mistreatment due to his brothers’ cruel act of selling him into slavery. Their betrayal had caused him loss and heartache that we can hardly imagine. Despite the enormity of this injustice, he exhibited the true nature of a child of God. Joseph had kept his focus on serving God and being true in every circumstance. He had avoided the traps of bitterness and self-pity. Although he spoke “roughly” as he tested his brothers to see if they had truly changed, every indication is that his motives toward them were for good.

Although our circumstances will likely not be as extreme as Joseph’s, we too will face times when we must choose whether to enact vengeance or show mercy toward others. The Word of God teaches that vengeance belongs solely to the Lord, so when emotion pressures us to respond to injury or injustice by retaliating, we must choose to honor God by showing His attitude of love and forgiveness. Remember, one of the most powerful witnesses to genuine Christianity is a willingness to extend mercy and forgiveness to those who have wronged us!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text gives the account of the first two trips that Joseph’s brothers made to Egypt and Joseph’s encounters with them.

Chapter 42 begins by recounting that the famine foretold by Joseph had reached Canaan. When Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent ten of his sons to buy provisions. Benjamin, Rachel’s younger

son and Joseph’s only full brother, was kept at home. Jacob’s fears for Benjamin’s safety could have been based upon his continued sorrow over the loss of Joseph or on a sense of concern about the feelings of the other brothers toward Benjamin. The trip from Canaan to Egypt was between 250 and 330 miles, and could have easily taken six weeks.

Genesis 42:6-28 tells of the interaction between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph had been in Egypt for over twenty years, and at this time he was clean-shaven (both his beard and head), attired as an Egyptian, and obviously held a high official position. He spoke in the Egyptian language and communicated with his brothers through an interpreter, so it is not surprising that his brothers did not recognize him.

Because Egypt was weakened by the famine, careful guard would have been given to watch for spies. Anyone coming from Canaan, Assyria, or other surrounding areas was likely subjected to keen examination.

Although Joseph recognized his brothers, he went through a number of steps to test them. The Bible does not reveal his motives; no doubt he wanted to know of the welfare of his father and brother. Additionally, he probably wanted to discern the attitude of these men toward Benjamin and to see if they had changed.

Joseph’s demand that his brothers bring their youngest brother to him caused them to rehearse their guilt concerning their treatment of Joseph so many years earlier. They were unaware that he was able to understand their speech. By keeping Simeon in prison as surety, Joseph showed his determination that Benjamin must be brought to Egypt. While secretly returning their money to their sacks may have been a kindness on Joseph’s part toward his brothers, that action caused the brothers to be even more afraid.

Chapter 43 tells of the brothers’ second trip to Egypt. Jacob found no comfort in the promises of Reuben (Genesis 42:37) and Judah (Genesis 43:8-9) that they would be surety for Benjamin and did not want to let Benjamin go. However, the famine compelled him to acquiesce and allow all his sons to return to Egypt. Again they took gifts, and this time enough money to pay for the previous provisions as well as to purchase more.

Once Joseph saw Benjamin, he was ready to continue the testing process for the brothers. Sent to Joseph’s home, they openly told Joseph’s steward the story of their returned money. Their willingness to pay for the first provisions proved that they were

no longer greedy like they had been when they sold Joseph. At the meal they shared, serving Benjamin a portion five times larger than the others was a way for Joseph to show favor to his full brother. Also, it gave him opportunity to see the response of the other brothers to this display of preferential treatment. They passed this test also, showing no ill will toward Benjamin.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 5. Joseph's sojourn in Egypt
 - c. As an administrator
 - (2) The first visit of Joseph's brothers (42:1-38)
 - (a) The ten sons sent to Egypt (42:1-5)
 - (b) The encounter with Joseph (42:6-17)
 - (c) The retention of Simeon (42:18-24)
 - (d) The return to Jacob (42:25-38)
 - (3) The second visit of Joseph's brothers
 - (a) The need for provisions (43:1-10)
 - (b) The journey with Benjamin (43:11-15)
 - (c) The kindness of Joseph (43:16-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many times did Joseph's brothers bow down to him in these two chapters? What do you suppose this indicated?

2. Why do you think Joseph accused his brothers of being spies and put them into prison?

3. Think of a time when God gave you an opportunity to extend forgiveness or mercy. What effect did this have on you?

CONCLUSION

Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers should inspire us to extend mercy to those who cause us grief. We too can overcome evil with good if we keep our eyes on the Lord.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.” (Genesis 45:7)

A few decades ago, a man invented a wristwatch movement that was based on a vibrating quartz crystal. He tried to sell the idea to the major watchmakers, who were using springs and gears in their watches, but the new technology was not in their business plans so they rejected it. Other companies, however, envisioned that this could be the watch of the future. They decided to invest in the technology that would make it possible to create quartz-movement wristwatches, and incorporated it into their plans. The new watches were so accurate and trouble free that they soon cornered the market.

Most successful businesses have a plan—a set of guidelines which directs their activities. The plan usually states the goals of the company and the steps to reaching their goals. The leadership of a company tries to look at the big picture and sometimes must make decisions that have a long-term impact on the organization. Those decisions may not initially make sense to the employees who do not have all the information, but they must rely on the judgment of those in the leadership positions.

In a much greater sense, down through the ages, God has always had a plan. As humans, we do not see the big picture and it may be easy to question life's events. However, God's purpose is always good. His goal in today's account was for the preservation of His chosen people, Israel. It could not have been easy for Joseph to understand what the plan was. During the trials and discomforts he went through, there must have been times when he wondered why such adversities were coming his way. Yet he retained his confidence in God. In today's text, Joseph told his brothers that the events that had befallen him were used so their family would have food in the time of famine.

Today, God has a plan for our lives. When trials come, we must remember that God is in control. When we are called to go through difficult circumstances, we can trust His plan because we know it ends in Heaven. Some have abandoned God in a time of trial and made a shipwreck of their lives. Others, though, have hung on in quiet faith and confidence until God brought them through. Let us choose to follow their example and that of Joseph!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 44 is the narrative of Joseph's continued testing of his brothers. His interaction with them climaxes in chapter 45 with the revelation of his identity.

Joseph instituted a plan which placed guilt upon Benjamin and thereby would keep him in Egypt. Divining by a cup (Genesis 44:5) was a custom of the eastern cultures at that time. Such vessels were considered sacred, and theft could be punished by slavery or death. Because of Joseph's belief in God, it is highly doubtful that he used his silver cup for this purpose. Rather, he was no doubt setting up a situation to see how his brothers would react. He wanted to know if they truly cared about Jacob and Benjamin.

When the cup was found, the brothers offered to all remain in Egypt as slaves. Joseph asserted that only Benjamin would need to stay, and the brothers were free to leave if they so chose. Joseph even told them to “get you up in peace unto your father” (verse 17). Judah's plea, recorded in verses 18-34, was passionate and profound. Judah, who had been instrumental in Joseph being sold into slavery rather than killed, volunteered to become a slave in Benjamin's place so Benjamin could return to his father. The phrase “Judah and his brethren” shows that he had become the spokesperson for the family. Joseph observed the change that had occurred in Judah's attitude.

Verses 1-15 of Chapter 45 contain the emotion-packed account of Joseph revealing himself to his brothers. When Judah finished speaking, Joseph could no longer refrain himself. With great feeling, he told them who he was. Although his brothers were amazed and speechless, his statement, “I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt” was full proof of his identity, because only those involved knew those details.

Although Joseph was in a position of complete control, he extended forgiveness. While he did not condone his brothers' wrongdoing, he assured them that God had overruled their actions and used the circumstances as a way to preserve them. Five more years of famine were ahead, and it was illogical for Joseph's family to stay in their homeland, thus necessitating repeated trips for supplies. Joseph arranged for his family to relocate to Goshen, a fertile area in the northeastern section of the Nile Delta, where Jacob's family and his descendants could be provided for and live without fear.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 5. Joseph's sojourn in Egypt
 - c. As an administrator
 - (3) The second visit of Joseph's brothers
 - (d) The arrest of Benjamin (44:1-34)
 - [1] The plot (44:1-5)
 - [2] The arrest (44:6-17)
 - [3] The intercession (44:18-34)
 - (e) The revealing of Joseph's identity (45:1-15)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Who was present when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers?

2. What might have been the first thoughts of these brothers when they realized this man of great power was Joseph?

3. What are the benefits of patiently waiting in faith for God's plan to be revealed?

CONCLUSION

God's ways are best. After our trials pass we may look back and see God's plan, and observe that He was orchestrating all the events for good.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation.” (Genesis 46:2-3)

A few years ago, it seemed the Lord was leading me to change jobs. I wanted to work for the same company if possible, but in a different capacity. At the time, I did not know where the path was going, just that God was somewhere out in front. For two weeks I worked at another job site in town, and then was sent out of town to a job that required commuting each day. In order to get to work on time, I had to leave home long before sunrise and did not get back until quite late. I began to wonder if I had misunderstood God’s directions, and prayed for reassurance.

Early one morning, I was driving along listening to the song “It Is Well with My Soul.” As the music flooded my car, the words of the first verse, “When peace like a river attendeth my way,” registered deeply in my heart. When I glanced out the window, the river off in the distance was so peaceful it looked like a mirror. I had driven that way many times but did not ever remember seeing it so calm. A full moon was setting in the west and it reflected perfectly on the water. At that moment, God’s Spirit witnessed to me that it was well with my soul, and I was following His will.

While our situation in life may not parallel or equate to Jacob’s, there may come times when change makes our future seem unsure and even frightening. Perhaps Jacob felt that way in our text today as he faced the prospect of moving to Egypt. Undoubtedly, he yearned to see Joseph, the son he had presumed was dead, but to do so he would have to leave all that was familiar and travel to a distant country with another language and culture. He was elderly at this time and could not be sure that he would ever see his homeland again.

When Jacob left his home in Hebron, he wanted to know the will of God so he traveled to Beer-sheba. It was a place that had great spiritual significance for him, as both his father and grandfather had called on God there and received answers. To an onlooker, the famine in Canaan and Pharaoh’s invitation to move might have seemed strong indicators of the Lord’s will. Still, Jacob wanted assurance in his own heart. As he sought the Lord, God made His will clear to

Jacob. He told him he was to travel to Egypt, that He would bless him there, that his descendants would return to the land of promise, and that he would pass from this life attended by Joseph in Egypt.

When new situations face us, experiencing a certain degree of anxiety about change is a normal reaction. However, we must not let fear paralyze us. It is encouraging to remember that the Lord of all the earth knows our names and our personal needs. He will always be there to take care of us!

BACKGROUND

Today’s Scripture passage describes Pharaoh’s invitation for Joseph’s family to move to Egypt, Jacob’s sons’ return to Canaan with the news that Joseph was alive, and the family’s move to Egypt.

After Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, he gave them instructions and facilitated the move of all their families to Egypt. The phrase, “See that ye fall not out by the way” (Genesis 45:24), was a caution for them not to revert to their old habits of quarreling amongst themselves.

Leaving Hebron for Egypt was a major change in Jacob’s life. He was 130 years old and had been living in the land promised by God to Abraham, Isaac, and himself. As he left this homeland, he built an altar and worshiped the Lord at Beersheba. The assurance that God himself gave Jacob provided full endorsement of the move. Genesis 46:8-27 lists Jacob’s family at that time.

The land of Goshen, an area about forty miles long and nine hundred square miles total, was a fertile valley located in the northeast part of the Nile Delta. While somewhat separated from the main portion of Egypt, it was close to where Joseph’s home was located, and was prime property for raising cattle and sheep. Since Egyptians had no regard for shepherds, the geography provided separation from the Egyptian populace and helped preserve Israel’s own culture. It was in Goshen that Joseph and his father met for the first time in twenty-two years. Jacob indicated that seeing Joseph again made his life complete.

In order for Jacob’s family to stay in Egypt, it was necessary for them to have official permission. Joseph carefully instructed five of his brothers on the best approach to use when they appeared before Pharaoh, and they made it clear that they were only in Egypt temporarily — to “sojourn” (Genesis 47:4).

Ordinarily, the Nile River flooded during the summer and the nutrients deposited in the soil during the flood made the land fertile for producing crops.

But in these years of famine, flooding did not occur. The people bought grain from Pharaoh via Joseph, first by using their money. Then they gave their herds, their land, and finally themselves, becoming servants of Pharaoh in order to live. At the end of the famine, Joseph instituted a rental or taxation program requiring the people to pay twenty percent of their crop yield to Pharaoh.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 6. Jacob's journey into Egypt (45:16—47:27)
 - a. Pharaoh's request for Jacob (45:16-28)
 - b. The sojourn of Jacob (46:1-34)
 - (1) The vision at Beersheba (46:1-4)
 - (2) The arrival in Egypt (46:5-7)
 - (3) The number of Jacob's sons (46:8-27)
 - (4) The encounter with Joseph (46:28-34)
 - c. The settlement of Jacob in Goshen (47:1-12)
 - d. The economic policy of Joseph (47:13-26)
 - e. The increase of Jacob's family (47:27)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How might Jacob's age have impacted his thoughts about traveling to Egypt?

2. What happened to Jacob's family after they settled in Goshen?

3. How might Jacob's actions regarding a major life change encourage us today when we face changes?

CONCLUSION

At times, the future seems unsure, and we do not know which step to take next. When we ask for direction, God will help us know the path that we are to follow.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt.” (Genesis 47:29)

Spending time with elderly people, one often finds them looking back over the past and also looking ahead toward Heaven. At various times my aunt, who is now ninety-four years old, has shared some of her recollections. Many of these stories have been reminders of the faithful service to God which has been part of our family heritage for generations. She tells how her parents and siblings would take the streetcar across the Burnside Bridge after spending Sunday at our downtown church. Riding the streetcar made her sick, so before they arrived home, her dad would get off and walk, carrying her. She tells about getting into poison oak year after year when they were spending the summer on the campground. She recounts Saturdays when, after musical rehearsals, she and her friends walked from the Sixth and Burnside church to the campground at 52nd and Duke, with at least one stop to buy ice cream. Woven through the stories is the underlying theme of God's faithfulness and a wholehearted desire to serve Him. My aunt longs for the day when she will step into eternity. She feels that her life's mission has been accomplished, and she is anticipating seeing the Lord.

In today's text, Jacob realized that before long he would depart from this life. "Mission accomplished!" could have been his heart's last cry. As he neared life's end, we see a man who had confidence in his relationship with God and was ready to meet Him.

Was Jacob always a man of great spiritual stature? No, in looking at his earlier life, one can see failures and missteps along the way. However, the mercy and grace of God had established him. Jacob had learned from his mistakes, and recognized his dependence upon God. His relationship to God had become essential to his life, and God changed his name to Israel, for as a prince he had prevailed with God. The grace of God sustained him throughout the remainder of his life.

This last Biblical glimpse of Jacob presents us with a challenge: what do we want our final testimony to be? It will be based upon how we are living in the present. Moment by moment we are building for

eternity. With God's help, we can make decisions that will give our lives a godly and righteous ending.

BACKGROUND

This text covers Jacob's last years. After he had been in Egypt for seventeen years, Jacob called for Joseph and asked him to promise to bury him in Canaan in the cave of Machpelah. Putting a hand under the thigh was a custom that indicated a vow. It was important to Jacob that his descendants remember they were only in Egypt temporarily and that someday they would return to Canaan.

In Genesis 48:1-22, Jacob bestowed a double blessing upon Joseph by referring to Joseph's two sons as his own. Jacob pronounced blessings upon each boy, with the greater promises going to the younger son, Ephraim. This was the passing on of the promises God had first given to Abraham, later to Isaac, and then to Jacob. With the covenant came the leadership responsibilities. The later history of the nation of Israel confirmed that the tribe of Ephraim held a leadership role and, in time, the nation made up of the ten northern tribes was called Ephraim. Manasseh also was destined to become great. Today Jewish people still use the blessing from Genesis 48:20, "God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh."

Genesis 49:1-28 contains Jacob's blessings and prophecies for his sons. Given in a poetic style, the messages contain metaphors and parallelism. Judah was destined to be the leader politically and militarily, and from his line eventually King David and Jesus Christ were born. Joseph was promised greater blessings than all the others, and his descendants later included Joshua, Deborah, Gideon, and Samuel. Jacob had given his last will and testament.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 7. Jacob's last days
 - a. Jacob's burial request (47:28-31)
 - b. Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons (48:1-22)
 - c. Jacob's blessing of his sons (49:1-28)
 - (1) The setting (49:1-2)
 - (2) Reuben (49:3-4)
 - (3) Simeon and Levi (49:5-7)
 - (4) Judah (49:8-12)
 - (5) Zebulun (49:13)
 - (6) Issachar (49:14-15)

- (7) Dan (49:16-18)
- (8) Gad (49:19)
- (9) Asher (49:20)
- (10) Naphtali (49:21)
- (11) Joseph (49:22-26)
- (12) Benjamin (49:27)
- (13) Conclusion (49:28)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Which two sons of Joseph received a direct inheritance from their grandfather? Why did they receive it?

2. Though Jacob's comments to his sons were based upon their past actions, how might his words have impacted their lives from that point on?

3. In describing God, Jacob referred to Him as "mighty" and "Almighty." In what ways has God shown Himself "mighty" in your circumstances?

CONCLUSION

Jacob learned many things the hard way, but he did learn. We can have the same purpose to follow God that Jacob developed, and thereby have the same eternal hope.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” (Genesis 50:19-20)

The big question of “Why?” is one that seemingly every person grapples with at some time in his or her life. Some years ago, God gave me an object lesson in why answers do not always come when we ask Him.

My children were young then, and they were full of questions such as, “Why is grass green?” or “What makes a rainbow?” Once they asked fifty questions as we drove a distance of about a mile and a half—I counted! Usually, I tried to respond. Sometimes, however, the answers were so complicated that I knew they could not understand if I tried to explain. For example, can you spell out how photosynthesis works to a four-year-old? How about what causes the prismatic colors of a rainbow? The answers to their questions were way beyond what their little minds could comprehend, and as much as I loved them, attempting an explanation would have been futile.

Times may come when we do not comprehend God’s chosen way to fulfill His purpose in our lives. However, we can be assured that God will use circumstances—no matter how unimaginable they may seem to us—to fulfill His own plans.

We can learn from the life of Joseph. While God was working in his life through incomprehensible happenings, Joseph steadfastly held to his trust in the Lord and let God sort it all out. No doubt the events of his life were a big puzzle to him. Perhaps at times he questioned why circumstances occurred as they did. However, he stood firm, and by the time of the events in today’s text, he finally understood why he had suffered the intense opposition, betrayal, denial, temptations, wrongful accusations, and unjust punishment that had come his way. More than that, he recognized that it was worthwhile.

After the death of Joseph’s father, his brothers came once more before him in fear of revenge for the evil they had done to him many years earlier. His kind answer and soothing words to them indicated that he was deeply committed to God and realized that God had an overall purpose. Joseph reassured his brothers of his forgiveness and also promised to take care of them and their families.

We must trust God and wait patiently for Him to bring good from the unexplainable—even the “bad” things that happen to us. We can trust Him because, as Joseph learned, God can transform evil into good.

BACKGROUND

This concluding text of Genesis tells of Jacob’s death and burial and also the death of Joseph. In both cases, references to their descendants’ future return to Canaan were stressed.

At the conclusion of the blessing of his sons, Jacob told them that he was to be buried in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan. He had previously asked Joseph to promise that this would be done, and Joseph was faithful to make it happen.

Embalming was a practice of the Egyptians, and they were masters of the process, which took between thirty and forty days. The Egyptians mourned about seventy days for a king, so they showed Jacob much honor. When it was time to go to Canaan, Joseph himself did not appear before Pharaoh because he would have still been wearing mourning clothing, and it was unacceptable to appear before the king in such attire. Pharaoh’s permission to leave was given, and an entourage was appointed to accompany Jacob’s sons. With due ceremony, Jacob was buried.

In Genesis 50:15-21, the brothers again expressed fear that Joseph would seek vengeance. His reassurance was given in another emotional scene.

At the end of his life, Joseph was still confidently looking ahead to the time when God would take Jacob’s family back to Canaan. He extracted a promise from Jacob’s descendants that they would take his body with them when they traveled back. That promise was kept and its fulfillment is recorded in Joshua 24:32.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The early history of the chosen race
 - D. Joseph
 - 7. Jacob’s last days
 - d. Jacob’s final request and death (49:29-33)
 - e. Jacob’s burial (50:1-14)
 - (1) The embalming (50:1-3)
 - (2) The burial in Canaan (50:4-14)
 - 8. The last days of Joseph (50:15-26)
 - a. The fear of Joseph’s brothers (50:15-21)
 - b. The death of Joseph (50:22-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Who went to Canaan to bury Jacob?

2. Why do you think Joseph wanted to be buried in Canaan?

3. What characteristics of Joseph's life impressed you most? How can you incorporate these characteristics into your own life?

CONCLUSION

Who knows what God may be working out through the events of our lives today! We can place our full trust in Him.

NOTES

[illegible]



Overview for Exodus

Purpose: To provide the account of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and establishment as a nation, and to reveal God's covenant with and requirements for His people

Author: Commonly accepted to be Moses, based upon the internal testimony of the book

Date Written: 1450–1410 B.C. during the desert wanderings of the Children of Israel, before they entered the Promised Land

Time Span Covered: From when Jacob and his sons entered Egypt, to the completion of the Tabernacle in the wilderness

Setting: Egypt, Mount Sinai, and the area between Mount Sinai and Canaan, the Promised Land

Key People: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Pharaoh, and Joshua

Summary: The Book of Exodus is the second of five books of the Law (known as the Pentateuch). It contains the history of Israel from the birth of Moses to the completion of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. It can be separated into three definite time periods: the Israelites under bondage (Exodus 1:1 through 12:36), wandering in the wilderness (Exodus 12:37 through 18:27), and at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1 through 40:38).

The word *exodus* literally means “departure” or “a way out.” According to Exodus 12:40, the Children of Israel spent 430 years dwelling in the land of Egypt, and during that time period, the descendants of Abraham had grown to include over two million people. At the beginning of the book, the Children of Israel were living as slaves under severe bondage, having taskmasters who were instructed to afflict them. By the conclusion of the book, the people had journeyed out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, following the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and were living in freedom.

Aside from God himself, Moses is the central figure of the Book of Exodus, which relates more miracles than any other Old Testament book. The

first recorded miracles revolve around Moses. He was miraculously spared from death as an infant when Pharaoh's daughter found him in a basket along the banks of the Nile River. Through the intervention of Miriam, Moses' sister, he was returned to his own mother who nursed him for Pharaoh's daughter.

After Moses reached adulthood, he slew an Egyptian in response to the injustices being heaped upon his people, the Israelites. When he realized his deed was known, he fled to the desert of Midian, where he lived for about forty years. Then God called him at the burning bush, commissioning him to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt. The once-confident prince feared the assignment, but during the final forty years of his life, God proved to Moses what He could do through him.

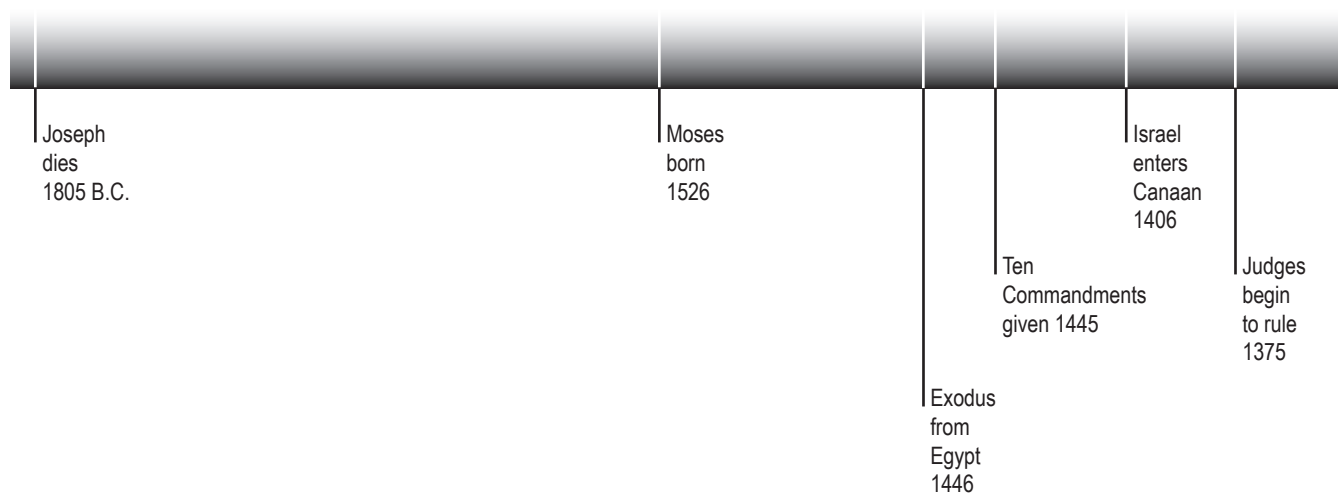
Through the mighty power of God, the enslaved Children of Israel became an independent nation in one night. The powerful acts of God had been manifested to the Children of Israel and the Egyptians through a series of ten plagues. With the final plague, God instituted the Passover as an annual observance to remind future generations of Israelites of their miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The blood of the lambs shed that night foreshadowed the redemption that would later be provided for mankind through the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

God established a covenant with Israel in which the nation of former slaves was set apart as God's holy nation. He revealed His changeless and universal moral law at Mount Sinai through the Ten Commandments. He also established His civil and ceremonial law for Israel through specific requirements for worship and daily living. The priesthood and the Tabernacle in the wilderness were among the visible features that distinguished Israel as a special people of God, set apart from the idolatrous and ungodly nations around them.

Throughout this segment of Israel's history, God provided for His people's physical and spiritual needs, but He also sent judgment for their disobedience and unbelief.

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

*Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. The oppression of Israel in Egypt (1:1 — 11:10)
 - A. The bondage of Israel (1:1-22)
 - B. The deliverer for Israel (2:1 — 4:31)
 - C. The struggles with Pharaoh (5:1 — 11:10)
- II. The redemption of Israel from Egypt (12:1 — 15:21)
 - A. The Passover (12:1-36)
 - B. The journey (12:37 — 15:21)
- III. The migration of Israel to Sinai (15:22 — 19:2)
 - A. The wilderness of Shur (15:22)
 - B. Marah (15:23-26)
 - C. Elim (15:27)
 - D. The wilderness of Sin (16:1-36)
 - E. Rephidim (17:1 — 18:27)
 - F. The arrival at Sinai (19:1-2)
- IV. The revelation of the Law to Israel (19:3 — 24:11)
 - A. The setting (19:3-25)
 - B. The commandments (20:1-26)
 - C. The ordinances (21:1 — 23:33)
 - D. The covenant ratified (24:1-11)
- V. The construction of the Tabernacle (24:12 — 40:38)
 - A. The setting (24:12-18)
 - B. The instructions for the building (25:1 — 31:18)
 - C. The delay in the building (32:1 — 34:35)
 - D. The construction of the building (35:1 — 40:38)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.” (Exodus 1:14)

The circumstances of Ruth Harshner’s life were bitter. Her husband was an alcoholic, and they lived with their five small children in a two-car garage with no running water or inside plumbing. All their water had to be carried from the neighbor’s house. Night after night, Ruth’s husband came home drunk. He had several guns, and one night he took one out into the front yard and shot it randomly up into the air. He did not know that their son was hiding in a tree right above him. Miraculously, God protected the child. Through all these difficult situations, Ruth chose to lean on the Lord. Time after time, God gave her strength, provided for her needs, and answered her prayers.

In our text today, the lives of the Hebrew people generated much bitterness. However, we can read the account of one couple who chose to trust God despite the circumstances. What emotions Jochebed must have felt as she hid her baby, Moses, in the bulrushes of the river! Even though she could not see the big picture of God’s plan for deliverance, she trusted God day by day for direction. She could have harbored resentment as she observed the Egyptian oppression of her family, her neighbors, and her people. She could have focused on the unfairness of the prejudice against them. She could have given in to despair and resigned herself to Pharaoh’s edict. She had the opportunity to allow depression to overwhelm her. She most certainly must have felt some fear; yet, she chose to put her trust in God.

This little infant’s life was spared in a most unusual way through the faith of his mother. God’s amazing plan was to use the daughter of the very designer of the evil plot of destruction to protect the life of Moses. God intervened again to prepare Moses’ heart to love and trust Him; Moses’ own mother was chosen to nurse him and, more importantly, to train him in the impressionable early years of his life. Later, God used the finest of the Egyptian schools to educate him.

It is not likely that we can see the big picture of our lives right now. However, our duty is to choose to daily trust in the Almighty and to respond to

difficulties and suffering with God-given grace. God will carry us through whatever circumstances come our way. We can ask Him to open our eyes to signs of hope. He may be orchestrating events at this very moment to allow His deliverance to unfold!

BACKGROUND

This portion of text relates how Jacob’s family multiplied in Egypt until a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph came into power. He forced the Israelites into slavery, and declared that their male children were to be killed. It also describes the birth and miraculous preservation of Moses.

The first seven verses of the text tie the Book of Exodus to the Book of Genesis. The number seventy referred to Jacob’s direct descendants and would not have included their servants. They were a group small in number, but God greatly multiplied them as He had promised.

Scholars hold various opinions regarding who the Pharaohs were at this time. Many believe that the new king mentioned in verse 8 was a ruler from a different dynasty. It is possible that the rulers at the time of Joseph were foreigners, and when they were overthrown, the new leadership had strong dislike for those who were not native Egyptians. Whatever the case, the new Pharaoh had no regard for the important role Joseph had played in the preservation of Egypt.

Since Goshen was located in the Nile delta area in the northern part of Egypt, Pharaoh felt the Israelites could easily become allied with Egypt’s enemies. Therefore, he oppressed them and forced them into slavery. While scholars disagree regarding precise city locations and names, structures built during that time have survived to the present, providing evidence that the Hebrew people participated in many Egyptian construction projects.

The two midwives who were instructed to kill the male babies (verses 15-21) were likely the leaders of groups of midwives. The “stools” were seats or stones where women giving birth knelt or sat during the delivery. God blessed the midwives because they disobeyed the king out of respect and fear for God. In a further effort to control the multiplication of the Hebrews, Pharaoh commanded that the male children be killed by throwing them into the river (verse 22).

