

DEVELOPING A LIFE OF PRAYER

EDGEMONT BIBLE CHURCH

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“PRAYER IN A TENSE WORLD ”

GENESIS 12:1 -18:33

I. LIFE IN THE POST BABEL WORLD

- A. *As if the rebellion of the pre-flood days had not been enough, just after settling back on dry ground, the rebooted new generation went into another great rebellion - the outright rejection of God and His authority with a declaration of independence. Man declared himself to be the new god in the new world.*
- B. *God's response is to confuse the languages of the people building the tower so they can no longer understand one another, thus breaking their unity. He then scatters them around the world in a move that they were supposed to have done willingly when they exited the ark of Noah.*
- C. *But God's response is even more devastating! As He had earlier with Adam and Eve, their parents, He separates Himself from them. I call this separation of God from humanity, the great divorce. They wanted independence from Him and now He grants it. But in His mercy and love, He assigns each nation one of the members of the divine council to show the rebels the way back to God and to give them knowledge of the flora, fauna and methods of building culture they would need to thrive.*
- D. *Their hearts are wicked though and they pervert the service of the sons of God given to them. Rather than seek God, they begin to worship their caretakers, the host of heaven, as gods and make idols for them. It seems that the rebellious elohim are only too willing to let this happen. Now each of these tribes becomes a nation of false-god worshippers as typified by Nimrod. They would become people hunters, conquering human abusers and thieves of the lands and resources God had given to the separate nations as their stewardship. Perverted rituals, even human sacrifice would become the fare of the day. The world was becoming tense with insecurity and violence once again. God is abandoned by them.*
- E. *It was in this environment that God called a man out of an idolatrous family and culture to follow Him wherever He*

would lead Him. This man and his descendants would become God's own particular people, His own possession in the presence of the other nations that were separated from Him. Through this man, God would reveal Himself and bless all the other nations. Through this man's family God would send the messiah, a deliverer of people from their captivity to sin and Satan.

II. LIVING AS A MAN CALLED OF GOD IN AN OPPOSITIONAL WORLD

- A. We are not told how Abraham, living in an idolatrous cultural, came to know God but he did. God specifically called him to go where He bade him to go. This is grace. We do not have any history of Abram prior to this call other than where he was living. Nor do we have any statements about his behavior or his faith. We have only the call of God in an instant of time on this one man living on an earth full of people "divorced" from God and creating their own legends, mythologies, rituals, and methods of spiritual contact with the other world. Our guess would be that he was one of those who was calling on the Lord.
- B. We make that guess based on what he did in response to God appearing to him personally (Genesis 12:7). In this appearance, the LORD explains that He is giving the land he is on to Abram's descendants. It looks like Abram immediately built an altar to the LORD. From the use of this word, it was a platform in which a fire was started. A living animal was killed and it or some part/parts of it were placed on the altar over the fire. It was left to be consumed. We are not always told what the reason for the offering was; sometimes it was offered as a substitute for one's children incase they had done something wrong (Job 1:5). At other times it looks as though it was offered to God in gratitude or worship of something God had done or said. At the time of Abram (and of Job), both prior to giving the law which proscribed what each offering was to be and the type of gift to be offered on the altar for it, we have not been told the reason an offering was being made.
- C. No words of the one providing the offering are given for us to know the nature of their offering. Can we say these offerings may have been wordless prayers? For whatever specific purpose the offering is given it is definitely offered as worship.
- D. The second reason we say Abram may have been among those who called on the name of the Lord is the thing he did when he

moved from the terebinth tree at Moreh where he built his first altar to the mountain east of Bethel. It was here he not only built an altar but he called on the name of the LORD Genesis 12:8. We do not know his exact words, but by using “called” to describe his action additional to building an altar, we hear in it the use of words of some sort. Conversation with God is prayer, even if it is vocally one way. Again we do not know the content of his conversation but we can know he was speaking to God with worship in mind.

- E. Abram left the Bethel region to go to Egypt where he played his deception on the king there. The king sent him away when his deception was discovered and he returned to Bethel where he had built the altar and there he once again called on the LORD. Genesis 13:4*
- F. At this time he and Lot had to split up to not overburden the land. After Lot had gone, the Lord spoke to Abram again about how extensive his land appropriation was to be. He was told to walk the land and wherever he went was going to be his! He responded by moving to the terebinth trees of Mamre (Hebron) and building yet another altar to the LORD 13:18*
- G. After the battle with the kings and the return of the goods to Sodom, Melchizedek blessed him. Abram told the king of Sodom that at some point he had lifted his hand to God and promised to take none of the spoils of his defeat of them. This is evidence of a prayer life in this idolatrous land.*
- H. In Genesis 15 God speaks again to Abram with another blessing positive message. Now we see Abram pray what is on his heart and mind. We do not know God, so we are as well to say to Him what is already in our heart. Abram is puzzled as to why God keeps speaking to him of his bright future and yet He has given Abram no heir and Abram is getting older. The boldness of this prayer reminds us of Hebrews 4:16. The LORD responds that he is going to have an heir from his own body and following that he will have as many descendants as the stars! In response we see that he believed God and God counted it to him for righteousness. He is justified by his faith.*
- I. The LORD tells him of his coming inheritance and another wave of bold prayer comes as he asks how he is going to know that is true? That is followed by Abram’s painstaking obedience in preparing an offering just as God had told him and God*

Himself confirming the covenant in front of him. Abram is speechless but humbly receiving. The Word of the LORD is answered prayer that we do not even know how to speak!

- J. So far, what we have seen is that with this patriarch it is the LORD who initiates prayer or conversation. Whatever is entailed with “calling on the LORD” seems to be Abram’s initiative in prayer. But God does put him in a position that he will need to pray.*
- K. There is no prayer offered when Sarai comes up with a plan to assist God in His poor attempt to give them an heir. This initiates the whole Hagar/Ishmael debacle.*
- L. In chapter 17 it is once again God initiating a conversation. God speaks of his heir and of circumcision. Abram’s response is to fall on his face in humility but then laugh at the improbability of him having another child since he and his wife are past the time. He tries to convince God that he already provided God the heir He couldn’t and wants God to bless him. God promises an alternative.*
- M. Prayer really gets more intense as Abraham is visited by the Angel of the LORD and two others. He pleads for God to remain with him and have some refreshment. He does and tells him that within a year he will have his own son! He then decides to tell Abraham what He is about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah. Prayer intensifies again as we hear him request of God to spare the cities since he knows Lot is living there. This is intercessory prayer! It seems to be pretty bold and even a little challenging as he keeps reducing the number of righteous people required for sparing the city. But it is also loaded with humility as he realizes that he is talking to God and he is unworthy to address him. This boldness in faith mixed with humility of person is a key to our learning to pray as God has shown us in His Word.*

CONCLUSION: *As God is progressively revealing Himself to those with whom He is estranged, we see them learning how to address God and learning what He is like. With Abram, then Abraham, we see a man whose actions were filled with worship in building altars and calling on the LORD. As he knows God better we see him getting bolder in the things he asks for and seeks explanations for. These things are written for our example and edification. 1 Corinthians*