

## THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

"What could be more absurd than that Abraham should be the father of all of the faithful?...During the whole course of his life, he was harassed and tossed in such a way, that any one desirous to give a picture of a calamitous life could not find one more appropriate." —John Calvin, *Institutes*

## "God & Abraham: His Failures, God's Faithfulness"

### Abram: The Man of Great Faith

- By faith, Abram responded to the Word of the Lord and left Haran and traveled to the Land of Canaan. (Gen. 12:1-4)

Acts 7:2—And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran.

Heb. 11:8—By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

- By faith, Abram believed the promises of God that seemed impossible by all human standards. (Gen. 15:1-6)

Rom. 4:13—For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Rom. 4:18-21—In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

### Abram: The Man of Many Faults

- Abram's failure to trust in God's provision led him to place all of his household in harm's way. (Gen. 12:10-16)

➔ Some commentaries point out that Abram understood the implications of this for Sarai and yet sent her Pharaoh anyway.

- Abram's failure to trust in God's timing was shown in his willingness to father a child with Hagar at the request of Sarai. (Gen. 16:1-4)

➔ Their desire for a child overwhelmed what they knew to be true based upon what God had promised them.

- Abram's failure to trust in God's protection led him to lie to Abimelech concerning Sarah while they sojourned in Gerar. (Gen. 20:1-18).

➔ Abram did not believe that God could be at work in the lives of others despite what he had experienced with Melchizedek.

Point of Emphasis: A life of faith involves seasons \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as well as times of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Sign and Seal of God's Covenant:      **Genesis 17:1-14**

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."*

- It had been 24 years since God had first called Abram and made His promises to him.

God Almighty– 'El Shaddai' →

...walk before me... →

*"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations."*

- In the ANE, a change of name signified a change of status, role, or function.

Abraham →

*"And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. "*

Circumcision →

- The primary focus of all of God's promises to Abraham involved his 'offspring' or 'seed.' The sign of the covenant, then, was placed on the most intimate part of his body.

**Point of Emphasis:** Circumcision was to serve as an \_\_\_\_\_ physical sign of an \_\_\_\_\_ spiritual reality.

**Deut. 10:12-16**– "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. **Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart**, and be no longer stubborn.

## **Justification by Faith and the Importance of a Sign and Seal**

1. God has always intended for \_\_\_\_\_ to accompany the physical signs and seals of His promises.

**Rom. 4:9-12**– Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

⇒ **The concept of circumcision remains important in the life of a Christian.**

**Col. 2:9-12**– For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

2. God has sealed Christians with the \_\_\_\_\_ as a guarantee of His promises to us.

**Eph. 1:11-14**– In him we have obtained **an inheritance**, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it...

⇒ **Baptism is the physical act that pictures the Holy Spirit's work of placing us into Christ.**