One courageous family ignored Pharaoh’s edict and hid their baby. The ark made by Moses’ mother was constructed from papyrus, a reed that grew on the edges of the Nile River. These reeds, which had a triangular stalk and at times reached sixteen feet

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

A CLOSER LOOK

2. What might have given Moses' mother the courage to do what she did?

CONCLUSION

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” (Exodus 3:10)

Harold Barrett was a young father when he repented of his sins and gave his life to God. His wife, Sally, was saved just a few days later. Harold would often testify that when the Lord saved him, he determined to put his whole heart into the Gospel and “pay any price that God might require.” He asked the Lord for a burden for souls, and shortly thereafter was given the privilege of visiting merchant ships in Portland’s harbor to invite the crewmen to church. That opportunity led to the couple entertaining crewmen in their home, and hundreds of contacts were made and friendships established. Many times the Korean seafaring men asked Harold if there was an Apostolic Faith Church in their country. When he would respond that there was not, they often asked, “Why don’t you come to Korea?”

In 1966, the Barretts made their first trip to South Korea and spent seven months visiting acquaintances all over the country. Harold’s heart was grieved when they were asked again and again why this organization did not have a church there. After they returned home, his pastor asked, “Harold, would you and Sally like to go to Korea as missionaries?” Harold later recounted, “There was no hesitation in my heart, and I knew not in Sally’s heart either, so I said yes. We rented our home, gave the family business to our sons, and were ready for the greatest adventure of our lives.”

Harold and Sally Barrett lived in Korea for many years and made numerous trips back once they were again living in the United States. Today our organization has six churches in South Korea, and multiple generations there have heard the Gospel because of the Barretts’ willingness to answer the call and start sharing the Good News.

In our text today, Moses too received a call from God. Years before, he had felt the burden to help his people, but he had not waited for God’s direction and had taken matters into his own hands. However, as we can see in the focus verse, God in His own time called Moses to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt. By then, having spent forty years in the desert, Moses was hesitant to answer. However, God was emphatic with His instructions, and Moses ultimately obeyed.

God calls each of us to serve Him. We may not be called to go far from home as missionaries, or to

lead a nation out of slavery, but we are told to share the good news of God’s love wherever we can. Maybe God wants us to witness to a fellow employee, lend a helping hand to a neighbor, or teach a class in Sunday school. There are many callings, but what is important is our willingness to do what God wants us to do. By His grace, we can answer His call.

BACKGROUND

This text block describes how Moses endeavored to defend a Hebrew slave and ended up fleeing to Midian and becoming a shepherd. It also describes his call from God at the burning bush, which took place about forty years after his abrupt departure from Egypt.

Egypt at this time was a highly developed civilization, especially in the areas of mathematics, engineering, and astronomy. They had an accurate calendar and had constructed edifices whose remains exist to this day. Moses no doubt was trained in the most advanced schools, where his instruction would have included international relationships and military logistics.

The training by his mother in his early years was reflected in Moses’ life as he grew to adulthood. He knew that he was a Hebrew by birth, and his heart was moved by his people’s persecution. When he was forty years old, he slew an Egyptian in defense of a Hebrew and then fled to Midian. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah, who are thought to have lived east of what is now the Gulf of Aqaba. There, Moses was taken in by a priest named Reuel (also known as Jethro), which means “friend of God.” Moses married Reuel’s daughter and had children. The name of his first son was Gershom, which means “refugee,” indicating that his heart was still with the Israelites. Meanwhile, the Hebrews were becoming more and more desperate under Egyptian bondage.

After Moses had been in Midian for forty years, God called him as he was tending flocks near Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) and commissioned him to go before Pharaoh and deliver the Israelites from Egyptian oppression. Many scholars believe that the “angel” in the burning bush was the preincarnate Christ. Moses had many questions and hesitated to comply, but God continued to prod him toward obedience.

Moses asked what he should say when the Hebrews inquired who had sent him. In ancient times, a person’s name expressed his character as well as

his identity. Although the Lord's name had been in use before, at this point He began to reveal what His name meant. "I AM" reflected more than just God's transcendent existence; it also indicated that His divine Presence would be with Moses and Israel.

In Exodus 3:16-22, God told Moses what to do when he arrived back in Egypt, promising to show His power and to give the Hebrew people deliverance. The first verses of chapter 4 relate how Moses held back, so God gave him signs that would demonstrate His divine power to the people. When Moses pled an inability to speak, God promised that Aaron, Moses' older brother, would serve as his mouthpiece.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The oppression of Israel in Egypt
- B. The deliverer for Israel
 - 1. Moses in Egypt
 - c. His murder of an Egyptian (2:11-14)
 - 2. Moses in Midian (2:15—4:17)
 - a. His exile (2:15-20)
 - b. His marriage (2:21-22)
 - c. His call (2:23—4:17)
 - (1) The background (2:23-25)
 - (2) The summons (3:1-12)
 - (3) The struggle (3:13—4:17)
 - (a) What shall I say? (3:13-22)
 - (b) What if they don't listen? (4:1-9)
 - (c) What about my inability to speak? (4:10-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did God use to attract Moses' attention in Midian so He could speak to him?

2. How might God call us into service for Him?

3. What can we learn from the signs God gave to Moses?

CONCLUSION

God's call on a life never disappears, nor can it be fulfilled if it is based on our own wisdom and ability. God's call is always about Him and not us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: and they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.” (Exodus 5:20-21)

Rejection is a painful experience no matter what the cause. Gladys Aylward knew the feeling. As a teenager, she read a magazine article about China that changed her life. She could not escape the impression that she had a responsibility toward the millions of people in that distant land who had not yet heard of God's love. She *knew* she had to tell them.

In her mid-twenties, she applied for and was given a probationary position with the China Inland Mission Center in London, but her probation ended in failure; she was rejected for service as a missionary. However, her inner sense of calling did not abate. She began to save the meager wages she earned as a housemaid, confident that God would help her get to China. And He did! On October 15, 1932, at the age of thirty, Gladys Aylward left London to begin the work God had called her to do. She spent many years in China caring for unwanted children and ministering in villages, prisons, and among lepers.

Throughout her stay in that country, Gladys' ministry was characterized by a humble dependence upon God in a steady stream of extreme circumstances. At the end of her life, she wrote, “My heart is full of praise that one so insignificant, uneducated, and ordinary in every way could be used to His glory for the blessing of His people in poor, persecuted China.” Though rejected by man, she proved that when an endeavor is undertaken at God's direction, He will make a way.

Moses and Aaron proved that as well. Today's focus verse describes their rejection by the Hebrew people. Confronting Pharaoh with God's demands had only increased the oppression inflicted upon the people. Moses was sent to deliver, and they responded by lashing out in anger and frustration. However, Moses was motivated by the fear of God and a love for the people of God, and he followed through in obedience in spite of rejection.

When we commit ourselves to follow God's call upon our lives, people around us may question, deride, or even actively resist us, but faithfulness to God will

always be rewarded. Gladys Aylward was rewarded by seeing her efforts in China used to God's glory. Moses' commitment to do the will of God led to the eventual deliverance of the Children of Israel.

Are there situations in your life today that leave you feeling rejected? Are you afraid of what may happen if you follow God? Take courage, and do what is right. God will note your obedience, and His blessing will rest upon your life.

BACKGROUND

Convinced at last of God's call, in today's text Moses took leave of his wife's family and returned to Egypt, accompanied by his brother, Aaron. True to God's forewarning, Pharaoh was not receptive to Moses and Aaron's request to let the Hebrews go, and responded by increasing his oppression of the Israelites.

Exodus 4:21 contains the first of multiple references to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh chose repeatedly to set his will against God and ignored the miracles and workings of God. Calamities which do not soften the heart will harden it. Though God did not arbitrarily decide to pre-set Pharaoh's heart and mind so he could not respond to Him, Pharaoh's continued resistance conditioned his heart to give the same response. His own free will was the cause of his downfall.

The passage in Exodus 4:24-26 is a subject of debate among Bible scholars. However, the main point is that God was emphasizing to Moses the importance of circumcision, which was part of the Abrahamic covenant. Also, God made it clear that obedience to His directions is vital. It is possible that Zipporah and Moses' sons went back to Midian after this episode (see Exodus 18:1-5).

Verses 27-31 relate how, at God's direction, Aaron went to the wilderness, where he met Moses in the area of Mount Sinai. Together they went to Egypt and approached the elders of Israel.

Exodus 5 tells of Moses and Aaron's first appearance before Pharaoh. The Egyptians had many gods; in fact, Pharaoh himself was considered to be a god. Thus, Pharaoh had no respect for the Hebrew God. Also, the requests to hold a feast in the wilderness and to go three days' journey into the desert indicated to Pharaoh that the Hebrews were asking to make a substantial trip.

Pharaoh responded by increasing the work required of the Hebrew slaves, who were making mud bricks which were dried in the sun. These were large

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

- I. The oppression of Israel in Egypt
 - B. The deliverer for Israel
 3. Moses' return to Egypt (4:18-31)
 - a. The command to return (4:18-23)
 - b. The episode in the inn (4:24-26)
 - c. The meeting with Aaron (4:27-28)
 - d. The confrontation with the elders (4:29-31)
 - C. The struggles with Pharaoh
 1. The confrontation with Pharaoh (5:1-21)
 - a. The command of Pharaoh (5:1-9)
 - b. The oppression of the taskmasters (5:10-14)
 - c. The cry of the sons of Israel (5:15-21)

1. In his initial request to Pharaoh, how far into the wilderness did Moses propose to take the people?

2. Why do you think the Hebrews responded to Moses and Aaron as they did after their first confrontation with Pharaoh?

[illegible]

God does not ask us to go anywhere that he will not go with us, or to do anything that He will not help us accomplish. It might seem hard to do right, but God will provide the strength, courage, and ability.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.” (Exodus 6:6)

An animal caught in a trap fights frantically to free itself. The instinct to get away is so strong that they do themselves injury in the process of trying to obtain freedom. Sometimes animals even pull against the trap so hard that they sever a leg or paw from their body. If release cannot be obtained, eventually the animal will die of dehydration or starvation.

Imagine how trapped the Children of Israel felt as they labored in cruel bondage to Pharaoh and the Egyptians! They had prayed to God for deliverance, and He had sent Moses to bring them out. Moses had gone before Pharaoh and had requested that the people be allowed to go to the desert to worship. However, instead of listening to Moses, Pharaoh had only made life harder for the Israelites.

Consider how Moses must have felt at Pharaoh’s rejection of his request. No doubt he mentally rehearsed what God had said when He called him in the desert. Moses knew God had told him to go and deliver His people, but his initial effort seemingly had only made matters worse for the Israelites. Strongly questioning his mission, Moses asked, “Why is it that thou hast sent me?” (Exodus 5:22). He must have felt like a failure—trapped by the seeming futility of pursuing the course of action God required.

In times of crisis, when we feel we are held captive by circumstances, we should remember the words of the Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, “Man’s extremities are God’s opportunities.” We may easily reach our limits, but God has no boundaries. God told Moses He would bring His people out of bondage. God’s purpose would be accomplished, even though the situation looked hopeless to Moses.

Situations in our lives may seem impossible at times. Perhaps we feel we are being held captive by our circumstances, with no deliverance in sight. If we are trying to do right and follow God, we can take heart. God has given us many promises in His Word. He can and will set us free! Claim these promises and patiently wait for His time of deliverance. Remember, He kept His promises to Moses and the Children of Israel, and He will do the same for us today.

BACKGROUND

This portion of Exodus relates the complaints of the Hebrews, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, and God’s continued instruction to Moses to persist in requesting the release of the Children of Israel. Inserted in chapter 6 is a genealogy detailing the ancestry of Moses and Aaron.

The beginning of today’s text records a dialog between Moses and God. After Pharaoh increased the tasks of the Hebrews, they turned against Moses and Aaron. In Exodus 5:22-23, Moses went to God and asked why he had been sent. Exodus 6:1-9 relates God’s response, which was a strong promise of deliverance. God intended to reveal Himself to the Children of Israel in a different way than He had to their forefathers. He would show them distinctly that He was with them and working for them. However, the Israelites were so oppressed that they were not encouraged by promises. When they would not believe Moses, he told God that he thought Pharaoh would not believe him either.

The genealogy inserted in Exodus 6:14-27 identifies the family ancestry of Moses and Aaron. Because of their leadership roles, their credentials needed to be established among the Israelites. They were to be seen as legitimate leaders of Israel.

In Exodus 6:28-30, the narrative resumes, restating that God directed Moses to go again to Pharaoh. Moses still hesitated, so God gave him direct instructions, and also told him what the results would be (Exodus 7:1-7). The phrase “I have made thee a god to Pharaoh” (Exodus 7:1) meant that God promised to give Moses authority and power that demanded respect. Aaron was to be his “prophet” or spokesperson. Although Pharaoh would not heed their words, God promised to deliver the Children of Israel. The mention of “armies” in Exodus 6:26 and 7:4 referred to a large number of people organized into groups or battalions. God intended His miracles to be a witness to the Egyptians, demonstrating that He was the one true, all-powerful God.

Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three when they confronted Pharaoh.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The oppression of Israel in Egypt
 - C. The struggles with Pharaoh
 2. The confrontation with Jehovah (5:22 — 7:7)
 - a. The first confrontation (5:22-6:9)

- (1) The complaint (5:22-23)
 - (2) The answer (6:1-8)
 - (3) The result (6:9)
- b. The second confrontation (6:10-27)
 - (1) The comment (6:10-11)
 - (2) The complaint (6:12)
 - (3) The answer (6:13)
 - (4) The genealogy (6:14-27)
- c. The third confrontation (6:28—7:7)
 - (1) The comment (6:28-29)
 - (2) The complaint (6:30)
 - (3) The answer (7:1-5)
 - (4) The result (7:6-7)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was God's promise to Moses concerning the deliverance of His people?

2. Why did Moses doubt that God had sent him to help deliver the Israelites out of Egypt?

3. How can God's promises in this text encourage us when we feel trapped by seemingly impossible situations?

CONCLUSION

When we feel overwhelmed by difficulties that arise because of our purpose to follow God, we must remember that we have a Deliverer! He is waiting to work in our lives, just as He did for the Children of Israel.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: tomorrow shall this sign be.” (Exodus 8:22-23)

A number of years ago, our family was traveling through Eastern Oregon near the border of Idaho. Late one afternoon, tired of driving, we pulled into a trailer camp for the night. We opened the car doors, and wearily emerged from the car’s interior, planning to go back to the trailer and fix some dinner. Suddenly, we began moving quickly—in fact, we found ourselves literally running for the trailer door. The whole area was swarming with flies! Buzzing in our faces, swirling around our heads, landing on our arms—there were flies everywhere! We dashed into the shelter of the trailer and quickly shut the door behind us. A few flies made it in with us, but thankfully, the hordes were outside. How grateful we were for a “division” between us and the swarm of insects!

Instantly, our thoughts went to the plague of flies, which is recorded in the text for today. What must it have been like for the Egyptians to endure such an outbreak? Our brief incident made us realize how terribly distressing that plague must have been. What an evidence of the caring protection of God for His own, when He decreed that none of the flies would venture into the land of Goshen!

Throughout the text we can see the danger of being opposed to God and the benefits of being on God’s side. God used these plagues to show Pharaoh and the Egyptians that He alone is the true God, and the gods they served were false gods. Because Moses and Aaron obeyed God’s commandments, He brought protection, guidance, and help to the Children of Israel. We can enjoy these same benefits today if we obey God’s Word and follow His will for our lives.

Stubbornness against God will bring judgment. When the Nile River turned to blood, when the frogs and lice infested the Egyptians’ homes, and when the hordes of flies swarmed all over them, one would have expected that Pharaoh and his people would have immediately repented—but they did not. Today, too, many people resist God’s will in their lives without considering the eternal consequences.

A heart that is fully surrendered to God will receive His blessing, and that blessing will include protection from evil.

BACKGROUND

In this text, Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh, and God began to work by sending the first four of ten plagues.

Pharaoh was not impressed by a lowly shepherd claiming to be sent by a foreign God. He asked for a miracle, so Aaron cast his rod down and it became a serpent. Through trickery or satanic power, Pharaoh’s magicians were able to duplicate this miracle. Yet, when Aaron’s rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians, God was showing Pharaoh who was really in control.

The plagues that followed Pharaoh’s refusal to let the Children of Israel go not only devastated Egypt, but also showed the Egyptians that God of the Hebrews was the true God of Heaven, and not the gods of nature, which the Egyptians worshipped.

The first plague opposed Hapi, the god of the Nile River, who supposedly saw to it that the river overflowed its banks each year just enough to renew the soil, but not enough to flood the villages. The Egyptians were dependent on the Nile as a source of water. God turned it and all other sources of water into blood. Once again, the magicians were able to duplicate the plague. Ironically, every time the magicians duplicated a plague, it just made matters worse for the Egyptians.

The second plague ridiculed the frog goddess, Heqet, who supposedly assisted women in childbirth and promoted fertility. God sent a deluge of frogs, which contaminated the entire land of Egypt. From the mud-brick houses of the poor to the most elaborate homes of the wealthy, the frogs permeated every room.

When God sent lice as the third plague, the magicians tried to duplicate that also, but they were not able to do so. In Exodus 8:19 the magicians admitted to Pharaoh that this plague was the “finger of God,” but still Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.

Moses told Pharaoh the next plague would be a swarm of flies that would cover the land of Egypt. However, this time God would put a division between Goshen, where the Children of Israel dwelt, and the rest of Egypt. The word *division* in Exodus 8:23 comes from the Hebrew word *pedut* and could also be translated as *deliverance*. God would protect the Children of Israel from the plagues that came

upon the Egyptians. Pharaoh tried to compromise and said he would allow the Children of Israel to sacrifice to their God, but only if they remained in Egypt. However, God’s purpose was deliverance, not just to obtain an opportunity for the Israelites to sacrifice.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The oppression of Israel in Egypt
 - C. The struggles with Pharaoh
 - 3. The judgments on Egypt
 - a. The hardening of Pharaoh (7:8-13)
 - b. The plagues on Egypt
 - (1) Nile turned to blood (7:14-25)
 - (2) Frogs (8:1-15)
 - (3) Lice (8:16-19)
 - (4) Swarms of flies (8:20-32)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. Where were the frogs during the plague in Egypt?

- 2. Through the plagues, what was God showing the Egyptians and the Israelites about Himself?

- 3. In what situations has God protected you or put a division between you and evil?

CONCLUSION

When we have given our lives to God and have experienced His redemption, we are truly separated from the world and will experience His protection and deliverance.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.”
(Exodus 9:34)**

Madalyn Murray O’Hair gained fame after her lawsuits, *Murray v. Curlett* and *Schempp v. School District of Abington Township*, were heard by the United States Supreme Court in 1963. She declared that her son, William, had been mistreated for not participating in the required daily opening exercises, which included Bible reading. The Court ruled that compulsory Bible reading and prayer in the public schools was unconstitutional. Following that decision, Madalyn Murray O’Hair became a spokesperson for atheism, and created a nonprofit organization called American Atheists. She sought for the removal of “In God We Trust” from the United States currency and wanted the phrase “under God” taken out of the Pledge of Allegiance. She was vocal, forceful, and zealous in her causes, which prompted many people to hate her. In 1995 she disappeared, and in time it was discovered that she had been gruesomely murdered.

In contrast, Murray O’Hair’s son, William, whose rights she sought to defend in her lawsuit, converted to Christianity in 1980 and became a Baptist preacher. He is active in Christian causes today. However, his conversion prompted a breach between him and his mother that was never resolved.

Every individual has a free choice of whether or not to serve God. Madalyn Murray O’Hair chose, her son William chose, and Pharaoh in Egypt chose. The focus verse states that Pharaoh hardened his heart. When he saw God’s workings and power, he repeatedly refused to submit himself. Some of the synonyms for *hard-hearted* include “unfeeling,” “unmerciful,” and “pitiless.” What a description of the type of man Pharaoh must have been! Though the Egyptians were being devastated and were suffering great distress because of his choices, Pharaoh still would not yield. He continued to resist the Lord and His servants, and each act of disobedience only hardened his heart more.

This should be a lesson to us. Each rejection of God results in a weakened conscience and lessens the ability of an individual to respond correctly the next time. When a person repeatedly chooses to ignore the Voice of God, the day may come when he no longer hears God’s call.

Christians must also be cautious to respond quickly to the Spirit. When God directs a particular course of action or instructs us in any way, let us be quick to yield and obey!

BACKGROUND

In this text, God continued to demonstrate His power as He sent three more plagues upon Egypt.

The fifth plague (verses 1-7) was a pestilence on the Egyptians’ livestock which were in the fields. The *murrain* was some type of highly contagious and fatal disease. Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh when this plague would begin, so some Egyptians heeded and took their animals out of the fields. The cattle of the Hebrews were protected from this plague, and confirmation of that fact contributed to the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart. The Egyptians worshipped many animals and animal-headed gods, and thus once again God showed His sovereignty over their false religious deities.

Pharaoh was given no warning of the sixth plague (verses 8-12), which was boils upon man and beasts. God turned ashes into small dust that went throughout Egypt, causing sores. The “furnace” where Moses obtained the ashes was likely a brick kiln used by the Hebrews in their slave labor. The magicians, who had been able to imitate earlier plagues, were also smitten and unable to produce a cure. There is no further reference to the magicians as the account of plagues continues.

The seventh plague (verses 13-35) was preceded with a warning. In the original language, “Now I will stretch out my hand” (verse 15) indicated something God could have done in the past, but chose not to. God was letting Pharaoh know that he could have been destroyed because of his willful determination not to yield. Instead God had chosen to let him live, and sent the plagues as evidence of His supremacy (verse 14) to the people of the whole earth (verse 16). Some in Egypt had come to respect God, and they heeded the warning, fleeing into their houses. Others ignored the warning and lost servants and cattle (verses 20-21).

Rain was not common in Egypt, and the storm God sent was fierce. The hail was large enough to destroy agriculture, trees, animals, and people. Based on the reference to the crops (verses 31-32), it is possible that this storm took place between January and March. The flax, which had been budding (balled), was ruined. It was used to make linen, which was a choice fabric in Egypt.

The violent storm caused Pharaoh to fear and admit that he was wrong. But he demonstrated no repentance, and his heart was not changed. Once the storm was over, he still would not let the Israelites go.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The oppression of Israel in Egypt
 - C. The struggles with Pharaoh
 - 3. The judgments on Egypt
 - b. The plagues on Egypt
 - (5) Pestilence upon the livestock (9:1-7)
 - (6) Boils (9:8-12)
 - (7) Hail (9:13-35)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What happened in Goshen when the plague of hail came?

2. Why does even a great demonstration of power fail to convince a person who has hardened his heart? How is this evidenced in our world today?

3. What can we do to keep our hearts tender toward God?

CONCLUSION

We want to choose to yield to God's plan. May we always have a soft heart toward the Lord and His will!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son’s son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the LORD.” (Exodus 10:2)

The pages of the scrapbook were yellowed and a bit tattered around the edges, but each page held a wealth of memories. I studied the precious old photographs that chronicled our family’s history. There was my dad as a young man (with hair!) on skis. That brought back memories of childhood trips to Mount Hood and skimming down the slope on the back of Dad’s skis, my arms tight around his waist. There was my uncle, smiling at the camera from behind his typewriter. He’s been in Heaven for so many years now that I can hardly picture his face, but I do remember his deep laugh, his love for God, and saying goodbye to him as he left for his final missionary trip to Africa. And that round-faced little toddler in a shepherd’s robe, clutching his stuffed lamb—could that really be my brother, the competent, respected building contractor? I clearly remember him singing, “I Wish I Could Have Been a Shepherd,” in the Sunday school program, even though I was only a child myself at the time.

Think of the memories Moses could have related! As a participant in one of the greatest dramas in Biblical history, Moses witnessed events that many have heard of but very few actually saw.

In our focus verse, God told Moses that He wanted him to tell his son and his son’s son about the mighty things God had wrought in Egypt so that generations to come would know that God is the Lord of all. In essence, God was saying, “Take a mental snapshot, Moses. Preserve this event for those who will follow after you. Do not let them forget.” Moses did just that, and we see throughout the Old Testament how the Children of Israel were reminded time after time of God’s deliverance from Egypt.

Has God blessed you with memories of what He has done in your life? Can you recount times when the Lord himself has intervened in your personal history? It is vital for us to tell what the Lord has done for us in our past and what He is doing for us now. The stories we relate and how we present them will help shape the next generation’s belief in God and knowledge of what He can do. Like beloved snapshots in an old family album, our memories of how God has worked

in our lives are meant to be shared. Let us pass them on, that they may inspire and refresh those who come behind us.

BACKGROUND

The Children of Israel were nearing the end of their bondage as Egyptian slaves. God had appointed Moses to lead them out of Egypt, and He sent plagues on the Egyptians because of Pharaoh’s refusal to let the Children of Israel go. Seven plagues preceded today’s text, with each plague bringing more devastation to the land of Egypt.

The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is mentioned twenty times in chapters 4 through 11. Exodus 9:16-17 and Romans 9:15-18 tell us that God raised up this particular Pharaoh to show the world the power of God. Pharaoh had exalted himself among the people, and God used the plagues to demonstrate how powerless Pharaoh really was when confronted by the true God.

The Children of Israel were a valuable asset to the Egyptians, and Pharaoh was unwilling to let go of such a resource. Their free labor had built Egypt’s great cities. By the time the eighth plague came, Egypt had already suffered incredible damage, yet Pharaoh still refused to let the Israelites go.

Moses often told Pharaoh ahead of time what the plague would be, giving ample warning of the results to come if Pharaoh refused to give in. Pharaoh first tried to compromise with Moses by offering to let only the men go. Later he offered to let all the people go if they would leave their livestock behind. However, his attempts to negotiate failed.

When the plague of locusts engulfed the land, Pharaoh quickly called for Moses and Aaron to come and entreat the Lord to take away the locusts. God hearkened to the prayers of Moses and Aaron just as He had after each preceding plague, showing God’s mercy even toward Pharaoh.

Of all the plagues, the plague of darkness was the biggest insult to Egypt’s many gods. Ra, the sun god and chief of all the Egyptian gods, was proved powerless to end the oppressive darkness. However, the true God of Heaven made sure His children, the Israelites, had light in their dwellings. God was proving to the Egyptians that He alone is the true God.

In Exodus 11, God outlined the final plague to Moses. This plague would cause Pharaoh to beg the Children of Israel to leave Egypt. God told Moses to have the Israelites ask the Egyptian people for silver and gold. By this time, the Egyptians had a great fear

of Moses and the Children of Israel, and they were more than willing to give the Israelites whatever they wanted. The death of all the firstborn males in Egypt, including Pharaoh's son, would be the final blow to Pharaoh's egotistical attitude that he was above God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The oppression of Israel in Egypt
 - C. The struggles with Pharaoh
 - 3. The judgments on Egypt
 - b. The plagues on Egypt
 - (8) Locust (10:1-20)
 - (9) Darkness (10:21-29)
 - (10) The last plague announced (11:1-8)
 - c. Summary (11:9-10)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What were the eighth and ninth plagues? How did Pharaoh respond?

2. How did Moses' obedience to God and his courage to stand up to Pharaoh affect the Egyptian people?

3. What leadership lessons do you think Moses might have learned through his ongoing confrontations with Pharaoh?

4. How can Moses' experience with Pharaoh encourage us to put our trust in God even when our situation seems impossible?

CONCLUSION

Our life experiences will not be like those of Moses, but they are unique and they matter. What were the turning points in your life? Where did you see God work? What is He doing for you right now? Pass it on! The stories you share today may be the building blocks for someone's faith tomorrow.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.” (Exodus 12:13-14)

While in high school, I cleaned house for a Jewish family, and through my acquaintance with them, I learned about their religious customs. Preparing for the Passover, an event celebrated in remembrance of their nation’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt, is an important part of their tradition. During Passover week, I was interested to find them thoroughly cleaning their cupboards to make sure there was no food that contained leaven in the house. The highlight of Passover is the *seder* (which means “order”). The seder service is held at the dining table in most homes, and at this time the story of the Exodus from Egypt is told. A special seder plate is placed on the table which contains several symbolic food items. A lamb bone symbolizes the sacrificial lamb that was used to protect the Jewish homes from the last plague. Bitter herbs (usually horseradish) are a reminder of the bitter life encountered by the slaves. A bowl of salt water, in which the greens are dipped, symbolizes tears shed by the slaves.

In the final plague upon Egypt, described in today’s text, a lamb without blemish had to be killed and its blood applied to the door posts and lintels of the houses. The killing of the lamb required the shedding of innocent blood, and that blood spared the life of the firstborn of each household.

It is no coincidence that Jesus was sacrificed during the Passover season. Most non-Jewish Christians do not commemorate the Exodus. However, we recognize that the Passover was a foreshadowing of a much greater redemption to come—the sacrifice of the Perfect Lamb for the redemption of mankind from sin. In the New Testament, John the Baptist proclaimed that the Lamb of God was Jesus Christ, who came to take away the sin of the world. Today, we can have Christ’s Blood applied to our hearts, which is our spiritual house.

Ponder the beauty of the word *deliverance*. Because of the Blood of Jesus, we are delivered from the bondage of sin. Because of the Blood of Jesus, we

will be spared from God’s judgment, just as all the Israelites who had the blood applied on their houses were spared from physical death on that memorable night so long ago.

How thankful we should be for deliverance from sin that makes us new creatures in Christ!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text records God’s instructions for the Hebrews regarding the Passover and tells of the final plague on the Egyptians—the death of the firstborn. After 430 years in Egypt, God was ready to lead the Children of Israel to the Promised Land. He had sent nine plagues that had devastated Egypt, and this tenth and last plague would cause the Egyptians to beg the Children of Israel to leave.

God did not want the Children of Israel to forget His deliverance, so He established a religious ceremony commemorating the event which the people were to perform every year. This observance, called Passover, is still part of Jewish custom.

Moses gave the Israelites instructions regarding how this memorial feast was to be celebrated. On the first day, they were to remove any leaven from their homes, and for seven days they were to eat only unleavened bread. This reflected the fact that the Children of Israel left Egypt in such haste that the women did not have time to let their bread rise, and instead, made unleavened bread (Exodus 12:34,39). Today the Jewish people still eat unleavened bread called *matzah* during Passover.

Prior to this time, most ancient cultures had agricultural calendars. Israel’s agricultural calendar began at the beginning of their rainy season. However, after their deliverance, the Passover feast was to mark the start of their religious calendar year (Exodus 12:2).

There is a progression in the Scriptural revelation of the sacrificing of a lamb. In Genesis, the lamb was slain for the individual (Genesis 4:4). In today’s Exodus text, the blood of a lamb availed for a family or household. In Leviticus, the lamb was slain for the nation (Leviticus 16). In the New Testament, the Perfect Lamb was slain for the sin of the whole world (John 1:29).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The redemption of Israel from Egypt
 - A. The Passover (12:1-36)
 - 1. The directions for the Passover (12:1-20)
 - a. The lamb (12:1-14)

- (1) The selection (12:1-6)
 - (2) The use (12:7-11)
 - (3) The sign (12:12-14)
- b. The unleavened bread (12:15-20)
- 2. The instruction of the people (12:21-28)
- 3. The death of the first born (12:29-30)
- 4. The plunder of the Egyptians (12:31-36)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why were the Israelites supposed to put blood upon the door posts and lintels of their homes?

2. Why do you think God required the Children of Israel to take action to protect themselves from this last plague instead of automatically exempting them as He had in the previous plagues?

3. What does God's deliverance mean to you?

CONCLUSION

Just as the blood of the Passover lamb protected the Children of Israel from God's judgment, we can escape divine judgment by having the Blood of Jesus applied to our hearts.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.” (Exodus 13:14)

In the United States, Memorial Day is a celebration to honor those who have given their lives in the defense of the nation. Flags are flown, parades are held, and memories are shared. It is a reminder of those who made the supreme sacrifice in support of the country Americans love. This day is an opportunity to teach children so they, too, will know and be thankful for the price paid to purchase freedom.

While our country and national liberty are of great value, there are eternal truths which are even more important. These, too, must be imparted to our children. For example, God’s Word indicates that salvation transforms a person’s life, and brings victory and deliverance from sin. It teaches entire sanctification (holiness), a second application of the Blood of Jesus, which cleanses and purifies the heart. The Bible indicates that sanctified believers can be filled with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We have proven that these truths are worth staking our lives upon, yet generation after generation must be taught and reminded.

God wanted future generations of the Children of Israel to know about His power that was displayed when He delivered His people out of Egypt. He instituted the Passover celebration and the dedication of the firstborn (as noted in the focus verse) as opportunities for the people to rehearse past events to their children.

We also have individual spiritual events in our lives that need to be shared. There are Gospel truths we have personally proved that must be passed on. Recounting them reminds us that God’s promises are still true. Just as the Children of Israel were to pass on to their children the account of the deliverance God had given them, we have truths to pass on to our children. May God help us to faithfully transmit the message of the Gospel to the next generation!

BACKGROUND

As the Egyptians buried their dead, the Israelites left Egypt a free people. At last they were on the

way to the Promised Land. This text recounts their departure, restates instructions about the Passover, and describes the dedication of the firstborn.

The exact locations of Rameses and Succoth are not known. It is possible that Rameses was a city in Goshen where the Children of Israel gathered to begin their exit. Succoth was probably not very far east of Rameses in the direction of the Red Sea. The word *succoth* means “booths” or “tents.”

It is possible that the statement “six hundred thousand on foot that were men” (verse 37) meant there was a total of between two and three million people when women and children were added to that number. The “mixed multitude” who went with the Children of Israel may have been Egyptians who had come to believe in God, or other slaves who used this opportunity to gain freedom. Later, these people brought trouble to Israel (see Numbers 11:4).

Instructions about the Passover were restated in verses 43-49, citing those who were eligible to participate and those who were not. The same regulations applied to the “homeborn” (Israelites) and the strangers who dwelt among them. The phrase “by their armies” means a large number of people arranged in groups like an army.

In Exodus 13:1-16, Moses relayed a message from God to the people, including a repetition of the Passover details. This was to be celebrated in the month during the Abib (a stage in the development of barley). It correlates approximately to our April on the Gregorian calendar. God also declared that the firstborn of man and animal belonged to Him, and He instituted a system of sacrifices for redeeming their sons and certain animals. This was to remind them of how the firstborn in Egypt had died.

The most direct route to Canaan from Egypt was north and east about two hundred miles. The Children of Israel could have traveled this distance in about fourteen days. However, war was inevitable on that route, so God protected His people by taking them in an indirect way. In the original language, the word “harnessed” in verse 18 indicated that they were armed for battle. However, many scholars believe this passage means the Israelites were organized in an orderly way. It is possible that the arrangement for exiting may have been planned while the plagues were transpiring.

Exodus 13:19 shows how Moses fulfilled the promise to Joseph that his bones would be carried with the Hebrews back to Canaan (see Genesis 50:25).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The redemption of Israel from Egypt
 - B. The journey
 - 1. From Rameses to Succoth (12:37 — 13:19)
 - a. The journey (12:37-39)
 - b. The celebration of Passover (12:40-51)
 - (1) The cause (12:40-42)
 - (2) The regulations (12:43-49)
 - (3) The event (12:50-51)
 - c. The consecration of the firstborn (13:1-16)
 - d. Additional statements of the journey (13:17-19)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Of the males born in Israel, which of them were to be sanctified (consecrated) to the Lord?

2. Why do you think God was so concerned that the Israelites remember how the firstborn in Egypt were destroyed?

3. What parallels can you draw between the Children of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and your personal deliverance from the bondage of sin?

CONCLUSION

In order to preserve our spiritual heritage for coming generations, it is important to relate miracles that have touched our lives and to rehearse answers to prayers.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever.” (Exodus 14:13)

Hotly pursued by an army sweeping in for the kill, it would appear to the natural eye that the Children of Israel were doomed. Yet, God made a way of escape, and God’s chosen people walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. Hebrews 11:29 puts it this way, “By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.” What a marvelous deliverance!

Thousands of years later, a young minister in Nigeria faced, not an avenging army, but two armed robbers wielding machetes. Having stopped alongside the highway to deal with an overheated van engine, this minister and his companions were unexpectedly attacked. As one robber dashed toward the young minister, the Lord put a holy boldness in his spirit. He stood his ground and simply shouted the name of his Savior: “Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!” At the mention of that Name, the robbers took to their heels and fled into the bush. Another marvelous deliverance!

In today’s focus verse and in many other verses in God’s Word, we read words of encouragement and the instruction to not be afraid. Though the Exodus and the opening of the Red Sea are dramatic examples of God’s care and concern for His people, most of us will experience times when the circumstances surrounding us seem impossible or overwhelming. We may not have an army of soldiers behind us or armed robbers coming toward us, but we may still feel trapped by circumstances. Instead of giving in to fear or anxiety, we must take our example from Moses and determine to “stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.”

God did not promise to keep us *from* all trouble, but He said that He will deliver us *out* of it! When apprehension about what lies ahead oppresses you, remember that God is in control. If you keep your faith steadfast in Him, He will make a way of deliverance!

BACKGROUND

In today’s text, God continued to demonstrate His care and concern for the Israelites by protecting and guiding them. Judgment was poured out upon Pharaoh and the armies of Egypt in the Red Sea.

Scholars are unsure of the location of Etham, but “in the edge of the wilderness” (Exodus 13:20) implies they were near the Red Sea. God was leading His people along a route less traveled and therefore less dangerous.

Exodus 13:21 is the first reference to the “pillar of a cloud” and the “pillar of fire.” This visible sign of God’s presence would be with the Children of Israel throughout their years in the wilderness. God used the pillar to direct the travel route of the Hebrews and to give them shade in the day and light at night.

Chapter 14 recounts Pharaoh’s change of mind and his efforts to try to recapture his slaves. No doubt his agents were watching the movements of the Hebrews. God said they would conclude that the Israelites were lost (“entangled”) in the wilderness and trapped by the Red Sea. Pharaoh gathered his forces, six hundred “chosen” chariots (perhaps extra fast or well-built ones) and other chariots that were readily available, and pursued. When the Israelites observed the Egyptians coming behind them and the sea in front of them, they cried out in fear.

Moses’ admonition to “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD” has become a classic statement of faith used by many generations since the time of Moses. God evidenced His power and presence mightily that night. The cloud moved between the Israelites and the Egyptians, giving the Children of Israel light, but causing the Egyptians to be in darkness. A strong east wind divided the sea, and the Israelites crossed through on dry land. When Pharaoh’s hosts followed, God caused their chariot wheels to come off, and they were destroyed when He returned the waters to their place. The “morning watch” (Exodus 14:24) is thought to have been sometime between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., probably about 4:00 a.m.

The Red Sea is a great body of water that stretches north and south for about 1,200 miles. The northern tip branches into the Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez. Scholars are unsure of the precise location where the Hebrews crossed. The distance of the crossing and the width of God’s miraculous path made it possible for approximately two to three million people to cross over on foot during one night. In addition, the location was of a sufficient size to contain Pharaoh’s hosts “in the midst” and for the waters to overcome them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The redemption of Israel from Egypt
 - B. The journey

2. From Succoth to Etham (13:20-22)
3. From Etham to Pi-hahiroth (14:1-14)
 - a. The journey and its effect on Pharaoh (14:1-9)
 - b. The advance of Pharaoh (14:10-14)
4. From Pi-hahiroth through the sea
 - a. The crossing
 - (1) The darkness between the camps (14:15-20)
 - (2) The opening of the sea (14:21-25)
 - (3) The closing of the sea (14:26-29)
 - (4) The conclusion (14:30-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did God prevent the Egyptians from overtaking the people of Israel?

2. What effect did the miracle at the sea have on the Israelites?

3. Describe a time when God delivered you or someone you know from an “impossible” situation.

CONCLUSION

What a great God we serve! We never need to be alarmed at circumstances if we are following His directions.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” (Exodus 15:2)

How often the words of a song seem to express the innermost emotions of our hearts! Charles Wesley was conducting open-air meetings near Killyleagh, Ireland. During the course of his preaching, a number of people took exception to his views and assaulted him. Unable to withstand the mob, Wesley fled for his life. He took refuge in a nearby farmhouse, where a kind-hearted housewife hid him in the milk house. When Wesley’s assailants rushed up, the woman diverted their attention by preparing refreshments. Fearful that they might search the premises and discover the exhausted preacher, the farmer’s wife went to the milk house on the pretext of getting a cold drink for her visitors. She instructed Wesley to climb through the rear window and hide under the hedge. He clambered through the window and found a little brook flowing beside the hedge, forming a pool with overhanging branches that afforded a safe retreat. While waiting for the vindictive villagers to give up the search and leave, Wesley pulled a pencil and paper from his pocket and wrote out a beautiful plea for the protection of God. The words of the immortal hymn penned that day, “Jesus, Lover of My Soul,” have blessed and comforted many a troubled heart in the years since.

In today’s text, with their enemies drowned and their freedom secure, Moses and the Children of Israel rejoiced in song. After the triumph of escape and victory over the pursuing armies, it was natural to lift their voices in a hymn of praise to God. For us, too, the words of a song can make known our relief, praise, and thanksgiving.

Music and worship go hand in hand, for songs help us focus on worship by lifting our thoughts and emotions to God. Through music, we can reflect upon great themes of the Spirit, rehearse the incomprehensible mercies of God, and celebrate the greatness of our Redeemer.

Thank God for the fact that He has given His people this medium of praise and worship! What a joy it is to draw nearer to Him in the fellowship of other believers by singing His praises together.

Are you troubled or overwhelmed with the pressures of life? Are you rejoicing over an answer to

prayer? Are you looking for a way to draw nearer to God? Follow the example of Moses, and use a song to express what is in your heart.

BACKGROUND

The first expression of Israel’s national life was a glad burst of inspired song, which was recorded in this chapter and is known as the Song of Moses. Music played an important part in Israel’s worship and celebration. Not only was singing an expression of love and praise to God, but it was also a creative way to pass down oral traditions to the next generation. Some scholars say the Song of Moses is the oldest recorded song in the world.

Hebrew poetry was often written in a parallel form. Each line was either repeated in similar words in the next line, or portrayed a contrasting thought. Most of this poem is in synonymous parallel structure.

The Song of Moses, in addition to being a festive epic poem celebrating God’s victory, was a prophecy foretelling the powerful effect of the destruction of Egypt’s army on the surrounding nations. It specifically mentioned that Palestina (the land of the Philistines), Edom (inhabited by the descendants of Esau) and Moab (area belonging to the descendants of Lot) would fear God’s power. It told of the future settlement of Canaan, the construction of the Temple on Mount Zion, and the perpetuity of the dominion and worship of God.

Moses was a poet as well as a lawgiver. He not only wrote history, law, and prophecy, but more than once, he perpetuated them in the words of an inspired song. We are told that the redeemed will sing the Song of Moses in Heaven (Revelation 15:3).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The redemption of Israel from Egypt
 - B. The journey
 - 4. From Pi-hahiroth through the sea
 - a. The crossing
 - (5) The singing (15:1-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How is God pictured in the Song of Moses?

[illegible]

When we think about all God has done for us, our hearts overflow with praise and thanksgiving to Him.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.” (Exodus 15:26)

We had just settled into the snug little lakeside cottage that was to be ours for a whole blissful week. Disregarding the admonition of our parents, my brother, sister, and I headed for the huge pile of driftwood on the beach. Why shouldn't we climb on the logs? What could be the harm in that? While Mom and Dad were resting, we would just climb a little around the edges.

I will never forget the fear that stabbed my heart when I heard my sister scream. One look at the blood pouring from a huge gash on her leg sent me running across the sand, faster than I had ever run before, calling for my parents. I was sure my sister was going to bleed to death before they could get to her!

She didn't. My parents came to the rescue and after a few stitches and the application of a major bandage at the local hospital, my sister was back at the lakeside cottage. But that day I learned two important lessons: listen to what your parents say, and do what they tell you to do.

In today's focus verse, God gave the Children of Israel instructions that revolved around the same two thoughts: “hearken” and “do that which is right.” If these two simple requirements were followed, they were promised freedom from the diseases that had come upon the Egyptians. Obedience to God will bring His blessing!

Many of the laws God gave the Children of Israel were designed to keep them free from sickness and harm. They may not have fully understood why God instituted some of His requirements, just as my siblings and I did not understand (at our young age) why it was not wise for us to climb on the logs unsupervised.

Satan would have us grow careless about obeying God, and think there is no reason we shouldn't do things our way instead of God's way. But God always has good reasons for His commands, and we place ourselves in grave spiritual danger when we consciously or carelessly disobey them.

Let's make careful obedience to God the pattern of our lives.

BACKGROUND

Although the Children of Israel murmured and complained, God sweetened the water of Marah for them and provided manna as their food.

After arriving on the east side of the Red Sea, the Hebrews encountered the wilderness of Shur. Because the group included women, children, and livestock, their progress could not have been rapid; they may have traveled from thirty to forty-five miles in the “three days in the wilderness.” When they came to Marah (which means “bitter”), they found no good drinking water, so they complained. After making the water sweet (drinkable), God gave His people “a statute and an ordinance”—an instruction to obey and a promise of blessing if they would. Their next encampment was at Elim, which had wells and palm trees. Elim is generally thought to have been located in present-day Wadi Gharandel, an oasis about sixty miles southeast of Suez, Egypt.

God continued to lead the people south along the Sinai Peninsula. A month after leaving Egypt, they complained of hunger, and God provided quail and manna. The term *manna* likely arose from the Hebrew word *man hu* which means “What is it?”—the question the Children of Israel asked when they discovered the food God miraculously provided for them (Exodus 16:15). The Children of Israel were nourished by this divine supply for forty years. According to Joshua 5:12, the provision of manna did not cease until they entered the Land of Canaan.

The manna had a number of unique characteristics that proved its miraculous nature. It did not appear until God had Moses tell the people that “bread” would be provided “to the full” on the coming day. It came six days a week in a large enough quantity to sustain about three million people. Any manna kept overnight developed worms and stank, except for the two-day supply which was gathered on the day before the Sabbath. Manna melted in the sun, so obtaining the day's food required early diligence on the people's part. It could be baked or boiled (seethed). God established a portion size, and commanded an omer to be gathered for each person. An omer is thought to have been equivalent to about three to six pints.

God's simple instructions regarding the manna were a test in order to “prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no” (Exodus 16:4). Many failed the test and left God asking the question, “How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?” (Exodus 16:28).

Observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest would have been impossible for the Children of Israel while they were slaves. God used the manna to help teach His people that He wanted them to observe the Sabbath in a special way. They were to set aside one day a week for rest and worship.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- III. The migration of Israel to Sinai
 - A. The wilderness of Shur (15:22)
 - B. Marah (15:23-26)
 - C. Elim (15:27)
 - D. The wilderness of Sin (16:1-36)
 - 1. The murmuring (16:1-3)
 - 2. The answer (16:4-12)
 - 3. The provision (16:13-34)
 - 4. The summary (16:35-36)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the immediate response of the Children of Israel to their difficulties?

2. What should the people have done when they had no water or faced a food shortage?

3. When difficulties come, how should we respond?

CONCLUSION

If we want God to take care of us, we must listen to Him and obey His directions. In short, we must “hearken” and “do that which is right.”

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.” (Exodus 17:12)

Do you want to find out how strong you are? Take a book off the bookshelf. You can choose a light one; even a pamphlet will do. Now, hold that book out at arm’s length. How long can you keep it there before your arm starts to feel heavy? How long before the ache in your fingers extends all the way up to your shoulder? How long before you give a desperate sigh and let the book fall to your side? The truth is, none of us can maintain that pose for long, no matter what our strength or endurance level. Yet, consider this: how would you have fared if someone held up your hands for you?

Oh, the value of support! In our text for today, the Amalekites attacked the Children of Israel. God intervened, giving the Israelite army the ability to overcome. When Moses held his hands up, Israel prevailed. When, through weariness, he allowed his hands to come down, the enemy prevailed. At last, Aaron and Hur stood by Moses’ side and held up his arms to ensure victory against Amalek.

How much we depend on each other for spiritual victories! In this case, it took them all—Joshua, the army, Moses, Aaron, and Hur—to win that battle. We should never allow ourselves to be isolated from other Christians. That is a trap of Satan! Even if we are not able to be in physical proximity with other believers, we need to keep in contact. We gain strength from their help and endurance from their encouragement.

Life is designed not for isolation, but for cooperation. This is especially true in a Christian’s life. It is important not to try to go it alone.

BACKGROUND

These two chapters contain the account of Moses striking the rock for water, the conflict with Amalek, and the visit of Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro (also called Reuel).

Exodus 17:1-7 states that the Children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin to Rephidim (which means “places of rest”). This was probably a wadi—a valley or streambed that had water only when it rained. Because they found no water there,

the people were angry enough at Moses to suggest stoning him. God told Moses to strike a rock in Horeb, and He would cause water to come out of it. Moses did so, and the water came forth in a sufficient amount to meet the needs of the large host of people and their cattle. Moses called the name of the place Massah, which means “to test or to prove,” and Meribah, which means “contention.” According to 1 Corinthians 10:4, the smitten rock was a type of Jesus Christ—the “spiritual Rock” from whom living waters flow. Christ had to be smitten before His grace could flow forth for all mankind.

While the Children of Israel were at the rock, they were attacked by Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16). The Amalekites were a fierce group of Bedouin tribes, descendants of Esau who roamed in the desert south of Canaan. The spoils they obtained when they raided settlements made up part of their livelihood. Because of the Amalekites’ unprovoked assault on Israel, Amalek became an object of God’s wrath.

This portion of Scripture contains the first mention of Joshua, who later led the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua’s name means “the Lord saves.” The Greek form of his name is Iesous, from which we get the English “Jesus.”

Hur stood with Aaron to hold up Moses’ hands. Hur is considered by Jewish tradition to be Miriam’s husband, and is referenced in Exodus 24:14 as being a helper to Aaron. Hur’s grandson was probably Bezaleel, whom God chose to build the Tabernacle and its furnishings (Exodus 31:2).

Some scholars suggest that the events of Exodus 18 transpired after the Children of Israel had arrived at Sinai. Verses 1-12 relate the visit of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, who brought Moses’ wife and two sons with him. The Bible does not state exactly when Zipporah had gone back to be with her parents. It may have been after Moses first started toward Egypt, or possibly after Moses’ responsibilities in Egypt became more intense.

Jethro was a Midianite, and thus of the family of Abraham by Keturah. While it is not known how much he understood about the true God, he was a religious man (a priest) and had a receptive heart when he heard the report of God’s miracles for the Children of Israel. His response was to praise God and to make an offering. The leaders of the Israelites joined him in a feast and time of fellowship.

When Jethro observed the interaction between Moses and the people, he gave Moses wise counsel (Exodus 18:13-23). He suggested a leadership

structure that would relieve Moses and also hasten the process of settling disputes between the people. Jethro was careful to deliver his suggestion respectfully and indicated that Moses should be certain this was God’s will. Moses heeded his advice and implemented the process (verses 24-27).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- III. The migration of Israel to Sinai
 - E. Rephidim (17:1 — 18:27)
 - 1. The water from the rock (17:1-7)
 - a. The cry of the people (17:1-3)
 - b. The cry of Moses (17:4)
 - c. The provision (17:5-7)
 - 2. The fight with Amalek (17:8-16)
 - 3. The visit of Jethro (18:1-12)
 - 4. The appointment of judges (18:13-27)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What did God say He would do to Amalek?

- 2. Why was Moses’ response to Jethro’s advice significant?

- 3. What are some things you can do to help your leaders as Aaron and Hur did?

CONCLUSION

The mutual support and encouragement between those who are part of God’s family is a theme woven throughout Scripture. Are you fulfilling your role as a supporter and encourager of others in the family of God?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.” (Exodus 19:10-11)

Imagine for a moment that you have been given an opportunity for a private meeting with the President of the United States, Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom, or some other notable world leader. Once the first excitement of receiving the invitation subsided, how would you go about preparing for the upcoming meeting?

Perhaps you would start by researching the appropriate protocol. For example, is it proper to stand when the president enters the room? How do you address him? Do you offer your hand, or wait for him to make the first move? Likely, you would consider what you should wear for such a significant event. Should it be something formal, like a black suit? Is your Sunday best good enough, or should you purchase something new? You might spend time considering possible subjects to discuss, and comments to make. You would arrange for transportation, wanting to be absolutely certain you arrived on time. Meeting with a national dignitary would be a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence for most of us, and we would not approach the opportunity casually. Rather, we likely would prepare for the occasion with utmost care.

In today’s text, we find the Children of Israel getting ready for a meeting with God himself. God had made the awesome statement that on the third day He would come down in the midst of His people. The great privilege of meeting God came with a great responsibility. The people were actually entering into a covenant with God: if they did their part, God would do His. They had agreed to set themselves apart for God, saying, “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do,” but now it was time to prepare for the meeting with Him.

God outlined specific instructions for Moses to deliver to the people. The people were to set themselves apart from sin and even from ordinary daily routines in order to dedicate themselves solely to God. The actions of washing and preparing were part of getting their minds and hearts ready. These steps underscored that this meeting was a very serious matter; the people were not to take the event lightly.

As Christians, we have the tremendous privilege of meeting with Almighty God—the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of mankind. We must remember that He is a holy God, and our interaction with Him should not be regarded casually but as an opportunity of the highest privilege. God is worthy of our utmost respect and honor!

Just as we would carefully prepare for meeting a national dignitary, we must make sure our hearts are ready when we meet God for worship. We should endeavor to separate ourselves from the duties and distractions of everyday life and focus entirely upon Him. When we have done this, we can expect to meet God in prayer and be ushered into His very presence.

BACKGROUND

Exodus 19 records a memorable point in the account of the travels of the Children of Israel. In this chapter, the people arrived at Mount Sinai, and God called them into a covenant with Him.

The Children of Israel had been gone from Egypt for almost three months when they came to the wilderness of Sinai. This was an uninhabited area at the base of Mount Sinai, the mountain where God had appeared in the burning bush to Moses. Many scholars believe Mount Sinai is the mountain named Jebel Musa, which is located in the southern portion of the Sinai Peninsula. Other scholars suggest it is the nearby peak Ras es-Safsafah. At the base of the northwest side of this peak, there is a plain about two miles long where the Israelites could have camped. Other mountains have also been proposed as the site of God’s interaction with the Hebrews.

God intended to establish a covenant with the Children of Israel. In His opening statement, God declared that He had brought judgment upon the Egyptians and miraculously delivered the Israelites. In showing His care of the people, He said, “I bare you on eagles’ wings” (verse 4), referring to imposing birds of that area which were known for carrying their young on their backs. At that time, a covenant could be an agreement between those of the same social standing, or it could be between those who were unequal, such as a sovereign and his subjects. In a covenant between those who were not equals, the stronger gave promises to the weaker, but those promises were accompanied by conditions. God’s promises to the Israelites were conditional on their obedience.

God said He would come “in a thick cloud” (verse 9) so the people would hear and understand

that God had sent Moses. In verses 10-15, the Lord detailed to Moses how the people were to prepare to meet with Him. This included personal cleansing and also setting boundaries to keep the people and animals back from the mountain. God wanted the people to understand the need to respect Him and His holiness, as well as the necessity of carefully following His commands.

The Lord’s descent on Mount Sinai was accompanied by dramatic evidence in the elements (verses 16-25). All the people trembled. This occasion is referenced in Hebrews 12:18-21, which states, “Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.” Yet Moses went up into the mountain at God’s instruction, and returned to the people with God’s message.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- III. The migration of Israel to Sinai
 - F. The arrival at Sinai (19:1-2)
- IV. The revelation of the Law to Israel
 - A. The setting (19:3-25)
 - 1. The commitment of the people (19:3-9)
 - 2. The preparation of the people (19:10-15)
 - 3. The warning of the people (19:16-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What did the Children of Israel promise God?

- 2. God had Moses give the Children of Israel repeated warnings about touching Mount Sinai. How does God repeatedly warn people today?

- 3. What are some ways we can show reverence to God?

CONCLUSION

God had good things in mind for the Children of Israel as they prepared themselves for meeting with Him. He has many promises for us as well if we also purpose to have a prepared heart to listen and follow His instructions.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” (Exodus 20:1-2)

A growing relationship with a friend is a treasure! When Patty came to work at our office, I first noticed her beautiful smile and unpretentious charm. As one pleasant moment together built upon another, our friendship grew. We began to share good books and great talks. We split desserts and browsed garden centers. We planted tulip bulbs together and prayed together. We encouraged each other, supported each other, and cheered each other on. When illness struck, we hoped together and coped together in prayer. As I learned to know Patty better, I loved her more.

If a growing connection with a special friend is something to be treasured, think how much more precious is a growing relationship with God. That was the case in today's text—God was drawing Israel into a closer relationship with Himself. God had first made a personal covenant with Abraham, and then continued that covenant through the patriarchs. The family group expanded and became a nation—the people that God had delivered from bondage in Egypt.

In today's text, God was not only revealing more of Himself, but for the first time, He was revealing His laws to Israel. The people's relationship with Him was growing as He taught them more about how to serve Him. How privileged they must have felt! Here was Almighty God, in their presence, with direct instructions for them. What an awesome time this event on Mount Sinai was, as God displayed His power and revealed more of Himself!

Why did God unveil His laws? It was so that His people might know Him better. With the revelation of God came the possibilities of blessings never before attainable. A closer communion and better fellowship with God was possible if the people would obey the laws He set before them. A deeper understanding of God always brings more exacting requirements, but a better knowledge of God also brings a more precious fellowship with Him.

As we examine how God has unveiled His plan through the ages, allowing successive generations to become more intimately acquainted with Him, we find a concept that applies to us individually. It is simply this: as we walk with God, we should be growing in Him; we should be discovering more about our

Savior. God will reveal more and more of Himself to us in our personal lives as we obey in the smallest details and continually seek Him.

If we do these things, there will be better things ahead in our relationship with our Redeemer!

BACKGROUND

The Children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai, where God established a covenant with them and, with His own finger, wrote His commandments upon tablets of stone. The covenant that was entered into followed a form of treaty well known in the ancient Middle East that established a relationship between a ruler or king and a nation. However, this covenant would be like no other, for instead of an agreement between a man and a nation, this covenant would establish a relationship between Almighty God and His people.

The Ten Commandments and the remainder of the Law that God gave became a guide for Israel whereby they would be able to remain in His favor and obtain His blessing for generations to come. This Law was unique in that, while codes of law in other countries depended on the power of men, it relied on the power and authority of God.

Summarized, the commandments are:

1. Have no other gods (verse 3). The words *before me* could be translated “in addition to me.” The Lord did not want the Israelites to incorporate heathen deities into their worship. God is the one true God, and the only One to worship.

2. Make no graven image (verses 4-6). God did not want His people to make or bow down to idols.

3. Do not take God's Name in vain (verse 7). The Lord's Name is to be revered and not used casually or as profanity.

4. Keep the Sabbath holy (verses 8-11). God wanted His people to set aside one day a week to rest from their labors and worship Him.

5. Honor your parents (verse 12). Obedience and respect for parents was instructed. This was the first commandment with a promise attached.

6. Do not kill (verse 13). When Jesus referred to this commandment, He said, “Thou shalt do no murder” (Matthew 19:18). God's further instructions to the Israelites did include allowance for warfare and punishment.

7. Do not commit adultery (verse 14). God wanted His people to be morally pure.

8. Do not steal (verse 15). The Lord's people were not to take what did not belong to them.

9. Do not bear false witness (verse 16). God's people were to speak the truth.

10. Do not covet (verse 17). This commandment addressed the attitude in the heart. The people of God were not to desire what belonged to someone else.

The Ten Commandments are often called the Decalogue, from the Greek word that means "ten words." Though more than three thousand years old, these laws are still relevant today. Their moral value cannot change, because they originated from God and His eternal character.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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IV. The revelation of the Law to Israel

B. The commandments (20:1-26)

1. The preamble (20:1-2)
2. The Decalogue (20:3-17)
3. The fear of the people (20:18-21)
4. The warning against idolatry (20:22-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Moses say was God's purpose in giving the people His Law?

2. What is the focus of the first four commandments, and what can we discern about God's character in them?

3. What are some of the blessings that will come to us if we obey God's laws?

CONCLUSION

The Israelites had the written Law of God before them with His promised blessing if they would obey it. We have God's complete and inspired written Word with His promised blessing if we will endeavor to know what He requires and do it.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.” (Exodus 21:1)

Have you ever played a game and come to a point where a question arose about the rules? I grew up in a home with three siblings, and playing games was part of our lives. From time to time, the fun of playing digressed into a disagreement about how the game should be played. After some discussion on both sides, someone usually found the rules and searched out the answer. The inventor of the game has the last word. He created the game, so he makes the rules.

For the same reason, it is fitting that God the Creator set down rules for life. Sometimes people may question, “Who is God to tell us what to do? Why can’t we make our own rules and do what we think is right?” The answer simply is this: God created us. That gives Him the authority to establish the moral guidelines that are to govern our day-to-day lives.

Just as the game creator had a reason for the rules he established for the game, God has reasons for His rules. It is obvious that without requirements and moral guidelines for society, there would be chaos on multiple levels. Governments have laws to maintain social cohesion and to preserve the rights of its citizens. Organizations have rules to regulate business operations, protect employees, and ensure safety. Families have rules designed to keep things running smoothly in the home and promote family values. Schools have rules to keep the students safe and encourage order. In fact, rules seem to be an inevitable part of any organized social interaction.

Even though the rules given in today’s text were specifically designed for the Children of Israel, they provide the basis for the criminal code and many of the moral laws we still have today.

In Exodus 20, God gave the Ten Commandments. In this subsequent and more-detailed segment of the Law, God gave rules on how to handle specific situations. If we were to describe God’s judgment in a brief manner, we would probably choose words like “fair” and “simple.” God gave the Children of Israel all the necessary rules to live by in relatively few books and chapters. In contrast, think of the volumes of laws and interpretations of laws that have been written in the past hundreds of years! They would literally fill rooms, if not buildings, were they all

assembled in one place. Yet there has never been an improvement on God’s instructions.

We should look at this chapter as evidence that God cared enough for the Children of Israel to give them His Law, and realize that He cares just as much for us as He did for them.

BACKGROUND

In the previous chapter of Exodus, God gave the Ten Commandments to the Children of Israel. This chapter and the next contain applications of those commandments as well as some punishments to those who broke the commandments.

God wanted His people to live according to the principles He had given them, and He gave specific examples to help them understand how to implement His Law in their society. The treatment of servants (or slaves) is dealt with in verses 1-11. Poverty was the major cause for Hebrew servitude, and God’s instructions protected the servants’ rights. The Law applied to both men and women.

Verses 12-17 discuss capital crimes (those for which the punishment was death). Premeditated murder was a capital crime, but accidental killing was not, and in those cases, provision was to be made for a place where the guilty party could flee. This was a preliminary step to the Cities of Refuge that would be established once the Children of Israel reached Canaan. To strike or curse one’s parents or to kidnap a man were also capital crimes.

Incidents causing personal harm are covered in verses 18-32. The details in these verses put a limit on the retribution for the specified injuries, thereby establishing guidelines for appropriate rather than excessive punishment or payment. Verses 24-25 are called the *lex talionis*, which means the “law of retaliation.” It limited the retribution to what the victim had lost. In many cultures of that time, extreme penalties were common, and God did not want His people to follow that pattern.

God made it clear that slaves had rights and personhood. Some injuries to slaves required that they be given their freedom. God’s Law specifically protected women and slaves, and made justice the same for all social classes.

Other civilizations of that time had codes of law. However, God’s Law included religious regulations and stated that He was the Creator and therefore the authority for prescribing justice. In contrast to other codes, the Law of God was outstandingly humane. The concept that God valued human life was clear.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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IV. The revelation of the Law to Israel

C. The ordinances

1. Concerning the care of servants (21:1-11)
 - a. Male servants (21:1-6)
 - b. Female servants (21:7-11)
2. Concerning personal injury (21:12-32)
 - a. Murder (21:12-14)
 - b. Disrespect for parents (21:15)
 - c. Kidnapping (21:16)
 - d. Disrespect for parents (21:17)
 - e. Bodily injury from a quarrel (21:18-19)
 - f. Mistreatment of slaves (21:20-21)
 - g. Miscarriage (21:22-25)
 - h. Eye and tooth damage of a slave (21:26-27)
 - i. Death by an animal (21:28-32)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What are three of the offenses that were punishable by death?

2. Why do you think God was so detailed in His instructions?

3. Have you ever been involved in or observed a situation that was resolved by a modern law which has its roots in God's Law? Explain the situation and the resolution.

CONCLUSION

God's rules for the nation of Israel promoted justice, fairness, and peace in society, and are the basis for our laws today.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; the owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his.” (Exodus 21:33-34)

A number of years ago, Pete Friesen attended camp meeting in Portland, Oregon, with the purpose of seeking the infilling of the Holy Spirit in his life. Day after day he prayed, seemingly without much success. Then the Lord brought to his mind a man who lived in a city over sixty miles away—an individual from whom he had stolen something before he was saved. Restitution needed to be made. Pete did not just tell the Lord he would do it the next time he was in that area. He drove the sixty miles from Portland to Dallas, Oregon, to make the matter right that same afternoon! In the very next prayer meeting after his return to camp meeting, the Lord baptized him with the Holy Spirit.

Today’s text deals with the principle of restitution—making wrongs right. At first glance, the detailed examples given in this portion of Scripture may seem irrelevant to our day. For instance, consider the requirement established in our focus verses. It makes more sense when we realize that the ox and donkey were critical pieces of property for the Children of Israel: one was vital for the tasks of agriculture, and the other was necessary for burden-bearing. Even more importantly, all these requirements point to a clear principle of God’s Law: willful acts of transgression against our fellowman, for which we can make amends, must be righted in order for us to have a clear conscience before God and a good testimony before others.

Some will take issue with the fact that God requires restitution, and say that God’s forgiveness is so far-reaching He does not expect a person to take care of the past. However, God’s instructions to the Children of Israel indicate otherwise. Clearly, He deemed restitution of great importance. As He shaped a nation out of a group of former slaves, God was concerned with fairness, justice, and reconciliation. He still is! He wants His people to live together in peace, as examples of His law of love—and making restitution for wrongs is a vital part of that.

There are benefits that come to us when we obey God in this. Restitution brings His favor and blessing. We will have peace with God, and power in prayer.

Pete Friesen found that out! Pete’s faith was able to take hold when he did what he knew God was requiring him to do, and he received the infilling of the Holy Spirit that his heart desired.

If there are wrongs in our past that need to be dealt with, God will gently remind us. More than that, He will go before us when we make things right. And once the past is straightened out, we will rejoice in the peace that comes with having a clear conscience!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text continues the application of God’s written law, giving further insight into the eighth commandment, which is “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15). God’s Law for the Israelites acknowledged the right to own private property, and proper reimbursement was required whenever these rights were encroached upon. These verses have to do with the loss, injury, or theft of personal property, such as animals, fields, money, or clothing.

These laws show that God intended for the Children of Israel to own property once they arrived in Canaan. They also indicate that wrongs were to be handled with restitution, rather than with the violent retaliation that was common among ancient civilizations. This is the first time the word *restitution* is found in the Bible, and it is used in four different verses in chapter 22.

The first portion of the text (Exodus 21:33-36) deals with animals that were killed or injured. Often grain, water, or goods were stored in pits dug in the ground. Proper safeguarding of these pits was necessary, especially if they were located in public areas. The protection may have been a small wall around the pit, or the provision of some type of covering. A person was responsible for any pits he dug, and he was required to pay for an animal if it fell into his pit. If animals injured each other in the field, proper settlement procedures were outlined.

Chapter 22:1-5 addresses stealing. Much of the Hebrews’ wealth was in livestock. Oxen were work animals, and thus potentially of more value than other animals such as sheep. *Breaking up* in verse 2 means “to steal by breaking in.” No guilt was to be imputed if a thief was killed as he was committing the act of thievery. However, if he lived, he needed to pay full restitution.

Fire (verse 6) was a grave hazard, and each person was responsible for any fire he built. God was concerned about the safety of His people and their property, and He wanted them to be careful.

The last part of the text (verses 7-15) addresses goods entrusted to one's keeping, and the matter of borrowing. The Israelites were to give conscientious attention to anything that was put under their care. If a dispute arose regarding ownership of items held in trust, the matter was decided by judges, and restitution was to be made. When animals were left for safekeeping or loaned to another person, any negligence called for restitution.

God's laws were designed to promote peace and understanding among neighbors and fellow citizens. The focus was on preventing crimes rather than punishment for those who committed them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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IV. The revelation of the Law to Israel

C. The ordinances

3. Concerning rights of property (21:33 — 22:15)
 - a. Loss or injury to animals (21:33-36)
 - b. Stealing (22:1-5)
 - c. Fire damage (22:6)
 - d. Use and safekeeping of others' property (22:7-15)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What restitution was required of a man who stole an ox or a sheep?

2. Why do you think God gave so many specific situational examples?

3. How has God blessed your life when you followed through in obedience and made restitution for past wrongdoings?

CONCLUSION

The slate can be clean. The slate *should* be clean! What peace is ours when all is squared away with God and others!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.” (Exodus 23:2)

“Attention!” A strident order shrilled above the anxious murmuring of the crowd of students and teachers. Moments before, fear had gripped Ahn Ei Sook’s heart, but suddenly a sense of peace that could only come from God settled over her. “Our profoundest bow to Amaterasu Omikami [the sun-goddess]!” As though they were one, the long line of people obeyed the shouted order and bent solemnly and deeply toward the ground. Everyone bowed—everyone but Ahn Ei Sook. Remaining erect, she looked straight at the sky. She knew the fate that could be hers for defying the order of the conquerors, but her heart was at peace.

Ahn Ei Sook survived that day, although she was prepared to be martyred. However, it was not the last time she had to take a stand for truth while her country, Korea, was under the control of the Japanese armies. For six years during World War II she was in prison, where she lived in squalor. Yet her courage and faithfulness to God brought Gospel light to many other prisoners.¹

Integrity comes with a price tag. Moses wrote, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil,” which means godly principles are unchanging regardless of the setting. No matter if those around you choose the easy way. No matter if it makes sense to follow the crowd. No matter if it appears that everyone else is doing it. It does not even matter if other professing Christians seem to have no problem with the behavior in question! We must not be drawn into disobedience by doing what others do.

We are a few thousand years past the time of the Exodus and God’s revelation of His requirements to the Children of Israel, but the moral principles outlined on Mount Sinai remain unchanged. And God’s promises and the strength He provides in times of need are as unchanging as His character.

Are you facing a situation today where clinging to your integrity is going to cost something? Hold on! God will provide strength and grace to meet the challenge when you stay true to Him.

BACKGROUND

This portion of text continues to expound God’s Law regarding right conduct in various situations.

In the ancient societies, daughters were considered property and a payment, or dowry, was paid before a young woman married. Exodus 22:16-17 outlines the procedure that was to be followed if a young man seduced a girl.

The three laws in Exodus 22:18-20 were instituted to keep the worship of the Israelites pure. Sorcery and witchcraft were common in the nations that surrounded the Children of Israel. This is the first time it was referred to in the Law. God indicated that all witches were to be destroyed because they appealed to a power other than God Himself. Pagan religions of that time, especially in Egypt, practiced corrupt sexual acts and sacrificed to many gods. God wanted Israel to worship Him in purity and truth, and therefore these transgressions were punished by death.

In Exodus 22:21-27, God addressed how those who were poor, helpless, or otherwise disadvantaged were to be treated. Strangers were to be shown fairness. Widows and orphans were not to be oppressed. In some cultures at that time, these groups of people had no rights or way to defend themselves, but God was making it clear that He was concerned about their welfare. When Israelites loaned money to the poor, they were to show mercy and not take advantage of the borrower’s difficulty. The “raiment” mentioned in verses 26-27 was probably a cloak. This was an outer garment or wrap that was used for a bed and a blanket, as well as to carry items.

Verses 28-31 prompted the Israelites to honor their leaders and to be faithful to give their offerings to God. They were called upon to be holy.

The verses in Exodus 23:1-9 give instructions about integrity. God commanded the people to act justly, not giving a false report or allowing partiality toward the poor to result in a wrong judgment (verses 1-3). They were to be helpful to their enemies (verses 4-5) and to carry out justice in legal matters (verses 6-9). God wanted His people to do right, even when the circumstances were difficult.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- IV. The revelation of the Law to Israel
 - C. The ordinances
 - 4. Concerning personal conduct (22:16—23:9)
 - a. Sexual abnormalities (22:16-19)
 - b. Idolatry (22:20)
 - c. Oppression (22:21-24)
 - d. Lending of money (22:25-27)
 - e. Use of the tongue (22:28)

-
-
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-
-

1. Why were the people instructed to “take no gift”?

[illegible]

There is no substitute for following God's laws. Let us purpose to adhere to moral and ethical principles, no matter what!

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.” (Exodus 23:32-33)

When my children were toddlers, one of their favorite rainy-day activities was to draw designs in a tray of shaving cream. I would squirt a pile of white foam onto a baking sheet and sprinkle a couple of drops of red food coloring on the cream. They would happily dig into the mixture, spreading it this way and that, drawing “pictures” on the tray.

At first the red drops showed up in startling contrast to the soft, white mounds of cream. However, with just a few swipes of little fingers, a transformation took place. The bright red dots were replaced with long pink streaks. Within moments, the mixture had completely blended together—and all of the cream was pink instead of white!

What a visual picture of the importance of today’s focus verse. God warned the Israelites about their neighbors, whose beliefs and practices were in direct contrast to the way God wanted His people to live. He knew that the people He desired to be pure and holy could be harmfully influenced by the idolatrous cultures around them, so He warned them not to make covenants with those nations or with their gods. God knew the Israelites could not associate with these influences and remain undefiled, so He continually emphasized the importance of guarding against the heathen religions.

While our neighbors and associates may at first glance have little in common with the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, or Canaanites, their values may be completely different from God’s. As Christians, we are called to maintain a lifestyle that reflects our faith and commitment to God. This necessitates separation from anything that would tarnish our testimony or weaken our commitment, integrity, or standards.

Separation from the world involves more than keeping our distance from sinful things; it means staying close to God. There is no way to remove ourselves totally from all evil—we have to live here in a world polluted by sin. Nevertheless, we are to resist the ungodliness around us.

As we focus on God and concentrate on staying close to Him, living a life that is pure, holy, and pleasing to Him is indeed possible!

BACKGROUND

God had been revealing to the Children of Israel what would later be known as the Law of Moses. There were universal moral laws, such as the Ten Commandments. Then there were warnings, such as “Thou shalt not seethe a kid [goat] in his mother’s milk” (Exodus 23:19), which were prohibitions against the common pagan practices of that era.

Three feasts were established at this time, each of which became an important part of Jewish religion and culture: The Feast of Unleavened Bread (also called the Feast of the Passover), The Feast of Harvest (also called the Feast of Pentecost), and the Feast of Ingathering (also called the Feast of Tabernacles).

The Children of Israel promised to obey the instructions of God, but in addition to their promises, it was necessary to seal the covenant with blood. In the Old Testament, God accepted the death of an animal as a substitute for the death of a sinner in most cases. (Execution was the penalty for some sins, such as witchcraft, as addressed in the previous text.) This sacrificial system, which brought forgiveness through the death of an animal, was only a temporary provision, pointing ahead to the death of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, which would cover *any* sin.

In the ratification ceremony described in this portion of text, Moses read the Book of the Covenant to the people and they affirmed their willingness to obey. He sprinkled half the blood from the sacrificed animals on the altar to show that the sinner could once again approach God because something had died in his place. The other half of the blood he sprinkled on the people to show that sin’s penalty had been paid and they could be reunited with God.

A sacrificial feast was also a part of the covenant process. On this occasion, the feast was attended by Moses, Aaron, Aaron’s two older sons (Nadab and Abihu) and seventy leaders (24:9-11). The phrase “they saw God” means that God manifested Himself to them in a special way. While it is unknown what they actually saw or how God was revealed, God’s presence was tangible to them. (Exodus 33:20 and Deuteronomy 4:12 indicate that they did not see God in a visible form.)

Then Moses was instructed to go up on Mount Sinai (24:12-18). Joshua also went up, although the Bible names Moses only as entering the cloud itself. Aaron and Hur were left in charge of the Children of Israel for the forty days that Moses was gone.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- IV. The revelation of the Law to Israel
 - C. The ordinances
 - 5. Concerning sacred seasons (23:10-19)
 - a. The years of rest for the land (23:10-13)
 - b. The three feasts (23:14-19)
 - 6. Concerning possession of the land (23:20-33)
 - D. The covenant ratified (24:1-11)
 - 1. The assent of the people (24:1-7)
 - 2. The binding of the people (24:8-11)
- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - A. The setting (24:12-18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What offerings were the Israelites supposed to bring to the Lord during the harvest?

2. God promised that His angel would guide and protect the Children of Israel. What was the condition related to this promise, and what is the significance to us of this condition?

3. How does the promise given in Exodus 23:25 apply to us today?

CONCLUSION

Society may pressure us to conform to its way of life and thought, but yielding to that pressure will have eternal consequences. Follow God, and don't let the culture around you mold your thoughts or actions!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they may bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.” (Exodus 25:2)

I have a pair of gloves that look pretty pathetic. There is a rip in one finger and the smooth leather palm is worn hopelessly thin. After all, they are nearly eleven years old and have seen a lot of use. The fall and winter seasons in the Northwest (and even the spring in some years) are generally wet and often cold, so the gloves have gone in and out of my coat pocket many times.

Somehow, although the gloves are almost past being usable, I’ve had a hard time disposing of them. You see, they were a gift from my ten-year-old son. It touched my heart that he assessed my need for some hand-warmers. As chief “Allowance Dispenser” in our household, I knew he must have saved for a long time to be able to purchase them for me. Of our five children, this middle son was probably the one who had the hardest time saving for anything! So his willingness to part with some of his cherished dollars was a thoughtful and much-appreciated gesture.

God’s first requirement, as the Children of Israel began preparing for the building of the Tabernacle, was that the offering of both goods and services was to be from those who gave willingly from their hearts. What value a willing and generous spirit places on the object given! It is a value that cannot be calculated in dollars and cents.

This principle of giving willingly continues in our time. God wants His children to be supportive of His work and willing to help in any way possible. If a person gives grudgingly, he shows that he has a stingy heart. Our attitude when we give far outweighs the actual amount given.

We never need to feel embarrassed if we can give only a small gift to God’s work. In the eyes of God, a willing offering from the resources we have will be counted precious.

BACKGROUND

Almighty God, the Creator, was going to dwell with His people! In this portion of text, God began to give specific details regarding the building of a sanctuary, promising that He would meet with the people from above the Mercy Seat within the Tabernacle.

The instructions were specific and detailed, and there was to be no deviation.

God instructed that many of the Tabernacle furnishings were to be made of shittim, or acacia, wood. Acacia trees grow in barren settings and were quite common in Old Testament times. The wood is very hard, making it an excellent material for furniture. It is still used in furniture making today.

The offerings were to consist of gold, silver, brass, onyx stones, materials of blue, purple, and scarlet for coverings, fine linen, and certain animal skins. They were also to give oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and sweet incense. All contributions were to be of the best quality, because they were for God’s sanctuary.

The demand that all these things be done according to the instructions and after the pattern shown to Moses on Mount Sinai is repeated many times. In Exodus 25:9 it is stated this way: “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - B. The instructions for the building
 - 1. The materials for the construction (25:1-9)
 - 2. The Ark of the Covenant (25:10-16)
 - 3. The Mercy Seat (25:17-22)
 - 4. The table of shewbread (25:23-30)
 - 5. The lampstand (25:31-40)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What were the Children of Israel told to bring as offerings?

2. Why was it so essential that the Children of Israel make the Tabernacle according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount?

3. What does the Mercy Seat represent and why is it important to you today?

CONCLUSION

Generous people are not necessarily faithful to God, but faithful people should always be generous.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.” (Exodus 26:30)

Our family has a quilt made in the Lone Star pattern, one of the oldest and most recognizable quilt patterns to Americans. A central star made up of dozens of small diamond-shaped pieces of fabric covers nearly the whole top side. Sometimes tiny stars are placed in the blank areas surrounding the main star. Making a quilt with this pattern is a challenge because the cutting and sewing must be extremely precise. Every angle of each piece must be perfect, and the seams must be exactly a quarter-inch wide. Quilting experts say that even a fractional error can cause the quilt top not to lay flat. The appearance of the whole quilt can be ruined by one mistake. Clearly, careful attention to both pattern and workmanship is a must.

The text for today contains some of the pattern God gave regarding the construction of the Tabernacle. Placed in the midst of the camp, this was the place where God first promised He would come down to dwell with man. God gave precise directions regarding the design and materials. In the focus verse, He reminded Moses to be sure to construct the Tabernacle “according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.”

Today, God wants to dwell with His people by abiding in our hearts, and the Bible contains the instructions that we must follow in order for Him to do so. We will not be successful by using the pattern of the world, or one designed by our own thinking. Just as God detailed how the Tabernacle was to be built and the specific materials that were to be used, so His Word details how our Christian lives are to be built. If we follow His pattern and directions, His presence will abide with us. Paying attention to detail in our Christian walk pays off. By doing so, our lives will bring glory to Him, and we will enjoy His presence dwelling with us.

BACKGROUND

This portion of text gives details regarding the construction of the Tabernacle and its coverings and curtains.

At times, the designation *Tabernacle* referred to the outer court and furnishings as well as to the tent itself. However, this text describes the tent, which had

a framework of wood that was covered by layers of curtains. This tent was thirty cubits long, ten cubits wide, and ten cubits high. A cubit was from 17 to 21 inches, so the Tabernacle was about 45 feet long by 15 feet wide and 15 feet high.

The curtains are described in verses 1-14. The inner curtains were made of fine linen that was intricately woven with depictions of cherubims. Ten curtains of identical size were sewn together in two groups of five, forming two large curtains. These two curtains could be hooked together by “loops” and “taches” (clasps or buttons). Layered over these inner curtains were curtains of goats’ hair, which were made and attached together similarly. The third layer was fabricated of rams’ skins and the fourth of badgers’ skins. Scholars believe that “badger” may have referred to a sea animal whose skins would repel rain and help insulate from heat.

Verses 15-30 describe the wooden part of the construction—the boards that stood on three sides to form a U-shaped structure, and the crossbars that connected them. The boards were of shittim (or acacia) wood and were covered with gold. They stood on a silver base which served as the foundation, and were attached to it by “tenons” (pegs). The bars, which were also of acacia wood covered with gold, slid through gold rings to hold the boards in position.

“On the south side southward” (verse 18) means to the right as a person faced east. The people of that time gave directions while facing east, and the Tabernacle itself faced east. When an individual stepped out from the single opening of the Tabernacle, he faced east; therefore the south was to his right, the north was to his left, and the back of the Tabernacle was behind him to the west. (See drawing at the end of *Daybreak*.)

Verses 31-35 describe the veil which divided the Tabernacle into two areas. The Ark with the Mercy Seat was in the innermost area, referred to as the Holy of Holies. The other area, the Holy Place, contained the candlestick, a table, and the altar of incense. The entrance into the Tabernacle was also screened by a curtain (verses 36-37).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - B. The instructions for the building
 - 6. The curtains (26:1-14)
 - 7. The boards (26:15-25)
 - 8. The bars (26:26-30)
 - 9. The veils (26:31-37)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Where was the Mercy Seat located?

2. Why was it important for the parts of the Tabernacle to fit together so precisely?

3. What are some characteristics that must be present in our lives if we want God to dwell with us?

CONCLUSION

If God Almighty insisted that the Israelites be precise and careful in each of the detailed instructions given for building the Tabernacle, then we too must carefully follow the instructions He gives for our lives.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always.”
(Exodus 27:20)**

When I read today’s focus verse, I was struck by the thought that the Israelites had to *do* something in order for the lamps in the Tabernacle to burn—they had to bring the oil. It made me think of a documentary I watched recently about Japanese Christians who did something in the aftermath of the terrible earthquake and tsunami which struck their nation on March 11, 2011. In the film, titled “The Light of the World,”¹ it was not the horrific devastation that captured my attention. Rather, it was the believers’ moving response to the tragedy, many of whom had lost everything personally. One after another stressed how they wanted to use this time as an opportunity to point unbelievers to Christ.

One pastor, surveying the mound of rubble that once had been his church, said, “Let the glory of God shine as the Light of the World in this place!” Christians risked their own safety by traveling into evacuation zones with food for unbelievers, recognizing that suffering people are touched more by actions than by words. At each place where they distributed needed food and supplies to tsunami victims, they prayed with the people and shared what they brought in the Name of Christ. One worker said, with emotion choking his voice, “May God’s comfort be poured more fully into the people in times of sadness like this.”

In today’s text we read God’s directions concerning the bringing of oil for the lamp in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. Some commentators suggest that the lamp was symbolic of God’s presence among the people—a visual reference to Christ, the Light of the World. Verse 20 reveals that the Israelites were instructed to bring pure olive oil in order to “cause the lamp to burn always.” Their efforts were needed if the lamp was to continue to shine!

The Japanese Christians who helped the suffering in their country were promoting and uplifting the Name of Jesus Christ, causing His Light to shine out across that country where only one percent of the people are believers. In effect, they were causing the “lamp” to burn!

Today, what kind of “oil” can we bring to make sure that the lamp will continue to burn always? What

can we do to publish Christ, proclaim Christ, and impart Christ to those whose lives touch ours? God has a task for each one of us. Let us do what we can to cause the Light of the World to shine in our darkened world!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 27 continues the descriptions of plans for the Tabernacle and its service, with this section focusing on two aspects: the altar (verses 1-8), and the courtyard (verses 9-21).

In the first verses of this chapter, God gave Moses detailed instructions for the construction of the brazen altar, which was at the center of the Levitical sacrificial system. The altar, positioned in the courtyard surrounding the Tabernacle, was constructed of shittim wood covered with brass. (Shittim, or acacia, is a gnarled and thorny tree that yields close-grained and durable lumber.) The altar was a hollow square approximately 7 feet across, and about 5 feet tall. On the top of the altar was a grate that allowed a supply of air to the fire and permitted the ashes to fall through into the pan that was placed below. The horns at the corners of the altar were both ornamental and practical; the sacrifices were bound to these corners with cords. Various basins, hooks, and other tools were designated for use in making the sacrifices, removing the ashes, and maintaining the altar. The fire in the brazen altar was kept burning continually.

The Tabernacle stood in an enclosure, or courtyard, which was a large open area approximately 150 feet by 75 feet, surrounded by a fence of “hangings” (curtains) that were approximately 7½ feet tall. Since the curtains were only about half the height of the Tabernacle (see Exodus 26:16), the holy building was still clearly visible throughout the camp. The courtyard served as a protection to keep animals and intruders away from the sacred building. More importantly, it also visually set apart the Tabernacle as a place of worship, as the hanging curtains provided a distinct demarcation between this sacred spot and the camp of the Israelites outside.

Since the Tabernacle itself had no windows, the lamp in its interior was required to be lit during the day. This statute was in force as long as the Tabernacle stood. Later, when the Temple was built, it was implemented there as well.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - B. The instructions for the building

10. The altar (27:1-8)
11. The court of the Tabernacle (27:9-19)
12. The light in the tent (27:20-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What metal was used in the construction of the altar?

2. Why do you think God gave such detailed instructions concerning the furnishings of the Tabernacle?

3. What are some specific ways we can “bring oil” to ensure that the Light of Christ continues to shine?

CONCLUSION

In a world dark with sin, let us watch for opportunities to point others to the Light of the World!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.”
(Exodus 28:2)**

My five-year-old grandson has quite an imagination, and one of his interests at the moment is discussing the job he will do when he grows up. Since two houses are under construction just across the street from his home, his intention (this week at least!) is to be a builder. Recently I came across a book entitled *Jobs People Do* that I think will expand his horizons when it comes to potential occupations. Each page shows children dressed in clothes representative of various professions, giving a cheerful introduction to the world of work. Firemen, policemen, mailmen, nurses—and yes, builders—are all pictured. However, I don’t think my grandson has explored the possibility of becoming a diver, a baker, a pilot, or a surgeon. Seeing the attire for those occupations will likely catch his attention. Who knows? They may even start him on a whole new career path!

Not every occupation requires a certain type of clothing, but in today’s text, we learn of one occupation for which the attire was ordained by God himself. In our focus verse, God told Moses to make “holy garments” (special clothing) for Aaron to wear as he ministered in the office of the high priest. God carefully spelled out the details of these garments, which included an ephod, breastplate, robe, and turban. They had to be constructed exactly according to His instructions. Aaron’s clothing distinguished him and his role as priest from the rest of the people, and was a visual indicator of the job assigned to him. It reflected his special calling.

As God’s children, we have a special calling from Him. What distinguishes us from individuals in the world around us? It probably will not be our physical clothing (though what we wear should be in keeping with the principles of modesty and appropriateness outlined in His Word). But there is some special “attire” for Christians—Scripture tells us that we can be clothed with the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness. These garments are designed to indicate the glory and beauty of His holiness.

Like Aaron of old, let us put on the special garments designed for us and wear them to the honor and glory of the Great Designer!

BACKGROUND

This chapter concerns the priests’ apparel, and closes with the priests’ anointing. God chose Aaron and his sons to minister in the priesthood; they did nothing to earn or deserve this position.

One of the requirements for serving God in this role was the wearing of priestly garments. Those who ministered in the priesthood—the high priests, priests, and the Levites—were to be attired in specific clothing when they performed their appointed services in the worship ceremonies. The costly, specially designed garments mentioned in this chapter are described again in Leviticus 8:7-9.

The ephod was a sleeveless outer garment of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, held together by an onyx stone clasp on each shoulder. The names of the tribes of Israel were engraved on the stones (six names on each) according to their birth order. The breastplate, which was affixed securely to the ephod, was a piece of beautifully embroidered fabric, nine inches square when folded in half. On the breastplate were twelve gems, each stone representing one of the tribes of Israel. Thus, whenever the priest wore this ceremonial robe, he carried his people before the Lord.

The high priest’s robe had golden bells and pomegranates (signifying fruitfulness) alternating along its hem. Without these, any priest who entered into the Holy Place would die.

The mitre (a headpiece or turban) of the high priest was engraved with the words “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” This was a constant reminder of the priest’s acceptance before God and of his holy ministry on behalf of the people.

Before Aaron and his sons could perform their duties in the worship ceremonies, Moses was instructed to anoint and consecrate them. This ceremony took place at the door of the Tabernacle. They were washed with water (indicative of cleansing) and outfitted in the new priestly attire. They were anointed with oil, which represented the Holy Spirit. A sin offering was made; then a second ram was slain and its blood applied to the ear, thumb, and toe of Aaron and his sons, as a token reminder that they must listen to God’s Word, do God’s work, and walk in God’s way.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - B. The instructions for the building

13. The priests
 - a. Their family (28:1)
 - b. Their dress (28:2-43)
 - (1) Summary (28:2-5)
 - (2) The ephod (28:6-14)
 - (3) The breastplate (28:15-30)
 - (4) The robe of the ephod (28:31-35)
 - (5) The turban (28:36-38)
 - (6) The other garments (28:39-43)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What kind of fabric was used in making the priests' garments?

2. Why did Aaron bear the names of the Children of Israel upon his shoulders before the Lord?

3. What will be the evidence in our daily lives if we are wearing the "robe of righteousness"?

CONCLUSION

Let us be sure that we are robed in righteousness, because that is what will distinguish us as followers of Christ!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest’s office.” (Exodus 29:44)

Last night, my college-age son was lying on the couch in the living room, contemplating the necessity of writing a paper on family roles for his English class. Sympathizing with his reluctance to move from the couch to the keyboard, and hoping to inspire him by a little dialogue on the subject, a family discussion sprang up evaluating the roles in our household. His siblings quickly noted that those roles shift regularly. Mom may be a counselor today and seamstress tomorrow. Dad may engage himself with a lawnmower on Monday night, but utilize a frying pan on Tuesday evening when Mom gets home late. Our son may be a student during the day (that’s the idea, anyway), but a champion basketball player, or die-hard fisherman in the evening and on weekends. Our daughter may be a giggling high-schooler one moment, but an expert cookie-maker the next.

While our roles in our homes or society may change from day to day, God has a particular role for each one of us to fill in His service. In today’s text, Aaron and his sons were sanctified (set apart) for a particular task. God had set up the system of sacrifices to help His people approach Him. Aaron and his sons were to be priests, the ones who performed the duties and worship rituals for the people. Their roles were clearly defined, not only by the functions they performed, but also by the special garments they wore and the portions of food they were allotted.

God wants to “sanctify” each of us to accomplish a special job for Him. While someone else may fill a similar position, the fact is, each one of us is the only one who can fill our particular spots. God has placed us in a certain environment, in a precise time frame, and equipped us with the specific abilities for a personal and designated role.

What role has God called you to in His harvest field? Are you filling it?

BACKGROUND

This chapter relates the instructions God gave Moses regarding the consecration of Aaron and his sons, who were to serve as the priests of Israel.

Verses 1-9 concern the preparations that were to be made for the ordination of the priests. The terms “to hallow,” “to sanctify,” and “to consecrate,” all carry with them the idea of a dedication to God for a holy purpose. The sacrifices God instructed Moses to make for the consecration of Aaron and his sons followed the same pattern that was later given for the congregation of Israel (Leviticus 1 through 7).

The next portion of the chapter, verses 10-37, describes various types of offerings that were to be part of the priests’ ordination. First, a sin offering was to be made (verses 10-14). Aaron and his sons placed their hands on the head of a young bullock symbolizing the transfer of their sins to it as their substitute. After that, a burnt offering of a ram was made. The animal was entirely consumed in the fire of the altar, signifying complete devotion and commitment to God’s service. Next, another ram was offered, along with several types of bread, portions of which were lifted before the Lord as a wave offering. This indicated a thankfulness to God for His provision. Then a heave offering, consisting of one breast of the second ram, was to be eaten by Aaron and his sons. This signified the fellowship between God and His people.

The conclusion of the chapter deals with the daily sacrifices. Every day thereafter, both morning and evening, a burnt offering was to be made, reminding the people of their need of cleansing and dedication to the Lord (Exodus 29:42-43). As the people made their sacrifices in obedience to God’s instructions, God would sanctify the Tabernacle and the altar for their ordained purposes, and Aaron and his sons for their appointed tasks.

In choosing Aaron for the office of high priest, God had not commissioned a perfect man. However, because of God’s grace, He gave forgiveness, cleansing, and fellowship, making Aaron’s service acceptable.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - B. The instructions for the building
 - 13. The priests
 - c. Their consecration (29:1-46)
 - (1) The preparation (29:1-9)
 - (2) The ordination (29:10-25)
 - (3) The food (29:26-35)
 - (4) The presence of God (29:36-46)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Name the four types of offerings made for the consecration of the priests. What was the purpose of these offerings?

2. What result could the people of God expect by following these instructions?

3. Why were the items and individuals used in the Tabernacle worship required to be sanctified?

4. What are some of the prerequisites for acceptable service to God today?

CONCLUSION

Like Aaron, God has something specific for us to do in His service. Are we doing it?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.” (Exodus 30:7-8)

My nephew has always figured that substantial meals are a critical part of each day and not to be missed. One time when he was a teenager, he slept in and didn't wander into the kitchen until almost noon. Never one to skip breakfast, he delved into the refrigerator, pulled out bacon and eggs, and fixed himself a heaping plateful sided by several slices of toast. His mother observed his activity and was not surprised that, even though it was late morning, he felt it necessary to start the day out with a hearty breakfast. She *was* a bit surprised, though, when just a half-an-hour or so later, he proceeded to make himself an equally hearty lunch!

While most of us probably do not have as voracious an appetite as my nephew, we likely make sure that we take in nourishment on a regular basis. Are we as eager to provide regularly for our spiritual needs as we do for our physical needs? In today's text, we read that the high priest was to go into the Tabernacle every morning and evening throughout the year to offer sweet incense (symbolic of acceptable prayers) to the Lord. This twice-daily routine was to be repeated throughout the generations.

In modern days, referred to as the New Testament dispensation, we worship God in a different manner than the Children of Israel did in their rites under the Old Testament Law. Rather than depending upon a priest to represent us before the Lord, we approach Him directly through prayer. It is important that we avail ourselves of this privilege on a regular basis, for this is how we receive the sustenance we need for spiritual survival.

We should start each day with prayer, asking for God's guidance, strength, and protection in the hours ahead. We also need to lift our hearts to Him in prayer as our day progresses, much as we would communicate spontaneously with a friend. When the day is over, we need to thank the Lord for His provision and care.

Let us purpose in our hearts to make prayer as much a daily habit as eating!

BACKGROUND

Moses was nearing the end of his forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai. In chapter 30, God gave His final instructions to Moses regarding the Tabernacle and its furnishings. These included the dimensions and shape of the altar of incense, orders concerning Aaron's burning of incense on it, and warnings against prohibited sacrifices and offerings. He also was instructed to make a laver of brass for the washing of the priests' hands and feet when they came to minister.

In verses 22-33, Moses was given the exact recipe of specified spices to make “an oil of holy ointment” for the anointing of the Tabernacle and all its furnishings, and for Aaron and his sons as they ministered. Over and over, God stressed that this was to be a holy anointing oil for use throughout their generations. Other sweet spices were to be blended to make a perfume that would be the “sweet incense” used in the Tabernacle. The Children of Israel were not to use the oil or incense for any other purpose, or even to make some that had the smell of these spice mixtures for their own use; to do so would bring a severe penalty.

In chapter 31, verses 1-11, God revealed to Moses that He had called Bezaleel, the grandson of Hur, and Aholiab to serve as skilled craftsmen who would create the beautiful furnishings for the Tabernacle. It is noteworthy that although their task was physical in nature, they were equipped by being filled with the Spirit of God, “in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.”

Verses 12-17 address the emphatic requirements God gave the Children of Israel regarding the observance of the Sabbath, indicating that this was to be another sign or distinguishing mark of His people. (Circumcision was the earlier sign.) Failure to obey the Sabbath commandment was punishable by death, for breaking it symbolically nullified the whole covenant between God and Israel.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - B. The instructions for the building
 - 14. The altar of incense (30:1-10)
 - 15. The ransom money (30:11-16)
 - 16. The bronze laver (30:17-21)
 - 17. The oil (30:22-33)
 - 18. The perfume (30:34-38)

19. The workmen (31:1-11)
20. The sign of the Sabbath (31:12-17)
21. The tables of stone (31:18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How often was Aaron instructed to sprinkle blood on the altar of incense?

2. Why did the incense and oil for the Tabernacle worship have to be different from any other?

3. How might the specific blessings given to Bezaleel aid us in our calling? What can we do to ensure that we receive from God as Bezaleel did?

CONCLUSION

When was the last time your spirit was fed and filled through prayer? If every morning and evening was the schedule commanded by God for His people in Moses' day, it is a good one for us to practice in our prayer life as well.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.” (Exodus 32:1)

You have just come from the best revival meetings ever. The Spirit of God was upon the sermons, the testimonies, and the music. More than once you felt God’s presence as you knelt in fervent prayer. But now you are back home and the cares of life have intruded on that glowing feeling. Possibly you face sickness, job difficulties, financial woes, or problems with the children. Those wonderful times of spiritual closeness to God seem so far away. Now what do you do?

Perhaps the Children of Israel were feeling some of the same emotions at the point of today’s text. During the preceding months, they had witnessed amazing miracles. They had seen God’s judgment poured out through the plagues on godless Egypt. They had experienced a mighty deliverance when God opened up the Red Sea so that they could cross over on dry ground. God had provided them with manna for their daily food and with water from a rock. With this array of miracles in their recent past, you would think that the Israelites would never doubt or feel downcast again. Yet they did, and very soon.

They were camped near Mount Sinai, where Moses had gone to receive the Law from God. Moses was their direct connection to God, and when he did not come down off the mountain as quickly as they had expected, they became discouraged. In fact, they felt so disheartened that they were ready to throw away their relationship with God and strike out in a new and sinful direction.

It is easy to condemn the Israelites for their folly and yet be guilty of similar behavior. Our relationship with God is a very personal and often an emotional connection. When we come to Him in true repentance for salvation, we experience a great miracle in our new birth. Whether we were deep in sin, or well-behaved Sunday school children when we came to God, there was great joy in knowing we were right with Him. No doubt we have also experienced other wonderful encounters with the Lord during our walk with Him.

However, we must not base our relationship with God on our feelings. Emotions can be fickle! Some days we may wake up feeling sad or discouraged and not even know why. By faith we must hold on to what God has given us, whether we feel emotionally up or down.

The well-known evangelist Billy Graham put it this way: “A lot of people believe they are saved only if they have some powerful emotion or overwhelming feeling. However, every Christian has times when feelings are not strong, no matter what our experiences may have been in the past. But it is not our feelings that save us—it is Christ.”¹ He was saying that the way we feel must not affect our assurance of salvation. If we know that God has saved us from sin and that we have not willfully turned away from Him, we must remain secure in our relationship, regardless of how we feel emotionally.

When feelings of gloom overshadow us, we may be tempted to think the Lord’s presence is not with us. Then we have a choice. We can do as the Israelites did and go the wrong direction, or we can choose to cling to faith. Recognizing that our salvation is not based on emotion, we can tell Satan to get behind us, and ask the Lord to refresh our spirits. With this attitude we will have victory every step of the way. The next thing we know, we will sense the joy of the Lord bubbling up in our souls once again!

BACKGROUND

This chapter records how Israel turned to idolatry while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Law, and describes God’s resultant wrath and Moses’ intercession for the people.

Verses 1-6 relate the people’s restlessness at Moses’ continued absence, and their appeal to Aaron to “make us gods.” Aaron instructed the women to bring him their earrings, and then fashioned their offerings into a calf. The word *calf* means “young bull in his first strength” in the Hebrew language. This animal was commonly used by the Egyptians to embody fertility and strength. Aaron’s golden calf may have been made of wood overlaid with gold, as that is how most idols used in Near Eastern religions of that era were constructed. When presented with this symbol, the people ate and drank, offered sacrifices, and engaged in carnal reveling.

In verses 7-14, God revealed to Moses that the people had sinned. God’s pronouncement that “*thy people . . . have corrupted themselves*” [*italics added*] seems to indicate that He was disowning the people.

God declared that Israel would be eliminated and in its place He would make a great nation of Moses, but Israel's leader responded by pleading with God to restrain His wrath and remember His promises to the patriarchs. As a result, God had mercy and chose not to utterly destroy the people.

Verses 15-29 describe Moses' confrontation of the sinful Israelites. When Moses came down from the mount and observed the people's wicked behavior, he cast down the Commandments which had been graven by God on tables of stone, smashing them to pieces—a dramatic sign that God's covenant with the people had been broken by Israel's disobedience. He burned the calf, then ground the gold to powder, sprinkled it upon the water, and made the people drink it. Moses then demanded of the people, "Who is on the LORD's side?" The sons of Levi responded, proving their devotion to God. (This tribe was later designated as the priestly family.) The Levites were commanded to go among the people and to slay. It may be assumed that it was those who would not submit themselves to Moses and to God who were slain; the number was three thousand men.

In the final verses of this chapter, Moses once again interceded before God for the people. At his earlier intercession, he had prayed that God would not immediately destroy Israel. Now, with a penitent nation awaiting God's judgment, Moses went before God again. This time he pled with Him to forgive the people, or else to blot his own name from God's book. To "blot out" meant to wipe out or remove the record of his relationship with God, so this phrase conveys the great love Moses had for the people. In response, God instructed Moses to lead the people on to the Promised Land, promising that His angel would go before them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - C. The delay in the building
 - 1. The breaking of the covenant (32:1-35)
 - a. The sin of the people (32:1-6)
 - b. The intercession of Moses (32:7-15)
 - c. The action of Moses (32:16-35)
 - (1) The destruction of the calf (32:16-20)
 - (2) The rebuke of Aaron (32:21-24)
 - (3) The wrath of Moses (32:25-29)
 - (4) The further intercession of Moses (32:30-35)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Where did Aaron get the gold to make the calf?

2. Why do you think God responded to Moses' intercession as He did?

3. What lessons can we learn from the failure of Israel?

CONCLUSION

If our hearts are right with God, we can choose to hold on to our faith, regardless of how we feel emotionally at any particular moment.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” (Exodus 33:11)

When I was seventeen years old, some friends and I drove from the West Coast to our church’s Midwest camp meeting in Edwardsville, Illinois. Wanting to see some of the country along the way, we stopped at several historical sites and scenic areas. We also visited Winfield, Kansas, and stayed for a couple of days in the home of Dolly Walker, who was pastor of our church in Winfield at that time.

One day while I was sitting in Sister Dolly’s living room, I could hear her talking to someone in the kitchen. After a few moments my attention was caught by her words. I realized that Sister Dolly was having a conversation with the Lord in a simple, matter-of-fact manner, just as if she were talking to an intimate friend. What an impression that made on me as a young Christian!

Today’s focus verse says, “The LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” Imagine! Although Moses did not see God’s face, God came down in the cloudy pillar and they talked as friends. This intimate exchange was not based on the fact that Moses was humanly perfect, or supremely talented, or a great leader. Rather, Moses communicated with God on the basis of relationship. They were friends!

Think about the characteristics of a true friendship. Common interests, shared experiences, matching goals, and unity in thinking are among the things that draw friends together. We expect understanding from our friends, along with support, trust, help in times of crisis, and comfort in times of sorrow. We like to spend time with our friends, and appreciate opportunities to get to know each other better.

Are those characteristics part of our relationship with God? Do we enjoy that close connection with Him that enables us to talk as friends? Communication between friends is more than one person doing all the talking; it also involves listening. A friendship where one person only came by to ask for favors and gifts would not last long. At times we might be inclined to tell God all our needs and cares and forget to listen to what He has to say. He *does* want us to talk to Him about our needs and cares, but He also wants us to offer Him our praises, express gratitude for His blessings, and make evident our interest in hearing from Him.

A friend of God does not rush in and out of His presence. It takes time to communicate! Martin Luther once said that the busier he became, the more he needed time to pray. Perhaps when we look at our hectic schedules, we are tempted to compensate by cutting short our time with God. However, if we truly want to be God’s friend, we will take time to build that relationship. Then our friendship with Him will take first place in our lives!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 33 deals with Israel’s repentance and reconciliation to God following their sin regarding the golden calf, and Moses’ intercession on their behalf.

Verses 1-6 relate how Israel mourned. Because of their disobedience, God had said He would not go with them into the Promised Land, though He indicated that He would send an angel to help them (Exodus 32:34). When Moses told the Israelites God’s words, they were deeply distressed. As a sign of their repentance, and at God’s instruction, they took off their ornaments.

Verses 7-11 describe God’s meeting with Moses in the sacred tent. Since the more permanent Tabernacle was not yet built, the Tabernacle of the congregation referenced in this passage was probably the tent where Moses had his headquarters. By moving it far away from the camp, Moses visually reinforced to the Israelites that God was not dwelling with them. Others beside Moses could go to this tent and pray; verse 11 shows that Joshua availed himself of this opportunity, and remained there after Moses left.

Verses 12-17 relate the third time that Moses interceded for the people after they made the golden calf. In his first intercession (Exodus 32:11-14), Moses had petitioned God to turn away from His wrath; in the second (Exodus 32:30-35), he had requested forgiveness and received the promise of an angel to accompany them. In his third intercession before God, Moses pled that he had no interest in moving forward without God’s presence in its fullness. Moses’ plea prevailed; God promised to answer Moses’ prayer and go with the Children of Israel, and give them rest.

Verses 18-23 record Moses’ request to see God’s glory. Perhaps he felt he needed to know more of what God was like in order to lead the often-straying Children of Israel. Whatever Moses’ reason, he yearned for a fuller and more glorious disclosure of God himself. God granted his request, saying He would place Moses in a fissure of a rock and would cover him with His hand while He passed by, removing His hand so that Moses could see His back.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - C. The delay in the building
 - 2. The renewal of the covenant
 - a. The journey continued (33:1-6)
 - b. The praying of Moses (33:7-23)
 - (1) The place of his prayer (33:7-11)
 - (2) The content of his prayer (33:12-16)
 - (3) The fulfillment of his prayer (33:17-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What promise caused God to say that the Children of Israel should continue toward Canaan?

2. How was the promise of an angel's presence different than the previous arrangement?

3. What steps can we take to develop a closer relationship with God?

CONCLUSION

Moses highly valued his relationship with God, making regular communion with Him an important priority in his life. May we follow his example in developing a similar relationship with the Lord.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.” (Exodus 34:27)

The word *covenant* has a stronger connotation than the word *promise*. Webster’s Dictionary says a covenant is a “formal, solemn, and binding agreement.” Keeping a covenant means upholding it even in the difficult times.

Samuel and Linda Kuan are an example of a couple who faithfully kept their marriage covenant. They were Christians who married in China and had three children. Samuel was the Chief Officer on a merchant ship that came to the Portland, Oregon, harbor, and he attended services at our church.

In the 1960s, not long after crossing the Columbia River bar into the Pacific Ocean, an engine room technician on the ship found what proved to be a bomb that had been planted on the ship by someone hoping for an insurance claim. The technician brought the bomb to the deck, and several men, including the captain, stood around it. Samuel cautioned the men to leave the object alone, but someone did not heed. The bomb exploded and several men were killed, including the captain.

Samuel was blinded in the explosion, and the other senior officers were all injured or killed. In spite of his injury, Samuel instructed the Boatswain (Petty Officer) through the process of bringing the ship back toward the coastline of the United States, where the Coast Guard could be reached to come and help. Ashore, Samuel was hospitalized and began treatment and rehabilitation. In the process, he was granted permanent residency in the United States, and God worked it out for his family to immigrate also. Linda came with their children and stood by Samuel through all the adjustments of coping with his blindness and also acclimating to life in a new country. Linda had been trained in nursing, and in time, Samuel was trained to be an x-ray technician. Both worked for years in a local hospital.

Then, in the 1980s, Linda began to show signs of Alzheimer’s disease. Samuel faithfully cared for her until it became obvious that she needed twenty-four-hour supervision. She was admitted to a care facility, where Samuel’s face became familiar to the staff. He went to visit and help with her care every day until she passed away.

Samuel and Linda Kuan were exemplary in staying true to their marriage covenant through many difficulties. Yet God is far more reliable than any human being. When He says something, we can count on it happening one hundred percent of the time.

Moses had developed a close relationship with God, and they communicated freely with one another. In today’s focus verse, God told Moses that He would make a covenant with Moses and the Children of Israel. Imagine the awesomeness of entering into a covenant with God himself!

God’s promises were not just for the people in Biblical history. His Word is full of promises that apply to us today, among them the great covenant that He will give us eternal life. However, we must choose to be recipients of His conditional covenant by submitting to His will and establishing a close personal relationship with Him.

BACKGROUND

This text describes how God renewed His covenant with the Children of Israel.

The first tables of stone—on which God himself had inscribed the Ten Commandments—were broken when Moses came down from Mount Sinai and saw the Children of Israel worshipping a golden calf. In verses 1-4 of this chapter, God gave instructions to Moses to hew (carve out) two new tables of stone. God promised to rewrite the Commandments upon them. Moses was also commanded to go up into the mountain by himself, and he carefully followed God’s directions.

Verses 5-9 tell the fulfillment of God’s promise to make His goodness pass before Moses (see Exodus 33:19-23). God came in the cloud and declared that He was “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” Moses’ response was to bow his head and worship, and to entreat God for His continued presence and forgiveness.

In verse 10, God responded by renewing His covenant with the Children of Israel and promising to drive out the inhabitants of the Promised Land (verse 11). Then He warned that the people were to keep themselves separate from the inhabitants of the land—not to worship their idols or to intermarry (verses 12-17). God had made a covenant with the Children of Israel, and they were not to make covenants with the people about them. God restated many of His instructions, including those for three annual feasts and the Sabbath (verses 18-27), and He promised protection as the people obeyed.

After Moses spent another forty days with God, he returned to the people with a brightly shining face (verses 28-35). He had observed God's glory and spent time in His presence, and the glory showed on his countenance.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - C. The delay in the building
 - 2. The renewal of the covenant
 - c. The second tablets of the Law (34:1-9)
 - d. The renewal of the covenant (34:10-17)
 - e. The observance of the feasts and the Sabbath (34:18-27)
 - f. The radiance of Moses (34:28-35)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did God promise would happen if the men of Israel would go up to worship the Lord for the feasts?

2. Why do you think God's covenant with the Children of Israel was conditional?

3. What are some blessings of having a personal covenant relationship with God?

CONCLUSION

A close personal relationship with God is something we want to develop and maintain throughout our lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded.” (Exodus 36:1)

For more than a century, one of the main types of evangelistic work carried on by the Apostolic Faith Church has been the publishing of Christian literature. Many consecrated people have participated in this outreach, but perhaps one of the most notable was a man named Cliff Baltzell, who began working in the print shop at Front and Burnside in Portland, Oregon, when he was just fifteen years of age.

Born in 1904, Cliff would tell in his testimony how he thought of becoming a missionary when he was a child. When he was just thirteen years of age, he was saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit in a little log cabin in Wyoming after his family received some Gospel literature from the Apostolic Faith. Two years later they moved to Portland to worship with the Apostolic Faith people. In the camp meeting that year, Florence Crawford told of the need for workers at the headquarters printing plant. Cliff recounted, “My young heart responded to that call, and God gave me the privilege of helping to send the Gospel message into all the world.”

From the very beginning, Cliff put his whole life into the Lord’s work. His first responsibilities were those of stocking supplies and working as a job pressman. His dedication was obvious; he was a quick learner, and before long those around him realized he had a definite call from God upon his life. In time he became the printing plant manager, and served in that role for many decades. In addition to his printing work, he was a talented musician, playing French horn in the church orchestra for about sixty years, singing in the choir, and even composing Gospel hymns. He testified, “Sometimes at the plant a new song of praise wells up in my soul, and I lay my work aside to put on paper the words and notes of another hymn.”

Though his responsibilities were many, Cliff never neglected an opportunity to share his talents and experience with beginning Gospel workers. Until the day God called him home, he labored faithfully for his Master, and without doubt his efforts were instrumental in bringing many souls into the Kingdom.

Through the ages of time, God’s Holy Spirit has selected and equipped individuals for particular tasks in the Lord’s work. Today’s text tells of two craftsmen, Bezaleel and Aholiab, who were chosen from among the Children of Israel and equipped with the skills to create beauty in the material furnishings of the Tabernacle. They were also instructed to teach others who could help in this part of God’s work.

Our call may not be to publish Gospel literature like Cliff, or to create beautiful furnishings for the house of God like Bezaleel and Aholiab. However, God does have a particular plan for our lives and a specific way He wants us to serve Him. God’s work requires different types of laborers, and He will bless and equip us for whatever our assigned task may be, whether spiritual or physical in nature. Let us join the ranks of those who have willingly offered themselves to God throughout the ages, and ask Him to use our time and talents for His glory!

BACKGROUND

The closing chapters of Exodus describe the building of the Tabernacle—a place where Jehovah’s presence could dwell continually among the Children of Israel. Much of this portion of Scripture repeats the instructions that had been given to Moses earlier.

Verses 1-3 describe how Moses communicated the revelation he had received on Mount Sinai to the Children of Israel. Once again, God’s chosen leader stressed the importance of honoring the Sabbath. The intent of this cautionary preamble may have been to make sure the people’s zeal for building the Tabernacle did not impact their observance of a day of rest.

In verses 5-29, instructions were given concerning offerings for the construction project. Moses detailed the supplies that would be needed, and the people responded by bringing “a willing offering unto the LORD.” The Hebrew word translated *willing* as used here means “spontaneous, abundant, or enthusiastic.” In fact, so much was given that Moses eventually told the people to cease from bringing donations (Exodus 36:5-6). Moses also instructed the wise-hearted and skillful men among the people to assist with the labors involved in construction.

Verses 35:30-35 and 36:1-7 concern the two craftsmen, Bezaleel and Aholiab, who were appointed to oversee the physical work of the construction project. God gave these men a special enabling to do their required task. The first verses of chapter 36 record their explicit obedience in response to the instructions God had given Moses.

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- 3.** How can we cultivate an attitude of willingness with regard to participating in the work of the Lord?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

1. What were some of the offerings brought by the Children of Israel for the construction of the Tabernacle?

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[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And every wise hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work made he them.” (Exodus 36:8)

As I marked the boards before cutting them to the correct length, I heard my dad say, “Make sure you cut them all on the same side of the line.” I remember saying something like, “Details, details. Does it really matter which side of the line I cut on?” As a young boy helping his father, I had no comprehension of how important a few millimeters can be to a quality project.

A few years later, I heard similar words from a new employer while I worked my way through college as a carpenter’s helper. Although my employer chuckled as he told me, “Be sure you cut on the same side of the line,” I noticed him watching over my shoulder. I had a sense that my continued employment might be at stake, so I made sure I followed his instructions!

My employer was concerned about my attention to detail for several reasons. Certain details in our construction project could impact the integrity of the completed structure. Others might affect the building’s appearance. Either way, failure to take appropriate care could have grave ramifications. Attention to the structural specifics would prevent collapse and possible injury to those in the building. Attention to cosmetic details would enhance the reputation of the builder and the marketability of the finished product.

In today’s text, the Lord gave precise instructions regarding the construction of the Tabernacle. He intended for the Children of Israel to follow His directions scrupulously, not overlooking any of the details or deeming any point unimportant.

God gives the same type of specific attention to us. He has a blueprint for our lives and wants us to follow it carefully. Through the Holy Spirit, His Word, and His messengers, He often points out details to which we should pay attention. It is not that God is “looking over our shoulders” for no reason. He wants to ensure the integrity of our spiritual buildings. His only motivation is to make our lives strong, complete, and appealing reflections of His wonderful love—and with that goal in view, details matter!

May God help us to value His attention to the details of our lives, and to respond in simple obedience.

BACKGROUND

This portion of Exodus 36 is a description of the obedience of the Israelites to the detailed instructions God had previously given Moses regarding the construction of the Tabernacle (see Exodus 25:10 through 27:19). The repetition of detail makes clear the importance God placed upon careful adherence to His directions.

The first step in the construction of God’s house was its framing. Verses 8-13 detail the size, color, type of fabric, and method of hanging the embroidered curtains which, when placed together, would form the walls of the Tabernacle. The words “made ten curtains” point to numerous hours of labor. A staggering amount of spinning and weaving had to take place to create the amount of fabric needed. The phrase “cherubims of cunning work” likely refers to figures that were woven into the fabric.

Verses 14-19 describe the three layers which made up the outer covering of the Tabernacle. These layers consisted of panels of goats’ skins, and over that, the covering of rams’ skins, and then of the badgers’ skins.

The boards and silver sockets, described in verses 20-34, are indicators of the strength and stability of the finished structure. The boards were joined together by the bars which passed through them.

Verses 35-38 deal with the hangings which were used for partitions (the veils) and doors (the curtains) between the sections of the Tabernacle. The partitions divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (also known as the Holy of Holies), where the Ark of the Covenant was placed.

An extensive amount of work was needed to produce the various parts of the Tabernacle. Clearly, the structure never could have been built without tremendous community involvement.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - D. The construction of the building
 - 1. The Tabernacle assembled
 - b. The making of the parts
 - (1) The curtains (36:8-13)
 - (2) The coverings over the tent (36:14-19)
 - (3) The boards and sockets of silver (36:20-30)
 - (4) The bars (36:31-34)
 - (5) The veil and the screen (36:35-38)

A CLOSER LOOK

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

NOTES

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he made the candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work made he the candlestick; his shaft, and his branch, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, were of the same.” (Exodus 37:17)

Some years ago my wife had an illness that kept her home for days, sometimes weeks. During one such time we started a puzzle. It was a two-thousand-piece puzzle with hundreds of hues to it, and we spent many hours searching for pieces. People would come by to visit my wife, and often in the course of their stay they would sit down and work for a while on the puzzle. Finally the day came when we finished it—well, not *quite* finished. You see, we put piece number 1,999 in place, but the last piece was missing! Yes, it was a beautiful picture, but the same question came from all who looked at it: “Where is the last piece?” Just one missing piece made the whole puzzle look undone.

In today’s text we find God’s directions being carried out in the preparations for the furnishing of the Tabernacle. Notice the attention to detail. Each part spelled out in the original plan was included in the final product. Not one thing was left out. God would not have been pleased if the craftsman had left off one of the candleholders or decided to eliminate one piece of furniture thinking it was not necessary! No, completeness was integral to the beauty and success of the project.

God would have us look at His Word and give the same attention to detail, not leaving out any part of His plan for our lives. It might seem a small point and not understood to us, but God has a reason for every instruction He gives.

We can ask God today to help us make sure all the pieces are in place, that nothing is left out of what He is requiring of us. Just as it was important for Bezaleel to follow every instruction given for the Tabernacle, it is important for us to follow all the instructions God has given us. The true blessing from God comes in response to our willingness to simply obey all His directions.

BACKGROUND

This chapter continues with the description of the Israelites’ obedience to detailed instructions God had previously given Moses regarding the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Today’s text deals with several key articles to be used in the Tabernacle:

the Ark (verses 1-9), the table (verses 10-16), the candlestick (verses 17-24), and the altar of incense (verses 25-29).

First was the Ark, which was to be built of shittim (acacia) wood, and overlaid with pure gold. It was an oblong chest that was two and one-half cubits long by one and one-half cubits in width and height. The Ark symbolized God’s covenant with the Children of Israel and represented the presence of God. Its cover was the Mercy Seat—a slab of solid gold the same length and width as the Ark. Two golden cherubim were to be placed at each end of the Ark, facing one another with their wings spread out. Inside the Ark would be the Ten Commandments. The Ark would be placed in the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of the Tabernacle.

The second piece of Tabernacle furniture described in this passage was the table, which was also made of shittim wood and overlaid with pure gold. It was slightly smaller than the Ark, being two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one and one-half cubits high. It would be placed in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, and the shewbread and various utensils would be kept upon it.

Next is the description of the candlestick, or lampstand, which would light the Holy Place for the priests. It was to be made of pure gold, with six branches coming off the central shaft. Thus, the one candlestick provided seven burning oil lamps. Each of the six branches was decorated with three cups in the form of an almond flower, while the center shaft held four cups in the same form. Utensils and vessels for use in conjunction with this candlestick were also to be made of pure gold.

The final articles described are the altar of incense, the holy anointing oil, and the pure incense that would be used. Like the other furnishings, the incense altar, which was one cubit square, was made of shittim wood covered with gold. It would stand in the Holy Place in front of the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. It was used for burning the fragrant incense which was symbolic of acceptable prayer. The holy anointing oil was used to consecrate the priests and all the pieces in the Tabernacle, symbolizing that they had been set apart for God’s service. (See drawing at the end of *Daybreak*.)

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - D. The construction of the building
 - 1. The Tabernacle assembled

- b. The making of the parts
 - (6) The Ark (37:1-9)
 - (7) The table (37:10-16)
 - (8) The lampstand (37:17-24)
 - (9) The altar of incense (37:25-28)
 - (10) The oil and perfume (37:29)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Besides the shewbread, what articles were to be placed upon the table in the Holy Place? What were these articles made of?

2. Why do you think it was so important that the Israelites did not omit any item from God's plan?

3. Have you ever skipped over an instruction while completing a project? What was the result? Make a spiritual application.

CONCLUSION

If we follow God's instructions to us in every detail, God's presence and blessing will be with us.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD commanded Moses.” (Exodus 38:22)

In this modern age of technology, computers can accomplish many tasks very quickly. However, they need to be programmed precisely in order to function properly. For example, in some computer languages, if one semicolon is inserted in the wrong place, nothing will happen—at least, nothing that was expected—because a semicolon signals the conclusion of an instruction. To those of us who are unfamiliar with programming language, incorrect insertion of a semicolon might seem like a small matter. However, we’d be wrong! If we want the program to work properly, those semicolons have to be in the right places. When programming is done correctly, suddenly the power of the computer is at our disposal.

This need for paying close attention to detail is portrayed in today’s text. At first glance, this chapter in Exodus may not seem to have much relevance to the twenty-first century in which we live. Yet, it offers a glimpse into the nature of God. Perhaps we do not fully understand why God planned the Tabernacle as He did. We recognize that it had to be portable, so that it could be disassembled from time to time and transported to a new location, but why was the Tabernacle to be so beautifully designed? Why did the altar have to be of shittim wood? Did it really matter that the hooks of the pillar and their fillets (bands) were of silver? Why twenty pillars instead of twenty-five? We do not know the answers to those questions.

What we *do* know is that the Tabernacle was the subject of much divine thought and care, and God is just as intimately concerned with the details of our lives. His Word tells us that He knows the number of hairs on our heads, is aware when we get up and sit down, and even notes the thoughts of our hearts!

In our focus verse, we read that Bezaleel, the head artisan, took God’s instructions seriously and “made all that the LORD commanded Moses.” By doing so, the Children of Israel were assured that God would be pleased to dwell among them.

Just as God expected the craftsmen of Israel to work exactly according to His directions without questioning them, He expects us to trust His judgment and follow Him in faith. When we do, we can be assured that His holy presence will be with us.

BACKGROUND

This chapter includes the final segment of instructions regarding the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. It provides the details for the altar of burnt offering and the bronze laver (verses 1-8), then moves to a description of the courtyard (verses 9-20). The chapter concludes with an inventory of the bronze, silver, and gold that were used (verses 21-31).

Although Moses had overall responsibility for the construction of the Tabernacle, he delegated direct oversight of the project to skilled artisans—among them, Bezaleel and Aholiab—to do the actual work. Each verse in the first section of this chapter begins with the words, “And he . . .,” referring to Bezaleel.

The description of the altar of burnt offering in this chapter is similar to the one in Exodus 27:1-8. The altar was a hollow rectangle, approximately seven feet across and five feet tall. A grate allowed a supply of air to the fire and permitted the ashes to fall through into the pan placed below. There were horns at the corners of the altar to which the sacrifices were bound with cords. A laver made of brass (also described in Exodus 30:17-21) stood between the Tabernacle and the brazen altar and held the water for the ceremonial washings of the priests. Verse 8 relates that the women brought their “lookingglasses” for use in the construction of the laver; these were mirrors made of highly-polished bronze.

In addition to the furnishings for the Tabernacle, Bezaleel also constructed the courtyard, which was the open area surrounding the holy building. Approximately 150 feet by 75 feet in size, the courtyard was enclosed by a framework hung with curtains that were approximately seven-and-a-half feet tall. Because these curtains were not as tall as the Tabernacle, the building itself would have been visible throughout the camp.

The Tabernacle was very costly to build, utilizing massive amounts of gold, silver, and brass. By Moses’ appointment, the Levites had charge of the offerings that were brought in for the project. According to verse 21, Ithamar, the son of Aaron, was chosen to have oversight of this account. Each of the roughly 600,000 adult males of the Israelites was responsible for some of the cost—verse 26 tells us each was to donate a bekah (or half a shekel) for the work. Offerings were made on an unconditional basis because it was God himself who designated how the materials were to be built into a furnished structure.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - D. The construction of the building
 - 1. The Tabernacle assembled
 - b. The making of the parts
 - (11) The altar of burnt offering (38:1-7)
 - (12) The bronze laver (38:8)
 - (13) The court (38:9-20)
 - (14) The metals used (38:21-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the women bring for use in constructing the laver?

2. Why do you think that some of the material for the Tabernacle came from contributions that each man was instructed to bring, while some came from freewill offerings?

3. What can we learn from the attitude of the Israelites with regard to this detailed project?

CONCLUSION

Let us be like Bezaleel in our text today, and be faithful in doing all that God would have us do, down to the smallest detail.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.” (Exodus 39:32)

My daughter’s wedding dress was complete. As I stood back and admired it, I was proud of my accomplishment! Much effort and many hours of labor had gone into the dress. The intricate handiwork had not been an inconvenience but a joy to do for her. It was so rewarding when she constantly expressed appreciation for the work I had done.

A sense of well-being and satisfaction usually goes along with completing a detailed or labor-intensive project. That must have been the way the Children of Israel felt when they finished the work God had given them. Today’s text clearly describes how they paid close attention to detail while making the special garments for the priests. No doubt there was a real sense of accomplishment as they surveyed the completed apparel. The work had been done just as God had commanded.

We may wonder why these efforts are noted in such detail in the Bible. Perhaps it is to help us understand that God noticed how diligent they were in obeying the instructions He had given. Are we as attentive to detail in our relationship with Him as these people were in following His directions?

At times in our spiritual journey we may face difficult situations. Perhaps we will be given a task that is detailed or arduous, or something that we’d simply rather not do. If we look to God, He will give us His grace and strength. As we become busy with the task at hand, He will help us successfully bring it to completion. He notices when we are diligent in our obedience.

Perhaps we feel God has not given us a specific assignment that includes many details. However, our spiritual walk before Him is exactly that. As we follow His Word and the leadings of the Holy Spirit, we will receive His instructions on how to live in a way that is pleasing to Him.

There are rewards for paying close attention to detail in spiritual matters. The Children of Israel were rewarded by God’s presence dwelling among them, and we too will be rewarded by God’s presence with us if we carefully obey Him. The result will be the personal satisfaction of a job well done, and also the blessing of the Lord.

BACKGROUND

This chapter tells how the priests’ garments were prepared exactly as God had instructed Moses, and concludes by recounting how Moses inspected all the Tabernacle’s parts and furnishings.

Verses 1-31 give details regarding the workmanship of the attire of the priests. The fact that the phrase “as the LORD commanded Moses” is repeated seven times shows that particular attention was given to making the garments exactly as God had instructed (see Exodus 28:1-43).

The method for making the gold thread for the ephod and the breastplate is described. The gold was beaten into thin plates, which were then cut into wires. It is thought that one thread of gold wire was twisted with six threads of a color, and this twisted strand was used like a single thread. This was done with the blue, purple, scarlet, and linen yarn, so four threads of gold were woven throughout.

Costly materials were incorporated into this elegant robe. The names of the tribes of Israel were inscribed upon stones as part of the ephod, and thus the priest bore the people on his heart as he entered into the Tabernacle. The hem of the robe had alternating pomegranates and bells. As the priest moved about to accomplish his duties in the Tabernacle, the people outside could hear the bells and knew the priest was going before God on their behalf.

The coats, the mitre, the goodly bonnets, and the breeches for all the priests were made of fine twined linen.

The completed items were brought to Moses for his review (verses 32-43). God had given him the instructions, so he was qualified to inspect. Constructing the Tabernacle with all the necessary parts and furnishings is thought to have taken about six or seven months. Those entrusted with the work had been diligent, and Moses was satisfied that they had accomplished every detail properly (verses 42 and 43).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - D. The construction of the building
 - 1. The Tabernacle assembled
 - b. The making of the parts
 - (15) The priestly garments (39:1-31)
 - (a) Summary (39:1)
 - (b) The ephod (39:2-7)
 - (c) The breastplate (39:8-21)

- (d) The robe (39:22-26)
- (e) The tunics, turban,
breeches, and sashes
(39:27-29)
- (f) The plate of the holy
crown (39:30-31)
- (16) The work concluded
(39:32-43)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the engraving on the mitre say?

2. What do you think motivated these workmen to be so careful?

3. What are some rewards for obedience to God?

CONCLUSION

Doing a job well brings a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. How much more this is the case when it is a task for the Lord.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” (Exodus 40:34)

The day I was filled with the baptism of the Holy Ghost was a day of wonder and awe. The Lord had saved my soul and forgiven me of my sins when I was a young girl. Then, I had prayed for a long while to align my heart with God’s will and to surrender every corner and aspect of my life to Him. When I did, He sanctified me, removing the inbred nature of sin. When the Holy Ghost came in and God’s glory filled my soul, I was overwhelmed and in awe of the presence of God that permeated my being.

Perhaps that is how Moses felt on the day when the cloud covered the tent and “the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” He could not enter the Tabernacle because of the overpowering presence of God. In my mind’s eye, I can picture him hesitating and waiting upon the Lord as the cloud rushed in, filling every inch of the place.

The Children of Israel had not witnessed God’s presence in this way before. Certainly He had performed marvelous works for them prior to that time, but now whenever the congregation looked at the Tabernacle, they could see God’s visible presence.

God wants to be that continual presence in our hearts today. He wishes to permeate every part of our lives—our decision-making, our plans, our hopes, our dreams. Consider the words of an old hymn by Fanny Crosby:

*Thou the Spring of all my comfort,
More than life to me,
Whom have I on earth beside Thee?
Whom in heav’n but Thee?¹*

The word *spring* gives a visual picture of a bubbling fountain infusing our souls with joy from our Savior. He floods everything. He fills every crevice. He gives the power to follow His leading and direction.

The Holy Spirit is willing to enter each clean and holy heart. God invites us to experience His continual presence within our souls for daily empowering and guiding.

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, God called Moses to bring together all of the parts that had been made beforehand and assemble the Tabernacle according to His

instructions. Notice that the directions in verses 2-16 are mirrored by the actual work in verses 17-33.

The Tabernacle was set up “in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month” (verse 17). That was fourteen days less than one year from the time the Israelites had left Egypt. The assembly process is noted beginning with the Tabernacle itself and then the furnishings from the innermost area outward. The court around the Tabernacle, the altar, and the court gate are mentioned last.

Then God’s holy presence filled the Tabernacle in a visible way: God gave His approval to the work that had been done. His glory was so overpowering that Moses could not enter. This physical manifestation of God’s presence was a powerful and moving sign to the congregation that God was among them. They were following the true God, and He would lead and guide them in the time and direction they should go. Each day the cloud, and each night the pillar of fire, provided proof of God’s presence. God did not withdraw those signs until they entered into the Promised Land. Once they had reached their goal, the cloud inhabited the Holy of Holies, where it resided upon the mercy seat.

The Book of Exodus began with the Children of Israel as slaves in Egypt and ends with them being free and having God’s presence with them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. The construction of the Tabernacle
 - D. The construction of the building
 - 1. The Tabernacle assembled
 - c. The assembling of the parts (40:1-33)
 - (1) The instructions for the assembling (40:1-16)
 - (2) The assembling of the Tabernacle (40:17-33)
 - 2. The Tabernacle accepted (40:34-38)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How was God’s presence and blessing visibly manifested?

2. What emotions might the Israelites have felt when they saw the Tabernacle had been made from items they had offered?

3. How have you personally experienced God's presence in your life this week?

CONCLUSION

Allow God to be the Spring of your life, the Presence with which you are filled, and the Guide you willingly follow!

NOTES



Overview for Job

Purpose: To reveal the sovereignty of God and to demonstrate the meaning of true faith. This book also gives insight into why the righteous suffer, and illustrates the Biblical position of man's free will rather than an eternally-sealed destiny.

Author: Possibly Job, although some have suggested Moses, Solomon, or Elihu. Jewish tradition taught that Moses wrote the book while in the desert of Midian, although there is nothing in the book that directly suggests his authorship.

Date Written: Unknown.

Time Period Covered: Based on internal evidence, the events in this book probably took place during the time of the patriarchs, approximately 2000 B.C. to 1800 B.C.

Key People: Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu

Setting: The land of Uz, which likely was located northeast of Palestine, between the Damascus and Euphrates Rivers

Summary: The fact that Job is referred to in other parts of Scripture establishes that he was a real person, rather than a fictional character in a colorful story. Ezekiel 14:14 states, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD." In the New Testament, the Apostle James referenced this historical figure when he wrote, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job" (James 5:11).

The time in which Job lived is unknown. However, most scholars believe that he was contemporary with Abraham or the other patriarchs. Several reasons substantiate this thinking: Job's religious customs were those of an early date; there is no reference to a priesthood, a central place of worship, or the Law of Moses; and wealth was measured as it was in the patriarchal times, and Job's long life span was typical of that period.

While it is a historical account, the Book of Job is considered by many scholars to be one of the most eloquently profound pieces of literature ever written. The book deals with many of the difficult issues and timeless truths of human life.

The beginning and the end of the book, which relate the account of Job's life, are written in prose. The main body of the book is a dialogue in poetic style between Job, his three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and

Zophar), a younger bystander named Elihu, and God. Job's "comforters" were convinced that his suffering was caused by hidden sin. Job insisted he was innocent, and challenged the supposition that sin and suffering are linked in a cause-and-effect sequence.

An understanding of the literary style of Hebrew poetry can help in the study of this book. Rather than using conventional meter and rhyme, it relies largely on three other literary devices: parallelism, metaphors, and irony.

Parallelism is employed when the second part of a passage mirrors the thought of the first part using different words. An example of this is found in Job 3:11, "Why did I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?"

Metaphor is where descriptions are given in abstract or symbolic ways. For example, "They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey" (Job 9:26).

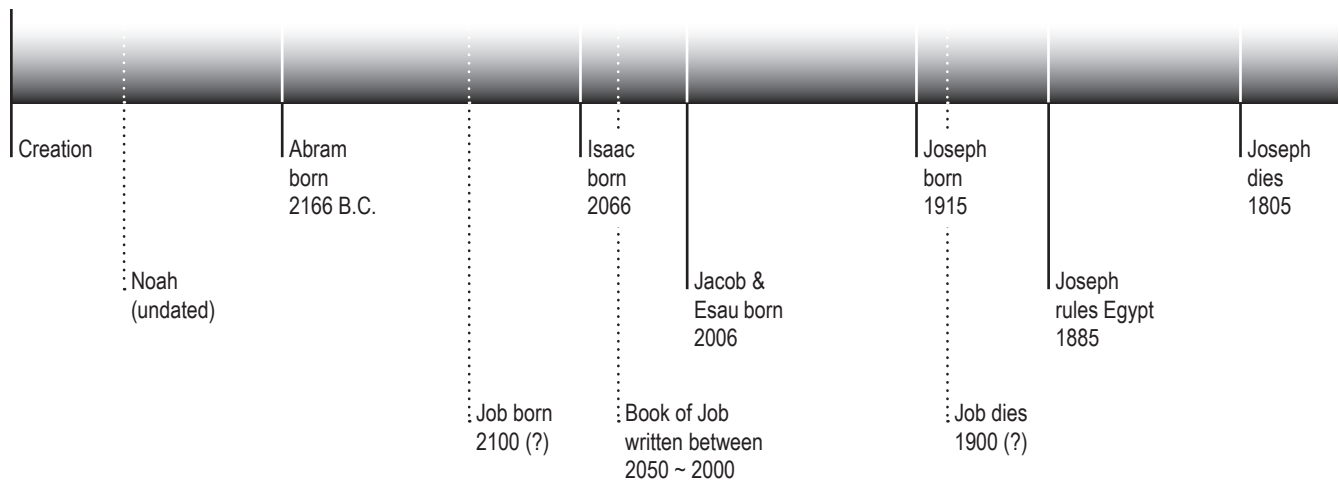
Irony is a literary technique in which what is said is the opposite of what is meant. We see irony used in Job 12:1-2, "And Job answered and said, No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Obviously Job knew the death of one person did not mean the death of wisdom.

It is vital to compare the statements made in the Book of Job with the full message of Scripture. Many of the recorded speeches were given by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. In Job 42:7, God states that Job's friends had not spoken "right" about Him. Thus, it cannot be assumed that everything they said is correct, even though they spoke with conviction and great assurance. Job himself was in a dark and confusing place in his life. At times he expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, even though his faith truly was anchored in God. Taken as isolated verses, these statements do not give an accurate picture of God, or even of Job's true sentiments. For example, Job said at one point, "If the scourge slay suddenly, he [God] will laugh at the trial of the innocent" (Job 9:23). This verse suggests that God would laugh if an innocent man died suddenly. While it reveals how Job was feeling at that precise moment, it is not an accurate portrayal of God's attitude.

The Book of Job does not offer solutions to all of life's troubles, but it shows us patience in the midst of trials and how a godly person can love God because of who He is, even in the absence of material benefits.

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. The introduction (1:1 — 2:13)
 - A. The character of Job (1:1-5)
 - B. The controversy over Job (1:6 — 2:10)
 - C. The coming of Job's friends (2:11-13)
- II. The solution of Job's three friends (3:1 — 31:40)
 - A. The lamentation of Job (3:1-26)
 - B. The first cycle of speeches (4:1 — 14:22)
 - C. The second cycle of speeches (15:1 — 21:34)
 - D. The third cycle of speeches (22:1-26:14)
 - E. The concluding statements of Job (27:1 — 31:40)
- III. The solution of Elihu (32:1 — 37:24)
 - A. Introduction: Elihu's intervention (32:1 — 33:7)
 - B. Elihu's first speech (33:8-33)
 - C. Elihu's second speech (34:1-37)
 - D. Elihu's third speech (35:1-16)
 - E. Elihu's fourth speech (36:1 — 37:24)
- IV. The solution of Jehovah (38:1 — 42:6)
 - A. The first speech (38:1 — 40:5)
 - B. The second speech (40:6 — 42:6)
- V. The conclusion (42:7-17)
 - A. The rebuke of Job's friends (42:7-9)
 - B. The restoration of Job's possessions (42:10-17)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.” (Job 1:12)

A college student is berated by her professor for voicing support for a Gospel principle. A Christian man loses his job, and consequently his family suffers severe financial reverses. A minister has a stroke and cannot speak. A faithful Gospel worker dies of cancer while still in her forties. A missionary is imprisoned and tortured. A Christian church is bombed and many believers are killed. Why does our all-powerful God allow these things?

In today's text, God permitted Job to suffer, and Job struggled to understand why. We, too, may wonder why difficulties and suffering come our way. God allows difficulties for various reasons. At times, they may be permitted as a form of correction, or to prove and strengthen us. Therefore, it is important to examine our hearts during a trial. At other times, as this account shows, trials come for reasons we may never understand.

In this case, Satan claimed that Job served God only because of the things God gave him—possessions, a large family, health, and security. God allowed Satan to test this assumption by taking from Job all that God had provided. Severe trials will reveal whether we serve God for the benefits or out of love for Him. If we serve Him for the benefits, a trial will defeat us. However, if we serve Him out of love, a trial will strengthen us. Faith built on benefits or prosperity will not endure. To stand the test, faith must be based on the knowledge that God is good, He is just, and He loves us more than we can imagine.

Right living does not guarantee a life free of suffering, and wrong behavior is not always instantly punished. Let us take courage from the insights revealed in these first chapters of Job. Spiritual warfare initiated by Satan against Job is described in the focus verse, and he will attack us, too. In fact, he may attack Christians more than he does unbelievers. (After all, unbelievers are already in his camp.) The enemy would like us to think God has forgotten us or forsaken us in our times of trial, but this text refutes that idea. God knows exactly what is happening in each of our lives.

Job's extreme suffering touched every area of his life. Although he did not know why he was suffering,

he did not lose his faith in God. We also can hold on to our faith no matter what comes to us, and cling to God in the assurance that He is with us.

BACKGROUND

This opening portion of the Book of Job describes Satan's assault on Job and his initial lament regarding his suffering.

The text begins with an account of who Job was and what happened to him. God said that Job was perfect and upright. The word *perfect*, as used in Job 1:1 and 1:8, does not mean without human error, but rather it means “blameless, upright, and undefiled.” Job had a wife and ten children and also possessed great wealth (1:3). The phrase “the greatest of all the men of the east” means that Job was highly respected and honored because of his righteousness, wisdom, and riches. He possessed faith, feared God, and shunned evil.

God and Satan conversed about Job (1:6-12), and Satan's accusation was that God had a hedge about Job. This text shows that Satan can only do what God allows. It also reveals that affliction and difficulties do not originate in the mind of God, but are permitted to accomplish His purposes.

Satan's argument to God was that Job only served Him for the benefits. God gave Satan permission to “touch” everything of Job's except Job himself. In one day, all of Job's possessions and family (other than his wife) were destroyed. Satan's accusation proved incorrect; Job refused to “charge God foolishly.” He did not blame God or curse Him. Job's devotion to God remained constant as he spoke the well-known words recorded in Job 1:21.

Chapter 2 begins with the account of Satan's further onslaught against Job; he secured permission from God to afflict Job's body. News of the tragic events reached Job's friends, and three of them came to comfort him (2:11-13). The sight of Job in his affliction caused them to weep, tear their clothes, and sprinkle dust on their heads. For seven days and nights they sat by him in silence.

Finally, Job spoke (chapter 3) with words that showed the anguish he felt. His grief and despair caused him to wish that he had never been born. He found no rest, as the quietness of his heart was replaced by trouble on every hand. He believed that God had forsaken him, and he desired to die. The groaning of his heart poured out in a mixture of sorrow and despair. This chapter begins the poetic dialog.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. The introduction (1:1 — 2:13)
 - A. The character of Job (1:1-5)
 - B. The controversy over Job (1:6 — 2:10)
 1. The first assault (1:6-22)
 - a. The conversation in Heaven (1:6-12)
 - b. The conflict on earth (1:13-19)
 - c. The confidence of Job (1:20-22)
 2. The second assault (2:1-10)
 - a. The conversation in Heaven (2:1-6)
 - b. The conflict on earth (2:7-10)
 - C. The coming of Job's friends (2:11-13)
- II. The solution of Job's three friends
 - A. The lamentation of Job (3:1-26)
 1. Why born? (3:1-10)
 2. Why not death at birth? (3:11-19)
 3. Why continue living? (3:20-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Job do at the conclusion of his children's celebrations?

2. What was Job's response to the tragedies that came his way? Why do you think he responded as he did?

3. What might be some of the reasons God allows suffering to come into a person's life?

CONCLUSION

Victory in trials comes when we trust God in the dark times, even though we cannot see or understand why He has allowed us to suffer.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?” (Job 4:1-2)

Have you ever been given poor advice? Most of us have received unsolicited “words of wisdom” from someone who really did not have the whole picture.

One time when I was in my late teens, I was helping my mom with her candy display at a local grocery store. As we set up the tables and arranged the assortment of chocolates and other sweets, a previous employer of mine approached me. The conversation started with typical generalities but quickly became more focused as he proceeded to voice how he thought I should plan my future. Granted, he was a successful businessman, but he was proposing that I pursue the job market with a “they need me” type of mentality.

His was not the only advice I had received. In fact, several people offered opinions and suggestions as to where they thought I would best succeed in life. Most of them were honest suggestions from people who cared for me, and I listened to them with that thought in mind. However, it seemed this individual was more concerned with voicing his personal philosophy than actually providing me with legitimate direction for my life.

Respectfully, I told him that he did not know me at all if he thought his ideas would work for me. It hurt to realize that someone I thought understood me at least a little did not understand me at all. He was looking at my situation strictly from his perspective, not taking into account that I wanted to follow God’s direction for my life.

No doubt Job felt all of these emotions and more as he listened to his friend, Eliphaz, tell him why he was experiencing such devastating circumstances. Eliphaz accused Job of sinning, and voiced his philosophy that God punishes those who sin against Him and blesses those who obey Him. He thought that Job must have sinned and simply needed to confess the sin in his life and allow God to restore him. Job must have wondered how his friend could say such a thing.

The right words spoken to a friend who is suffering can be greatly encouraging. Conversely, we may speak words of criticism and deeply hurt someone who is experiencing a difficult situation. How vital it is that we are careful to weigh prayerfully any opinions we might offer!

BACKGROUND

This block of text describes the discourse of Eliphaz, the first of Job’s friends to respond following Job’s complaint. He was the chief of the three friends, so he spoke first in each of the sets of speeches. Teman, where he was from, was known traditionally for its wise and learned men.

In his monologue, Eliphaz first commended Job for his words of kindness and support to others, mentioning that his words had “upholden him that was falling.” He could not overlook Job’s reputation; his wisdom and encouragement were renowned throughout the area where he lived. He exhorted Job to react to his circumstances as he had encouraged others to do.

Based on his personal experience, Eliphaz stated that punishment is the result of wrongdoing (4:7-11), implying that Job had sinned. He illustrated his statements by speaking of lions, using the words *roaring, fierce, young, old, stout, and whelps*. He was drawing a verbal picture to show that even those who are strong and in authority will be put down by God if they are wicked.

Eliphaz next spoke of an experience he had in the night (4:12-16). It is unknown whether he actually had a vision. However, verses 17-21 give his point: God alone is righteous, and people cannot rid themselves of sin.

Chapter 5 continues Eliphaz’s discourse. In verses 1-7 he indicated that the wicked may seem to prosper, but ultimately they will suffer. Again, he was trying to point out to Job that he must have sinned. In verses 8-16 he encouraged Job to seek God and extolled His virtues. Verses 17-27 speak of how God chastises but will also bring deliverance. Eliphaz wanted to convince Job that what he proposed was the appropriate course of action.

While many of the statements made by Eliphaz were correct, his premise was incorrect. He believed that Job suffered because he had done wrong.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - B. The first cycle of speeches
 - 1. Eliphaz’s advice (4:1 — 5:27)
 - a. The rebuke of Job (4:1-6)
 - b. The propositions of Eliphaz (4:7 — 5:7)
 - (1) Only the guilty are punished (4:7-11)

- (2) Only God is righteous (4:12 — 5:7)
 - (a) Man is impure (4:12-21)
 - (b) Suffering is universal (5:1-7)
- c. The points of Eliphaz (5:8-27)
 - (1) Trust God for help (5:8-16)
 - (2) God's punishment is corrective (5:17-27)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Job treat those who were weaker and less fortunate than himself?

2. Eliphaz established a relationship between sin and suffering (Job 4:7-8). How does he relate this to Job?

3. What are some ways we can show understanding to our friends when they suffer?

CONCLUSION

When offering words of support to another, we should remember that we do not see the whole picture and carefully weigh what we say.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.” (Job 7:11)

Thick, acrid smoke billowed up from beneath our jeep. Less than an hour earlier, my wife and I had left Gardiner, Maine, after spending all of our traveling money for necessary repairs on our vehicle. We had not planned to stop in Maine, but car trouble dictated that we were not going anywhere until our vehicle was fixed.

Several times I looked under the jeep, and felt despair as I observed oil dripping from the transfer case attached to the transmission. As each drop hit the heated exhaust system, little clouds of black smoke drifted down the freeway in the direction we should have been headed. Sitting there on the turnpike, with neither tools or the know-how to fix the problem, I felt totally helpless.

After a few minutes, my wife asked, “Aren’t you going to pray?” I was feeling so frustrated and powerless that forming a prayer seemed impossible, but my wife knew what to say. She prayed a simple but sincere prayer for help. Up to that point, I had not been able to turn the key, budge the steering wheel, or move the gear stick. Suddenly, everything freed up and I was able to start the engine. I jumped out, slammed the hood shut, and headed down the freeway, thanking God for His help and for answering my wife’s prayer.

Looking back, I know our situation that day was insignificant when compared to the circumstances that Job faced in his life. In his desperation, Job cried out in the hope that God would give deliverance. Unlike the immediate response I received on the turnpike, Job had to endure for some time before the desire of his heart was granted. Yet in spite of the overwhelming nature of what he faced, he maintained his innocence and his integrity before God.

Times of distress are inevitable, and we may face situations in our lives when we need to cry out desperately to God. We can be encouraged by remembering Job and what he endured. This will help us realize that God is hearing our prayers, whether He answers immediately or not.

BACKGROUND

In today’s text, Job responded to Eliphaz’s speech, continuing to mourn the injustice of his situation

instead of addressing Eliphaz’s statements point by point. Job was so acutely aware of his misery that he felt all hope was gone. Eventually, he determined that it would be better for God to take his life; then he would know assuredly that he had maintained his integrity before God.

Instead of offering sound advice or support, Eliphaz had accused Job of wrongdoing. Job, in turn, asserted that those who refuse to show kindness to a friend have turned their backs on true religion. Also, he challenged his friends to look at him and determine if he was lying about being righteous.

In chapter 7, Job provided an analogy of life as the life of a slave, saying that man has no control over his life and that he only looks forward to the end of the day when he can rest. Through most of chapter 7, Job directed his comments toward God. Job feared that if his suffering continued much longer, he might forsake God. He told God that if He did not do something soon to vindicate his name, he would die. In his desperation, Job spoke frankly. He felt his death was imminent, so there was no need to speak in guarded phrases; he expressed directly what he was thinking and how he felt.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - B. The first cycle of speeches
 - 2. Job’s answer (6:1 — 7:21)
 - a. Job’s despair (6:1-7)
 - b. Job’s request for death (6:8-13)
 - c. Job’s rebuke of his friends (6:14-30)
 - d. Job’s lament before God (7:1-21)
 - (1) Because of life’s misery (7:1-10)
 - (2) Because of God’s treatment (7:11-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What word picture does Job use to describe his friends?

[illegible][illegible]

Even though we must endure trying circumstances in life, we can maintain our integrity before God simply by keeping our faith in Him. God will never fail.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.” (Job 9:11)

Recently while I was spending some time talking to the Lord, the sun was streaming in the window, lighting up the sofa where I was kneeling. Suddenly, the room became quite dark, and I realized that a cloud had moved between the sun and me. I could no longer see the sun with its radiant beams of light as it had appeared moments before . . . yet I knew that nothing about the sun had changed! The slight silver rim around the clouds was evidence that the sun was still there and was shining as brightly as before; I just could not see it as well.

Job’s lament in the focus verse shows that he felt this way about God—that his view of God had become clouded. It is interesting to note that although he wrestled with many questions, Job did not question the existence of God. The intensity of the situation and the sense of spiritual separation from God did not cause him to cast away his confidence in the reality of God; rather, his questions had to do with whether God was acting justly in his particular case.

As readers of the Book of Job, we have the benefit of knowing about an important dialog that took place between God and Satan. This helps us to understand the suffering of Job and provides perspective on what he went through. However, when we face our own dark night of the soul, we very possibly will have no more understanding regarding what is happening than Job did. For that reason, faith is imperative.

When the enemy attacks with the thought that God is remote or unconcerned about the issues facing us, we need to remember that just as the sun is sometimes clouded, there will be times when we cannot perceive God’s nearness even though He is close by. In those dark moments, we can recall how God has worked for us in the past and know that He is mindful of our every need.

When the clouds roll in and our view of God is obscured, we will find that if we hold on to God in faith, He will carry us through.

BACKGROUND

Bildad was the second of Job’s friends to voice his thoughts in this initial round of speeches. All three men had come for the purpose of comforting their friend, but in this portion of text, Bildad argued with Job and condemned him. Job replied to Bildad

and then made his complaint to God. It is thought that Bildad may have been a descendant of Shuah, Abraham’s sixth son by Keturah.

Bildad began by condemning Job’s words and comparing them to “a strong wind,” turbulent and stormy. He denounced Job’s questioning of God’s justice, and maintained that if Job were pure and upright, God would not have permitted him to suffer. He further declared that the death of Job’s children was indisputable evidence of their sin and insinuated that if Job would forsake his sin, all would be well.

Job replied to Bildad by posing a simple question, “How should man be just with God?” (Job 9:2). In essence he was saying, “How can a person be declared innocent in God’s sight?” He went on to state that a person cannot contend with God. Job depicted the unapproachable majesty of God through the physical phenomena of the sea, the stars (Arcturus is the name of a star; Orion and Pleiades are constellations), and all of creation. However, he could not deny his longing to be justified and expressed his desire for a mediator or go-between “who may lay his hand on us both,” to reconcile the matter (Job 9:33). “But it is not so with me,” he confessed, the tone of his words bearing witness to his inner discouragement.

In Job 10:12-22, Job reminisced of times past when he had felt God’s nearness. The recollection was painful and the unanswered questions weighed him down with a great burden. Speaking hypothetically, he said, “If I sin . . . If I be wicked . . . and if I be righteous,” it would not change God’s treatment of him, and he was confused because of this. He realized that life is short and longed for God to relieve his afflictions so he could have a little respite before he died.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - B. The first cycle of speeches
 - 3. Bildad’s advice (8:1-22)
 - a. The thesis: God punishes sinners (8:1-7)
 - b. The support of the thesis (8:8-10)
 - c. The dealings of God with the wicked and righteous (8:11-22)
 - 4. Job’s answer (9:1 — 10:22)
 - a. His answer to Bildad (9:1-35)
 - (1) God is almighty (9:1-12)
 - (2) God destroys the righteous and the wicked (9:13-24)
 - (3) Job’s weakness (9:25-35)

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NOTES

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.” (Job 14:14)

Today while doing an internet search, I came across a website for grieving families—an area where individuals could share memories or write a tribute to a child who had passed away. My heart was touched as I felt the anguish those posts expressed. However, it was interesting to note the difference in tone between the comments of people who had hope of seeing their children again in eternity, and those who clearly regarded death as the final parting.

My mind went to the little one our family lost a few years ago—a precious ten-month-old girl. We know she is waiting for us in Heaven! I found myself rejoicing again in the fact that we not only have hope, but a solid assurance of seeing our dear ones once more when we step from this life into the next. As Christians, we may live out our lives on earth in less-than-wonderful conditions—possibly in the midst of poverty, loneliness, or sickness—but we find real hope in the surety of the Resurrection.

Though posed as a question, today’s focus verse introduces a ray of hope as Job raised the possibility of immortality. The light was beginning to break, if only faintly. Early believers, like Job, did not have the revelation of future life as we now have it. Passages in the Old Testament hint at a future resurrection, but Job did not have the Scriptures to read and ponder. A few chapters after today’s text, Job would make a great statement about future resurrection (Job 19:25-26), but in chapters 11 to 14 he was vacillating between hope and despair.

Today, Job’s hope of eternal life is a reality. Yes, we can be assured that though a man dies, he will live again! What a blessed and comforting hope that is.

If we are grappling with a giant of grief, we can take heart. Jesus is here to share our load. His Word promises that not only will He be with us through the valley of the shadow of death, but one day we will enjoy eternal life together with those who have gone before us. Focus your thoughts on that great resurrection and be comforted!

BACKGROUND

In chapter 11, Zophar, who also claimed to be a friend of Job, addressed the suffering man. He took the same position Eliphaz and Bildad had taken

in prior chapters: that Job was suffering because of his sins. Zophar self-righteously accused Job of talking too much, boasting, mocking God, and being hypocritical. He stated that Job received less punishment than he actually deserved and, showing no sympathy for Job’s pitiful condition, accused Job of hiding secret sin. Although Zophar was correct in his belief that God knows and sees everything, he arrogantly supposed that Job did not know this. He completely misjudged Job’s spiritual condition. If Job had been a sinner, as Zophar implied, he might have been led to repentance through Zophar’s words. Instead, Zophar’s “wisdom” sounded like the self-righteous boasting of one trying to show how intelligent he was.

Responding with biting sarcasm in chapter 12, Job answered Zophar’s accusations. Job needed his friends’ love and support at this time, not their reproof. Job did not understand why he suffered, but he knew that his friends’ reasons did not apply to him. He also disagreed with their insistence that evil people never prosper.

In chapter 13, tired of defending himself to his mistaken friends, Job appealed directly to God. Feeling abandoned, Job cried out to Him, saying in essence, “Call me to come—how quickly will I answer. If I have done wrong, tell me what I have done.” As a picture of his sense of rejection, Job compared himself to a moth-eaten old coat. Verse 15 in this chapter reveals the extremity to which Job felt his condition had progressed, but in spite of that he reiterated his trust in God.

Chapter 14 continues Job’s line of reasoning, as he referenced the frailty of man and how short life is. Because of his suffering, rejection by his friends, and his apparent impending death, he complained that life was not fair. He said that a tree, when cut down, may sprout new life from the roots, but man dies and rots away. Still, in the depths of his despair, Job had hope of an eventual resurrection.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - B. The first cycle of speeches
 - 5. Zophar’s advice (11:1-20)
 - a. Job’s words rebuked (11:1-6)
 - b. God’s power praised (11:7-12)
 - c. Job urged to repent (11:13-20)
 - 6. Job’s answer (12:1 — 14:22)
 - a. Answer to Zophar (12:1 — 13:19)
 - (1) Job’s sarcasm (12:1-6)

- (2) Job's realization of God's person (12:7-25)
- (3) Job's denunciation of his friends (13:1-12)
- (4) Job's desire to turn to God (13:13-19)
- b. Appeal to God (13:20—14:22)
 - (1) Job's request of God (13:20-28)
 - (2) Job's complaint of life's brevity (14:1-6)
 - (3) Job's doubts of life after death (14:7-17)
 - (4) Job's complaint over his miseries (14:18-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. In chapter 13, what did Job declare he would do even if God chose to slay him?

2. Job's friends argued that all suffering is a punishment for sin, and concluded that Job was suffering because of wrongdoing. What was the problem with their reasoning?

3. When we feel that we are out of options and resources, as Job did at this point in his life, what should we do?

CONCLUSION

For the child of God, death need not be a source of dread or fear because we know that one day we will overcome it!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all.” (Job 16:1-2)

A while back, I read about a missionary who was translating the Scriptures for a remote tribe in the mountains of Mexico. At one point he found himself struggling to translate our English word “comfort.” One day his helper asked for a week’s leave, explaining that his uncle had died. He wanted some days off to visit his bereaved aunt, “to help her heart around the corner.” That was just the expression the missionary needed. What a picturesque way to describe comfort!

While we will never experience the dire set of circumstances that caused Job’s suffering, we probably will find ourselves in need of comfort at some point in life. Circumstances which cause physical, spiritual, mental, or emotional pain are a universal reality.

Most likely we will also try at some point to comfort a friend or acquaintance who is hurting. In those times, let us attempt to be better comforters than Job’s “friends” were! The dictionary indicates that the word *comfort* means “to give strength and hope; to soothe in distress; to ease misery or grief.” Clearly, Job was right when he called the three men who visited him “miserable comforters.” They not only failed to offer strength and hope, but they actually added to Job’s misery by turning against him and harshly accusing him of causing his own suffering.

When we attempt to console others, we should be careful never to criticize how the sufferer is handling adversity. It may be helpful to remember that people who are hurting often experience feelings of shock, denial, bewilderment, confusion, guilt, anger, or depression. Those emotions may manifest themselves in a wide variety of ways.

Generally, it is best not to attempt to suggest any reason for the suffering. We do not know why people suffer—only God sees behind the scenes and understands fully *why* He allows what He allows. As we see by the example of Job’s comforters, things are not always as they appear to us.

The best comforters are usually people who have experienced a similar sorrow. If we have not gone through what the person we are attempting to comfort is experiencing, our understanding is limited. Still,

we can try to put ourselves in the sufferer’s place and offer genuine solace, encouragement, and prayers. We can encourage him or her to have confidence that God is working out His perfect plan through the circumstances of life. When the suffering focus on that, a blessed glimmer of hope will appear on the horizon, and they will find in Him the strength to carry on.

How do you want others to comfort you in your time of need? Do your best to offer exactly the same kind of compassionate support to others!

BACKGROUND

In chapters 4-14, Job and his friends had engaged in a cycle of discussion in which each of the three men individually addressed Job, and then Job responded. Today’s text begins the second cycle of discussions.

In chapter 15, Eliphaz, the friend who spoke first in the previous dialog, once again took the lead in addressing the suffering man. Although Eliphaz basically repeated his earlier assertions, the tone of this second speech is sharper and more intense. He attacked Job’s wisdom and condemned him as a hypocrite, maintaining adamantly that Job brought his awful circumstances upon himself because of his sinfulness. Eliphaz concluded his verbal attack by giving a description of the fate of the wicked, perhaps with the hope of stirring Job to confession and repentance.

Chapter 16 begins Job’s response to Eliphaz. Job revealed his deep hurt and anger at his friends’ accusations. He described with contempt their efforts to comfort him, and expressed that he felt they had turned him over to the hands of the wicked. To add to his grief, he felt God had forsaken him, so he seemingly abandoned any hope of vindication. He began to dwell on death, seeing it as an end to his pain and grief.

In chapter 17, Job lamented the fact that his neighbors and friends had turned against him. He appealed directly to God to vouch for him and to confound his friends for their attacks against his integrity. Then he again addressed the men before him, bemoaning his pitiful state and expressing his fear that all hope for righting this wrong would go to the grave with him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - C. The second cycle of speeches

1. Eliphaz's advice (15:1-35)
 - a. Job's guilt assessed (15:1-6)
 - b. The reason stated (15:7-16)
 - c. Job challenged to repent (15:17-35)
2. Job's answer (16:1 — 17:16)
 - a. The description of his friends' advice (16:1-5)
 - b. The source of Job's affliction (16:6-17)
 - c. The desire for God's help (16:18 — 17:5)
 - d. The sorrow of Job for his state (17:6-16)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What are some of the word pictures Job used in chapter 16 to describe his pitiful condition?

2. Why do you think Job felt that even God had turned against him?

3. Why is hope so important? What steps can we take to increase our hope in a discouraging time?

CONCLUSION

In times of extreme suffering and grief, God's loving presence is often communicated through ordinary people who minister with grace and compassion. Let us be among those who do that!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”
(Job 19:25)**

The report from the oncologist was not good. Unless God intervened, my husband’s grandmother had just a short time to live. We were still reeling from the shock of this news when the phone rang and my mother informed me that their home had been broken into and my father had been brutally beaten, almost to the point of death.

Contemplating these events later in the week while driving our family vehicle, I rounded a slippery corner and collided abruptly with an oil tanker. Once my car came to a standstill, I realized that I was uninjured but the car would need extensive work. When my husband showed up at the scene of the crash a few minutes later, I burst into tears as I fell into his arms. The cumulative stresses of that week were almost more than I could bear.

When we become Christians, a wonderful work is done in our lives. Unbelief is turned to faith. Old habits fall away and new, clean ones take their place. Negative emotions are replaced with feelings of love, joy, and peace. There is a sense of relief, and it is easy to believe that God is there and in control.

However, sooner or later a trial will come. Sometimes many challenges occur almost simultaneously. Suddenly the feeling of peace is elusive. Life feels overwhelming and we may wonder if God is even on the scene at all. This would only be a fraction of what Job must have felt when Bildad was lecturing him in today’s text, for his response to Bildad reflects feelings of abandonment and despair.

However challenging such trials of faith may be, it is at these times that we learn to trust the Lord more deeply. When we cannot feel God’s presence or see a way out, we can still have hope that someday our trials will be over and we will see God. As we seek the Lord and look back to the wonderful landmarks in our Christian lives such as salvation and other experiences, we can affirm with Job that “I know that my redeemer liveth.” How pleased the Lord must feel when His children assert their faith in Him even when they cannot feel Him near!

BACKGROUND

In chapter 18, following Eliphaz in this second round of speeches, Bildad also lashed out at Job

with more vehemence than he had used in his earlier speech. In blunt and violent language he told Job that he was nothing special to God, that he had insulted the intelligence of his friends, and that his wickedness would cause the destruction of all that he knew, including his name. While in his first speech he had offered hope if Job would repent, in this diatribe he offered no hope. Instead, he quoted Job’s own words, twisting them out of context, and turning them into “proof” that his friend was wicked.

Bildad’s barbs wounded Job anew, and he acknowledged that the harsh evaluation of his friends had multiplied his pain. He did agree with his friends on one point: that God was the cause of his affliction and the One who assailed him.

Despite all the negative accusations and the fact that Job believed God was against him, many view his assertion of faith in verses 25-27 of chapter 19 as some of the most beautiful words recorded in Scripture. Job managed for a moment to focus his attention solely on God and was carried to the peak of faith, where he saw the God of righteousness ultimately coming to his defense. He saw God not as merely an Arbiter, but as a Redeemer who would fight for his cause. Out of the pit of despair, Job prophesied the atonement, the incarnation of Christ, and his own ultimate bodily resurrection.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - C. The second cycle of speeches
 - 3. Bildad’s advice (18:1-21)
 - a. His reproach of Job (18:1-4)
 - b. His description of the wicked’s doom (18:5-21)
 - 4. Job’s answer (19:1-29)
 - a. His repudiation of his friend’s concept (19:1-6)
 - b. His description of God’s treatment (19:7-22)
 - (1) His desolation (19:7-12)
 - (2) His separation (19:13-22)
 - c. His confidence in God (19:23-29)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many times did Job say his friends had reproached him?

2. Why do you think Job's friends were so hard on him in his plight?

3. What will help us keep our focus and faith in God when we suffer trial and affliction?

CONCLUSION

Our trials will not last forever. Someday we will be in the presence of God for eternity! Focusing on that great hope will help us remain steadfast through the temporary adversities of this life.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.” (Job 21:32)

Operation Lifesaver, a public information program dedicated to reducing collisions, injuries, and fatalities at highway-rail crossings, provides a startling statistic on the homepage of its corporate website: someone is hit by a train about every three hours. Perhaps even more startling is the fact that most of the fatalities are caused by risk-takers. Research has shown that hearing a train whistle will cause people’s minds to indicate they should increase their speed. About forty-three percent of the accidents occur at crossings equipped with flashing lights and bells or gates, because many drivers will go around or under the gates. They know the risk, but they think they can beat the oncoming train and somehow avoid a collision—but with tragic consequences!

All of us know that we will die someday. Death is inevitable unless the Lord comes first, and we do not know when either event will occur. Yet, while many people are aware that there is danger in failing to prepare for eternity, they put off making their peace with God. They ignore the “flashing lights and bells” that warn of the danger and proceed recklessly through life, seemingly giving little thought to the hereafter. What a terrible risk they are taking!

In today’s text, Zophar and Job debated the subject of death. Zophar declared that the death of the wicked is premature and immediate as a sign of God’s judgment. Job contested Zophar’s words, insisting that the wicked do not die any sooner than the righteous, nor are their lives on earth necessarily any less prosperous, successful, or healthy than the lives of those who live in a godly manner. Job was right. But in the midst of this heated dispute, it is interesting to note that the two men agreed on one point: death occurs for both the righteous and the wicked.

Like Job, we do not fully understand why at times good people suffer and the ungodly prosper. However, we are assured, as Job was, that final justice will not come in this life but in the next. In the meantime, we want to be sure to prepare for eternity.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 20 is the second speech that Zophar directed to Job. Since Job’s viewpoint had already been stated by Eliphaz and Bildad, as well as by himself, Zophar offered nothing new to the discussion.

Like the others, he continued to ascribe guilt to Job and to attack his position. He gave a fiery “sermon” focused on the way of the wicked, with the obvious motive of forcing Job to admit he was suffering because he was being rightly judged by God.

In chapter 21, Job gave his last reply in the second cycle of discussion. He seemingly no longer hoped for words of comfort from his friends, but expected their continual mockings. In response to Zophar’s faulty premise regarding the wicked, he offered the opposing perspective, attacking Zophar’s points and disproving them with evidence. He declared that, while the wicked may prosper in this life, God will ultimately judge them in eternity. In this speech, Job did not address any remarks to God. By the time he concluded, he seemingly felt he had completely refuted the arguments of his friends because what they had said had no proof in real life.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - C. The second cycle of speeches
 - 5. Zophar’s advice (20:1-29)
 - a. The transitory state of the wicked (20:1-11)
 - b. The judgment of God upon the wicked (20:12-29)
 - 6. Job’s answer (21:1-34)
 - a. The wicked do prosper (21:1-16)
 - b. The wicked are rarely cut off (21:17-26)
 - c. The rejection of their premise (21:27-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Whose joy did Zophar say was “but for a moment”?

2. Why do you think Job bothered to contest Zophar’s false statements about the lot of the wicked?

3. If the ungodly prosper and succeed in spite of their sin, what is the benefit in serving God?

CONCLUSION

While death comes to all, we can heed the warnings of Scripture and be prepared for eternity.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.”
(Job 23:14)**

Driving along the highway one late November day, Jack, an experienced truck driver, suddenly felt his tractor-trailer begin to slide uncontrollably across the lanes. He gripped the steering wheel tightly and attempted to straighten out the huge vehicle, but it continued sliding and began to jackknife.

As Jack fought frantically for control, he cried out to God. Suddenly his hands were flung off the steering wheel. Slowly the semi began to straighten out. When Jack took the steering wheel again, the giant truck was in its own lane, moving down the highway in a straight line. He said it was as if God’s unseen hands had brushed his hands away so that God himself could steer the truck.

As humans, we tend to feel confident and secure as long as things happen according to plan. However, when unexpected events occur—especially negative ones—uncertainty can quickly escalate into fear and even panic. In our world today, many people feel anxiety when they consider the potential of terrorist attacks. Some are alarmed at the possibility of “rogue” nations gaining nuclear capability. As a result, anxiety and stress are increasing, and depression is a significant public-health concern across all regions of the world.

Even as Christians, we will face times in our lives when our personal circumstances seem overwhelming or when everything is going wrong, and we cannot seem to reach God in prayer. How helpless we feel at such times!

Job must have felt that way in our text today. He certainly had experienced a series of unexpected and negative events. He could not seem to reach God, and he was powerless to help himself. Yet Job trusted God with his life and completely believed his circumstances were in God’s hands. For this reason, he asserted in the focus verse that whatever happened to him was according to God’s will.

That thought can be our anchor when life seems uncertain. Even during the deep trials when God is obscured by our suffering, we can know that He is allowing it so that we can become like pure gold (Job 23:10). What a wonderful thought!

It can be a comfort to know we do not need to be in charge. The great God in Heaven who loves us

has complete control of our lives, just as God was in control of Jack’s truck. We can each learn to rest in the Lord and know that He makes all things work together for our good. As we seek that place of rest in the Lord, the ray of hope that has been so elusive will begin to shine through the darkness. We can be assured that the Lord will bring us out and ultimately give us victory just as He did for Job.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text begins the third cycle of discourses between Job and his friends, in their ongoing debate about why Job was experiencing such hardship.

Chapter 22 gives the third speech of Eliphaz, who was again the first to speak. Still not accepting Job’s denial of sin, in this speech Eliphaz moved from assessing Job’s supposed wrongdoing in general terms, to a lengthy list of specific but imagined sins. His preconceived theology—that severe trials would only occur in the life of an ungodly individual—remained intact, so he resorted to false accusations.

In chapters 23 and 24, Job responded. He did not dignify Eliphaz’s false attacks with a direct rebuttal, but once again expressed his desire to find God and present his case before Him. He felt that his suffering would be much more bearable if he could only understand why it was occurring. Though he was confused and troubled, he asserted his confidence that God had allowed his present state, and that the vindication and reward of those who served God faithfully would occur beyond the grave. He was confident that when his trial was over, he would come forth as gold (Job 23:8-12).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - D. The third cycle of speeches
 - 1. Eliphaz’s advice (22:1-30)
 - a. The sinfulness of Job (22:1-11)
 - (1) Stated (22:1-5)
 - (2) Sustained (22:6-11)
 - b. The false security of the wicked (22:12-20)
 - c. The invitation to repent (22:21-30)
 - 2. Job’s answer (23:1 — 24:25)
 - a. Job’s desire to find God (23:1-9)
 - b. Job’s dismay of God (23:10-17)
 - c. Job allows that God permits wickedness (24:1-12)
 - d. Job knows the wicked prosper (24:13-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What verses in chapter 23 reveal that Job was confident he had not sinned and that God was working things out for his good?

2. Based on chapter 23, what do you think was Job's greatest frustration during his trial?

3. Think back to a time in your life when God seemed distant and prayer was difficult, but victory was eventually gained. What encouragement would you give someone else going through a similar experience?

CONCLUSION

Take heart when going through the hard times in life! We can have the same confidence as Job. God knows how much we can endure and He will not forsake His children.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?” (Job 26:14)

Given the assumptions and beliefs that were common in the ancient Near East where Job lived during the era of the patriarchs, his insight regarding the greatness, dominion, and majesty of God are truly remarkable. The history of the region is marked by many achievements that changed the world, including understanding the concept of time and math, and the inventions of the wheel, sailboats, maps, and writing. However, Mesopotamian religions were polytheistic, and worshippers gave homage to multiple gods and goddesses who supposedly created the earth, combated hostile deities, controlled the weather and the seasons, and brought fortune or misfortune to mankind.

Beliefs about the cosmos were also varied. For example, the Babylonians believed the sky was a solid dome through which water sometimes seeped through as rain. Ancient Egyptians perceived the universe as rectangular and box-like. Early Greeks thought the world was a floating disk surrounded by a great river. Hindus believed that the universe was carried on the back of four elephants who rode on the back of a tortoise.

Today’s text reveals that Job understood it is not mythical gods, but God’s power that controls all natural forces. That power extends over the living and dead, the north and the south, the sun and the moon, the clouds and the seas. And as our focus verse states, Job realized that all this was but a little portion of God’s ways!

Another individual who understood this great truth was Amy Carmichael, Irish missionary to India in the early 1900s. Like Job, she recognized that all God created and controlled were only small parts or “edges” of the infinite power behind them—only the extremities, fringes, and outlines of the ways and works of God. During the final years of her life, an injury prevented Amy from having much personal contact with her loved ones at the Dohnavur mission she had established for children rescued from temple prostitution. To stay in touch with her fellow workers and the children, she regularly wrote devotional thoughts to encourage and instruct them. These messages were published in a book titled “Edges of His Ways,” a title based on our focus verse, and in the years since, that book has blessed many far beyond the borders of India.

The reality of God’s great power is a truth that we can apply to our own lives. Has God answered a prayer for you? Has He given you a glimpse of His mercy, His forgiveness, or His grace? Be assured that these gracious gifts are only “parts” of His ways. God’s greatness is not restricted to creative acts; it extends far beyond the physical universe around us. The One who “hangeeth the earth upon nothing” is interested in us and mindful of our smallest needs.

BACKGROUND

The third and final cycle of discourses between Job and his friends, which began in chapter 22, continues in these chapters. In chapter 25, Bildad the Shuhite gave a short speech about God’s awesomeness and man’s wickedness. However, he offered no new arguments and did not refer to the preceding speech. He ignored Job’s examples of the prosperity of the wicked, instead accusing Job of pride for claiming his suffering was not the result of sin.

Bildad’s key point is made in verses 4-6: How can a mere man be justified before God? Bildad’s reference to man as a “worm” in verse 6 was a metaphoric way of comparing man’s lowly and insignificant state to God’s majesty and greatness. This view of man’s insignificance was also spoken of by the Psalmist David (see Psalm 8:4-5) but unlike David, Bildad failed to see man’s unique and God-given potential; Bildad had indicated in verse 4 that he felt man was unjustifiable.

In chapter 26, Job began his final response—a long discourse which first addressed the brief speech of Bildad, and then became a speech on wisdom and a final defense that ended in Job 31. For the first time, Job used singular pronouns in this discourse, so he seemingly was directing his words to Bildad, although his comments obviously were intended for all three of his visitors. (The fourth visitor, Elihu, had not yet spoken.) In verses 1-4, Job repudiated their previous attempts to help him, saying that no help had been given to ease his suffering.

In verses 5-14, Job acknowledged that God is sovereign, and gave a description of the power of God. Several statements in these verses—for example, that God “hangeeth the earth upon nothing” and that He “bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds”—reveal a remarkable grasp of scientific principles that were in sharp contrast to the beliefs that were part of the legends and mythology of that era. The chapter concludes with Job’s accurate statement that man could not possibly know everything about God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job's three friends
 - D. The third cycle of speeches
 - 3. Bildad's advice (25:1-6)
 - a. God's greatness described (25:1-3)
 - b. Man's sinfulness asserted (25:4-6)
 - 4. Job's answer (26:1-14)
 - a. His repudiation of his friends (26:1-4)
 - b. His description of God's greatness (26:5-14)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. In Job 25:2, what did Bildad say were "with" God?

2. What key point do you think Job was making in Job 26:2-4?

3. In what specific areas of your life have you seen the parts or edges of God's ways?

CONCLUSION

Our finite minds can only grasp fragments of God's power, but we can be sure that He is aware of our needs and in control of everything that impacts our lives.

NOTES

DAYBREAK

Job 27:1 through 28:28



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” (Job 28:28)

When we picture a person who possesses wisdom, the image that comes to mind is probably *not* a diseased alcoholic with a criminal background, strapped into a bed in a locked psychiatric ward. That was Jesse Martin’s condition. Yet Jesse experienced a radical change in his life—one that indicated he was a wise man, according to Job’s description in our focus verse.

An ex-Marine gunnery sergeant, Jesse had prided himself on being a tough guy. However, his desire for drink had led him down a terrible path. He was without money, in trouble with the law, and homeless when alcohol delirium necessitated his admittance to the Veterans Administration Hospital in Vancouver, Washington. He had always scoffed at religion and had gone through World War II without saying a prayer. However, in that hospital at the brink of death, he began to take on a different perspective.

One day a nurse got permission to take Jesse to a church service being held by Apostolic Faith people in the hospital where he was a patient. After listening to several veterans tell what God had done for them, Jesse held up his hand to indicate he wanted prayer. Though the doctors had told him he would end up insane or in the grave, Jesse promised God that he would serve Him if He would help him out of that place. Miraculously, just a short time later, Jesse was discharged.

Jesse began reading the Bible and attending services at the Apostolic Faith Church. There he was told that God worked on the basis of unconditional surrender. As a soldier, those were words Jesse understood. He was willing to meet God’s terms, and what a miracle happened in his life! God saved his soul, and completely turned his life around. The body that had been ruined by alcohol was restored, and all desire for drinking was instantly gone. Jesse confessed to his part in a robbery he had been involved in, and was forgiven. He began living a new life of freedom and peace.

In our lesson text, Job asked the question, “Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?” (Job 28:12). Out of Job’s anguish and through all the debate between him

and his friends, in today’s text he came back to the fundamental basis of wisdom—a right relationship with God, which begins with departing from evil. That wisdom is available to each one of us, no matter what our background or condition.

God made a wise man of Jesse Martin when he “departed from evil,” and He will do the same for anyone who comes to Him with an honest heart. Are you a possessor of the wisdom that comes from God? You can be!

BACKGROUND

Since Zophar seemingly had declined to address Job the third time, in today’s text Job continued his discourse to his three friends. This is the final speech in the dialogue section of the book.

In chapter 27, Job continued to assert his innocence, despite all the accusations that had been hurled against him. In verses 7-23, the fate of the wicked is described. Some commentators ascribe these verses to Zophar, suggesting this is his “missing” speech. Others state that the plural structure makes it more probable that this was a continuance of Job’s dissertation. Whatever the case, the vengeance of God upon the wicked will occur when they are weighed in the balance of justice and found wanting.

Chapter 28 begins Job’s final summation of his position. He presented no new arguments in this chapter, instead focusing on refuting his friends’ claim that wisdom had been granted them to ascertain the cause of his affliction. Job eloquently brought out that while man has been ingenious in mining the treasures found in the earth (verses 1-11), true wisdom cannot be found or purchased (verses 12-22). Rather, it belongs to God alone and can only be found by man as he fears God and turns from evil (verses 23-28).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - E. The concluding statements of Job
 - 1. The first statement (27:1—28:28)
 - a. Job defends his integrity (27:1-6)
 - b. Job describes the destiny of the wicked (27:7-23)
 - c. Wealth is the result of labor (28:1-11)
 - d. Wisdom is not the product of labor (28:12-22)
 - e. Wisdom is from God (28:23-28)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What is the theme of the activity described in Job 28:1-12?

2. If wisdom is so important, why is it such a challenge to obtain it?

3. What are some evidences that will be apparent in our lives if we have found the true wisdom that is from God?

CONCLUSION

If we desire to receive true wisdom, we must fear God and depart from evil.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“When the ear heard me, then it blessed me;
and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me:
Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the
fatherless, and him that had none to help him.”
(Job 29:11-12)**

George Mueller (1805 –1898) was a man with a heart for the poor. He was just twenty-eight years of age when the inward flame in his heart, which had been kindled when he turned his life over to God, led him to reach out to the destitute orphans of England. In the early morning hours he would go out and gather ragged children who were running wild in the streets, give them a bit of bread for breakfast, and then teach them from the Bible. As the numbers of children increased, he trusted that the Lord’s provision would increase also—and it did!

In later years, God led Mueller to a more expansive ministry along the same lines. Beginning with a few orphan children taken into a home in Bristol, England, his work among homeless children gradually grew to immense proportions. Though it was entirely funded by faith, without soliciting for financial support, at one point he had 2,000 orphan children in the homes he operated being fed, clothed, educated, and trained for useful positions. He cared for over 10,000 orphans during the course of his life, and also established 117 schools which offered Christian education to some 120,000 children. In addition, Mueller established an institution which he called “The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad” with the objectives of assisting Sunday schools, offering Bibles and New Testaments to the poor, distributing Gospel tracts, and providing financial aid to freelance missionaries. Over the years, the life and legacy of this man of God has been an inspiration to countless Christians worldwide.

Like George Mueller, Job had a heart for those in need. In today’s text, he relates that he had been known for his deeds of compassion: ministering to the poor, the fatherless, the widows, and others who had no one to help them. In addition to responding to physical needs with material assistance, he was a judicial advocate for the most defenseless members of society.

Our world today is full of needs. It can be overwhelming to consider hunger, disease, injustice, poverty, and suffering on a worldwide scale. While our primary endeavor is always to share the Gospel,

we can and should be alert to needs in our own sphere of influence. Job offers us a pattern for showing empathy and concern for those who face hard times. Let us ask God to give us compassionate hearts that will see and respond to the needs of others as He leads!

BACKGROUND

These three chapters conclude Job’s final speech in the dialogue section of the book. In chapter 29, Job reflected upon what his life had been like before this trial. He had enjoyed many material blessings. In addition, he had been a respected magistrate and judge in the city, and was held in high regard for his good deeds in serving the people.

In contrast to Job’s former prosperity and position as described in chapter 29, chapter 30 contains his lament over his present pathetic state. Not only had he suffered extreme loss and hardship, but he was also mocked by younger men over whose fathers he had once had authority. He was racked by physical pain, mental torment, and anguish of soul. He could not understand why God would continue to afflict him in his desperate condition.

Chapter 31 concludes Job’s reply to his three original comforters. In this chapter, Job defended his integrity in the details of life. In the matter of sexual purity, he had not only refrained from the sin of adultery, but he had not even allowed his eyes to look at a woman with lust—the same standard given by Jesus in the New Testament. Job also reviewed his business ethics, his treatment of his servants, his social responsibility, how he handled his wealth, and his manner of worship. Job did not fear that his sins would be discovered, because he knew of no sin that he had committed. Proclaiming himself innocent of both inward and outward sins, he once again expressed his longing for God to answer him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The solution of Job’s three friends
 - E. The concluding statements of Job
 - 2. The second statement (29:1 — 31:40)
 - a. His past state (29:1-25)
 - (1) His blessings (29:1-10)
 - (2) His respect (29:11-17)
 - (3) His thoughts (29:18-20)
 - (4) His fame (29:21-25)
 - b. His present humiliation (30:1-31)
 - (1) The mockers described (30:1-8)

- (2) The persecution described (30:9-15)
- (3) The illness described (30:16-23)
- (4) The sorrow described (30:24-31)
- c. His protest of innocence (31:1-40)
 - (1) From sensual sins (31:1-12)
 - (a) From lust for a virgin (31:1-4)
 - (b) From deceit (31:5-8)
 - (c) From enticement to a woman (31:9-12)
 - (2) From personal sins (31:13-34)
 - (a) From maltreatment of slaves (31:13-15)
 - (b) From mistreatment of the poor (31:16-23)
 - (c) From trust in riches (31:24-28)
 - (d) From lack of hospitality (31:29-34)
 - (3) His desire to meet God (31:35-40)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What positive attributes did Job exhibit toward others prior to his time of affliction?

2. Why do you think Job's associates turned against him once the power and prestige of wealth was taken from him?

3. Through all the accusations of his friends, Job retained his clear conscience before the Lord. Why is a clear conscience so valuable?

CONCLUSION

Like Job, we can have a testimony of compassion and integrity before God and man!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. (Job 34:21)”

Does God really see and care about the trials that we go through in life? If you have been through the valley of affliction, you know it is a lonely place. Your nearest and dearest are outside of what you endure. The nights are long, and in the darkness, it is often a struggle to touch the hand of God. And the devil does not hesitate to attack just because we are down. In fact, he is quick with discouragement and insinuations that God does not see our affliction or care about us anymore. That certainly was Job’s experience. However, we can be assured that God *does* see what we are going through—and He cares!

I have personally experienced that reality. One spring as I sat in a wheelchair by my window and watched the season come and go, I questioned whether I would ever again stroll outside on a sunny morning, smell the lilacs, or pick the tulips my father-in-law had planted for us. Would I even walk again? During that time of illness, the song “*His Eye Is on the Sparrow*” was a great comfort. The first verse says:

*Why should I feel discouraged?
Why should the shadows come?
Why should my heart be lonely
And long for heaven and home?
When Jesus is my portion,
My constant friend is He.
His eye is on the sparrow
And I know He watches me.¹*

It was reassuring to be reminded that God’s eyes were upon me!

Later, I learned the circumstances behind the encouraging words of that song. Civilla Martin, who wrote the lyrics, said her inspiration came when she and her husband visited a precious saint of God who had been bedridden for almost twenty years. The woman’s husband was also afflicted and had to get himself to and from his business in a wheelchair. Despite their physical challenges, the two lived happy Christian lives, bringing inspiration and comfort to all who knew them. One day this couple was asked the secret of the bright hopefulness in their lives. The bedridden woman’s reply was simple: “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.” That simple expression of boundless faith gripped the songwriter’s heart, and the hymn “His Eye Is on the Sparrow” was the outcome.

We can be certain that God never fails to observe what we are going through. It is God’s intention to make our trial a blessing for us—in the light of eternity. In the meantime, we can trust that God in His own time will bring good from the circumstances we are going through. Strength comes when we focus on Jesus and rest in the assurance that He sees and cares!

BACKGROUND

In today’s text, Elihu—a young bystander who had apparently listened to the preceding debate between Job and his three friends—is the fourth person to address Job. Some commentators suggest that Elihu’s comments were really a series of four speeches, each identified by the opening phrase, “Elihu said . . .” Whether one speech or four, Job did not respond to any of Elihu’s remarks, nor did any of the other bystanders.

Elihu began his dissertation in chapter 32 by explaining that he had not spoken earlier because he was honoring the seniority and presumed wisdom of the first three speakers. Once he began to speak, however, he did so with vehemence; his wrath is mentioned four times in the first five verses of the chapter. He strongly condemned both Job and his friends: Job for speaking unjustly about God, and the three friends for being unable to refute Job’s claims of righteousness.

In chapter 33, Elihu addressed Job’s allegation that his affliction was proof of God’s enmity against him. He pointed out that since God is greater than man, it should not be surprising that He does not always respond directly to questions. Perhaps in an attempt to assume an intermediary role, Elihu took it upon himself to speak to Job in God’s stead, stating that he would speak God’s truth and balance it with Job’s circumstances.

In chapter 34, Elihu defended God’s justice, denying that God had been unjust in His treatment of Job. He appealed to the “men of understanding” (verse 10) who were listening to hear his defense of God’s righteousness. As he continued his attack on Job, he became even bolder and more cutting, until at the close of the chapter he accused the suffering man of outright wickedness and rebellion against God.

While Elihu had vehemently rebuked the three previous speakers for their inability to give Job a reasonable answer for why he was suffering, his own statements still fell short. Elihu may have been closer to the truth than the other three men, because he did state that man cannot understand all that God

permits. Still, he wrongly assumed that the right response to suffering will always bring prosperity, and that suffering is always, in some way, connected to wrongdoing.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- III. The solution of Elihu
 - A. Introduction: Elihu's intervention (32:1 — 33:7)
 - 1. The appearance of Elihu (32:1-5)
 - 2. The reason for his intervention (32:6-22)
 - a. The reason for his initial silence (32:6-16)
 - b. The reason for his speaking (32:17-22)
 - 3. The desire for Job's attention (33:1-7)
 - B. Elihu's first speech (33:8-33)
 - 1. Job's complaint (33:8-11)
 - 2. Elihu's comment (33:12-33)
 - a. God speaks at times directly (33:12-18)
 - b. God speaks at times through affliction (33:19-33)
 - C. Elihu's second speech (34:1-37)
 - 1. Job's complaint restated (34:1-9)
 - 2. Elihu's comment (34:10-37)
 - a. God is sovereign (34:10-15)
 - b. God is just (34:16-20)
 - c. God is all-knowing (34:21-30)
 - d. Job's need to repent (34:31-37)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What charges did Elihu make against Job at the end of chapter 34?

2. Why do you think Job did not respond to Elihu, when he had responded to the other three men who addressed him?

3. What lesson can we learn from Elihu's judging of Job and his motives?

CONCLUSION

Like Job, in our time of trial it might be easy to think that God does not see what we are going through, but He does!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?” (Job 35:10)

In one of Charles Spurgeon’s most well-known sermons, preached in the late 1800s, he used Elihu’s words in today’s focus verse as his text. In Spurgeon’s opening statement, he commented, “The great cause of distress, the reason for the depths of sorrow into which many are plunged, is simply this—while they are looking around, on the right hand and on the left, to see how they may escape their troubles—they forget to look to the hills where all real help comes from. They don’t say, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?’” Elihu, like the other friends of Job who had offered the suffering man counsel, was not accurate in all his statements. However, his observation that it is God “who giveth songs in the night” showed great insight.

God is the *source* of our song in the night. Any of us can sing when the sun shines brightly, life is good, we are enjoying good health, and the bills are paid. However, where is the song when clouds arise, life brings burdens, afflictions come, and financial struggles loom? It is not natural to sing in times of trouble. However, as Christians we can say, “My God gives me songs in the night!”

God is the *inspiration* for our song in the night. We no doubt will experience many kinds of “nights” in our lifetimes—nights of sorrow, persecution, doubt, anxiety, affliction, oppression—nights which press heavily upon our spirits. Even if there is no comfort anywhere else, we can be assured on the basis of God’s Word that He is aware of what we are facing, and He cares. That fact alone gives us reason to sing.

God is the *subject* of our song in the night. Whatever trials we face at the moment, we have an amazing promise for the future. Spurgeon put it this way: “My expectation is that the sweet sunshine of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, that the oppressed will be set free, that tyranny will be destroyed, that liberty will be established, that lasting peace will arrive, and that the glorious liberty of the Gospel of God will be extended throughout the known world. Christian! If you are in a dark night, think of tomorrow; cheer your heart with the thought of the coming of your Lord.”

The songs we sing in the night may sound the most beautiful in the ears of our Lord, for they are expressions of our faith in Him, despite the troubling

circumstances we face. To express confidence in Christ when we feel He is shrouded in darkness is evidence of true faith. So, when we face the night of trials, let us remember to look to the One who is the source, the inspiration, and the subject of our song. He’ll be there!

BACKGROUND

This portion of text is a continuation of Elihu’s address to Job. Some commentators refer to these segments as his third and fourth speeches, suggesting that the words “Elihu said . . .” mark divisions or pauses in the dissertation.

In his third argument (chapter 35) Elihu contested Job’s complaint that God had been unjust to him (Job 34:5-6). He asserted that God is concerned about man, and if He does not answer, it is because of the pride of man, or because the prayer was presumptuous. Elihu concluded this section by accusing Job of being like proud and vain men, and stated that Job’s words were useless.

In chapter 36, Elihu began his fourth argument by requesting the listeners’ attention again, and then developed the thought that God is mighty and just, and does not show favor to the wicked nor forget the poor. He stated that if people respond to God’s instructions as they should, all will go well for them, but if they are disobedient, they will suffer the consequences. In verses 15-25, Elihu applied these principles to Job, trying to convince him that God wanted to teach him through his suffering. He concluded that Job had presumed to instruct God rather than to learn from Him.

In chapter 37, Elihu declared the greatness of God as revealed in nature, using rain, wind, thunder, and lightning as examples. He concluded this argument by challenging Job to take notice of his own lack of knowledge and strength when compared to God, and exhorted him to bow before God in humble submission.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. The solution of Elihu

- D. Elihu’s third speech (35:1-16)
 - 1. Declaration of God’s sovereignty (35:1-8)
 - 2. Explanation of God’s silence (35:9-16)
- E. Elihu’s fourth speech (36:1—37:24)
 - 1. God’s ways with men (36:1-23)
 - a. The purpose of afflictions (36:1-16)
 - b. The application for Job (36:17-23)

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NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?” (Job 38:4-5)

Recently our daughter came home chuckling about an activity she had volunteered for that morning in her high school Sunday school class. In an effort to demonstrate how ludicrous it is for someone weak to strive against someone much more powerful, her teacher had asked for a volunteer to pit his or her strength against him in an arm-wrestling match. None of the big, strapping boys in the class had been willing to take on their teacher, who is 6’4” and weighs 225 pounds. Our petite, 105-pound daughter decided that, if no one else would accept his challenge, she would! We joined her in laughing at the picture they must have made. Of course, she lost. He was so much bigger and stronger that there was simply no contest.

Today’s portion of Scripture paints a picture of a far more dramatic “no contest” situation. Job’s wisdom was nothing compared to his Creator’s wisdom. God’s series of questions regarding nature pointed out Job’s complete inability to understand the workings of His physical creation. If Job could not answer God on this level, how could he possibly understand God’s mind and character? If he could not unravel these natural mysteries, how could he hope to fathom God’s dealings with the human soul?

The wonders of creation reveal the might and wisdom of a God who could shape such a universe. In contrast, man clearly is weak, finite, and very limited in understanding. This comparison of the Creator’s greatness versus man’s insignificance was not lost on Job, nor should it be on us. Because of this great contrast, we can completely trust what God is doing in our lives, even when it does not make sense to us.

While the Bible gives us some knowledge of God, and our own personal experience with Him broadens our understanding, we can never know the answers to all of life’s questions. Still, we know that the mighty God sent His only Son to die for us, and that is proof of His great love for humanity. Let us rest in that, and anchor our confidence in the One who created and controls the entire universe.

BACKGROUND

Up to this point, Job had been crying out for God to appear and answer his questions. In these chapters,

Job heard God speak at last, but not with the answers Job was looking for. God’s first words were, in effect, “Who do you think you are, speaking words without really knowing what you are talking about?” Rather than answers, God presented questions—more than fifty of them in today’s portion of text—and Job could not answer a single one.

Among the questions, God asked Job if he had “entered into the springs of the sea” or “walked in the search of the depth” (Job 38:16). At that time, man was limited to going just a few yards below the surface of the ocean and staying under water for only a few minutes. Today, submersible crafts scan the very bottom of the ocean, and man has learned that the deepest oceanic trench is over 36,000 feet deep. However, each new discovery brings recognition that there is much more yet to be learned.

In Job 38:31-32, God asked Job if he could “bind the sweet influences of Pleiades” (the cluster of seven stars in the constellation Taurus, which is among the nearest to earth), or “loose the bands of Orion” (a constellation located on the celestial equator and thus visible throughout the world), “bring forth Mazzaroth in his season” (a band of stars), or “guide Arcturus with his sons” (the three most brilliant stars of the Northern Hemisphere in line with the tail of Ursa Major, also known as the Great Bear). This reference to Biblical astronomy is not to be confused with astrology, which is the study that attempts to interpret the influence of the heavenly bodies on human affairs. Biblical astronomy recognizes that God created the heavens and that the stars are given as signs to us (see Genesis 1:14).

In these, and all of the other questions, God was not seeking answers from Job. Instead, He was leading Job to recognize and submit to His power and sovereignty. Only then could he really understand what God was saying to him.

In chapter 40, God summed up all his earlier questions by asking Job, “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it” (Job 40:2). The questions had demonstrated the tremendous contrast between Job and the One who created the universe, and Job quickly recognized his extreme human limitations. He responded humbly and with a determination to keep silent before the greatness of God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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IV. The solution of Jehovah

A. The first speech (38:1—40:5)

1. Jehovah's address (38:1 — 40:2)
 - a. The intervention of Jehovah (38:1-3)
 - b. Creation and preservation of the world by Jehovah (38:4 — 39:30)
 - (1) The physical world (38:4-38)
 - (a) The foundation of the earth (38:4-7)
 - (b) The sea (38:8-11)
 - (c) The morning (38:12-15)
 - (d) The depths (38:16-18)
 - (e) The light and darkness (38:19-21)
 - (f) The snow and hail (38:22-23)
 - (g) The light, rain, dew and ice (38:24-30)
 - (h) The stars (38:31-33)
 - (i) The lightning and rain (38:34-38)
 - (2) The animal world (38:39 — 39:30)
 - (a) The lion and raven (38:39-41)
 - (b) The mountain goat (39:1-4)
 - (c) The donkey and ox (39:5-12)
 - (d) The ostrich (39:13-18)
 - (e) The horse (39:19-25)
 - (f) The hawk and eagle (39:26-30)
 - c. The challenge of Jehovah (40:1-2)
2. Job's answer (40:3-5)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. From what physical manifestation did the Lord speak to Job?

2. Why do you think God chose to respond to Job's questions with a series of questions of His own?

3. As you ponder God's amazing creation, what conclusions do you reach about Him?

CONCLUSION

When we face painful situations in life, as Job did, it is natural to seek for understanding. Although God may not always provide us with direct answers, we can be assured that the One who has the forces of nature at His command is in control of our circumstances as well.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?” (Job 40:6-9)

In his book on Job titled *Dialogue in Despair*, William E. Hulme tells about a scientist who was instructed to describe his research on human intelligence in 150 words. For his response, the scientist wrote the three-word sentence “I don’t know” . . . fifty times!

Perhaps that simple sentence accurately describes how Job felt after God bombarded him with a series of questions about His work as the Creator of the universe. Job recognized that he was exceedingly small when compared to the immeasurable greatness of God, and he stood submissive and silent before his Maker. However, God was not done with him! In today’s focus verses, the Almighty again spoke out of the whirlwind and asserted that Job had condemned Him in order to justify himself.

Like Job’s friends, we can mistakenly assume that following God always results in a trouble-free life, and resisting God always results in a troubled life. How easy it is to wonder why God allows bad things to happen to good people. If God is in control, why do His followers experience trials and suffering? As we endure tribulations, we may find ourselves thinking or even telling God, “This isn’t fair!” The Book of Job is a call to review our perspective.

There is benefit in challenging ourselves to consider who we are and who God is. When Job saw God in His awesomeness, he repented—his perspective had completely changed, and he stated that he abhorred himself. When we have a right view of God and truly grasp where we stand in comparison to Him, we will also cast ourselves before Him. Who are we to say that what God allows is not fair? How can we accuse God of injustice? He is the Creator and is sovereign in all things.

Job did not know why God allowed the trials He did. We might not know God’s reasons for what He allows in our lives either. But will we trust Him anyway? Will we cling to our faith in the trials? Will we trust God about unanswered questions? God has said that He cares for each of us. Let us hold that

promise fast in our hearts and remember that He is in control.

God is not indifferent to our situations, nor is He uncaring or powerless. Even though we do not understand why He allows difficulties in our lives, we can cling to the knowledge that God knows what He is doing and has our best interests at heart.

BACKGROUND

In his time of trial, Job had felt that God was treating him unjustly, and he had repeatedly expressed his thoughts and feelings to God. In Job 40:6-14, God questioned Job, in essence asking him, “Do you refute My wisdom? Do you condemn My justice? Do you question My power? Do you speak with My voice?” He challenged Job to demonstrate his power if he thought he was equal to the Omnipotent.

The remainder of chapters 40 and 41 are a description of two animals: the behemoth (a land mammal) and the leviathan (a sea creature). There are a variety of speculations about these animals. The word translated *behemoth* comes from the root word for *beast*; the word translated *leviathan* denotes a “coil” or “twist.” They may have been (as *Hannah’s Outline* indicates) the hippopotamus and crocodile. Whatever the exact animals, God showed by His description that the One who could create such powerful creatures was far superior to insignificant man. If Job was not able to control them, how dare he stand before God, the Creator, and complain about his rights or question how he had been treated?

In Job 41:11, God interrupted His long description of the leviathan to remind Job that He is in control of the whole world. Because everything belongs to Him, He has no obligations to His creatures. Anything God bestows is given completely by grace.

Job 42:1-6 gives Job’s response to God’s challenges. In the end, Job said, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Job’s friends had been exhorting him to repent, and he had refused. Yet this passage tells us that he *did* repent—not of the secret sins that his friends had accused him of committing, but of questioning God’s sovereignty and perfect justice. Job repented of his attitude, which had developed in his time of trial. He humbly acknowledged God’s power and greatness, and confessed that he had talked about things that he did not understand. Job stated that he had heard of God before, but now he knew Him for himself.

Job 42:7-17 is an epilogue to the book which details Job’s restoration. God spoke directly to Job’s

friends, telling them that they had been wrong. He laid out His requirements: the friends were instructed to make a sacrifice, and Job was to offer prayers for them. When Job interceded for those who had accused him so mercilessly, God restored the suffering man’s material blessings as well.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- IV. The solution of Jehovah
 - B. The second speech (40:6—42:6)
 - 1. Jehovah’s address (40:6—41:34)
 - a. The invitation to rule the world (40:6-14)
 - b. The description of the hippopotamus (40:15-24)
 - c. The description of the crocodile (41:1-34)
 - (1) His untamableness (41:1-11)
 - (2) His description (41:12-34)
 - 2. Job’s answer (42:1-6)
- V. The conclusion (42:7-17)
 - A. The rebuke of Job’s friends (42:7-9)
 - B. The restoration of Job’s possessions (42:10-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Job do for his friends that they should have done for him?

2. What do you think is implied by Job’s “abhorring” of himself?

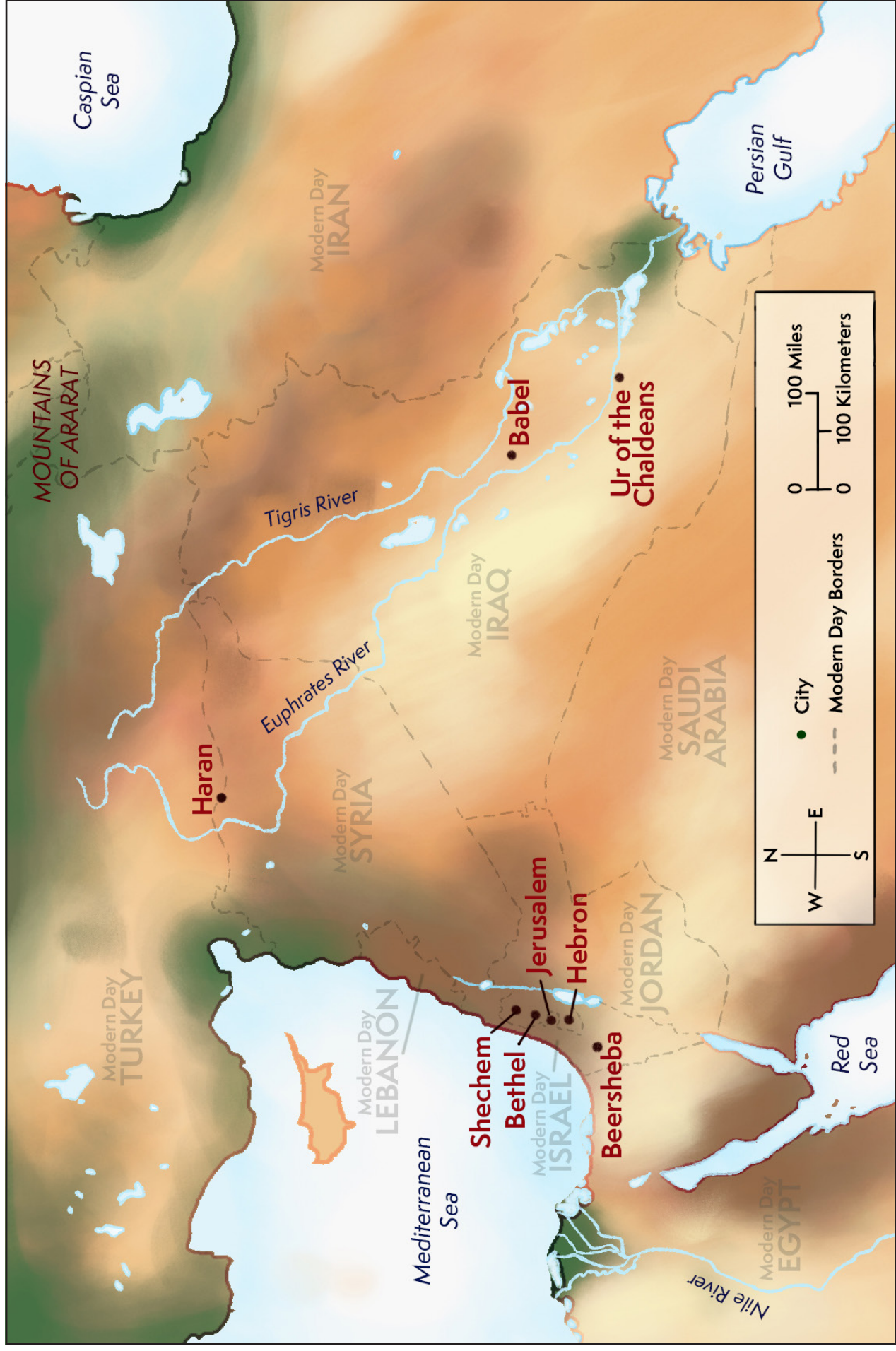
3. What lesson from the Book of Job stands out to you as being the most instructive for your life?

CONCLUSION

We may not always understand the “why” of suffering, but we can maintain our integrity and our trust in God in spite of it.

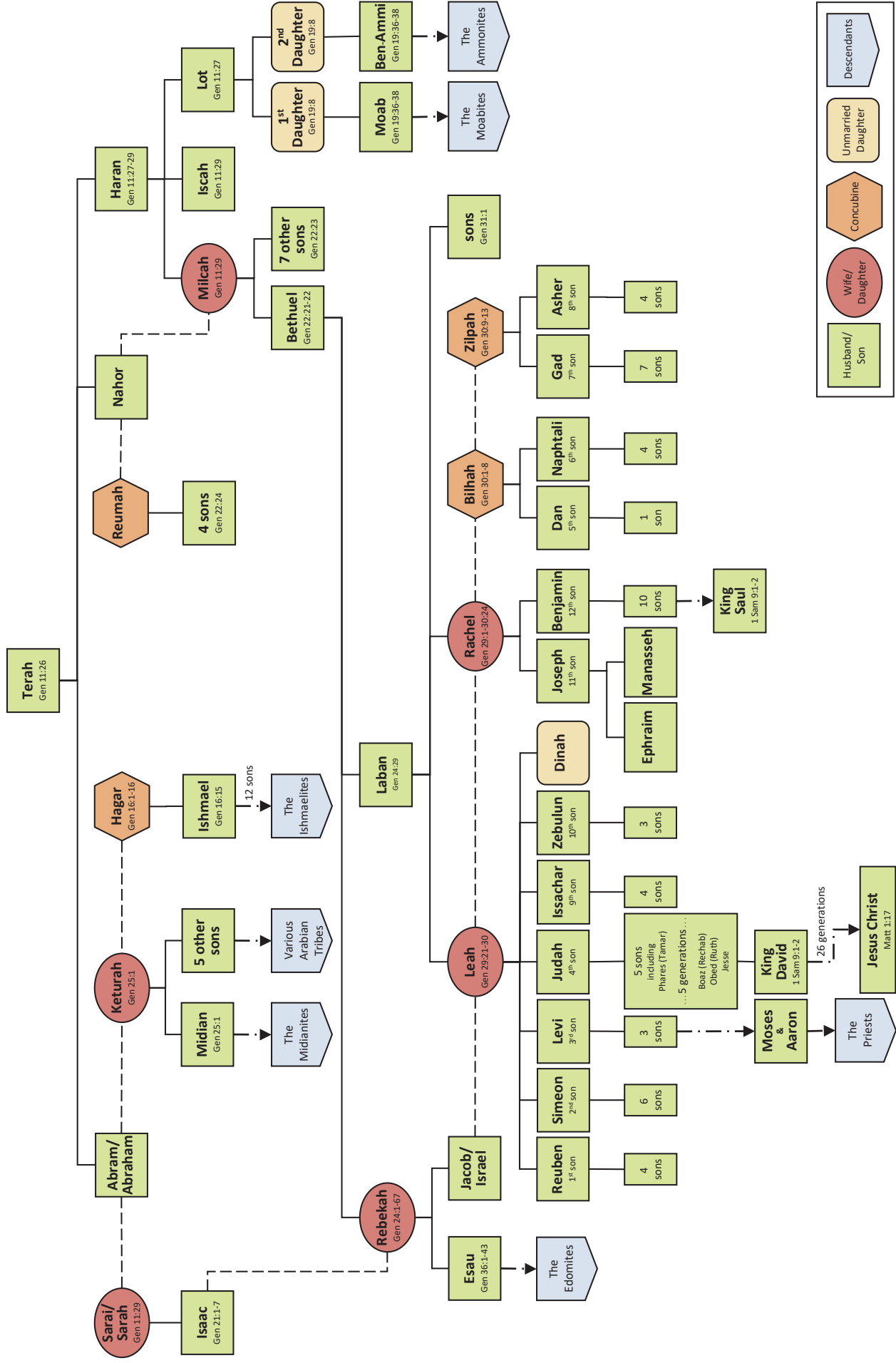
NOTES

Key Locations in Genesis



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Abraham's Lineage



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Key Locations in Exodus



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