

Uncle Oscar was apprehensive about his first airplane ride. His friends, eager to hear how it went, asked if he enjoyed the flight. "Well," commented Uncle Oscar, "it wasn't as bad as I thought it might be, but I'll tell you this. I never did put all my weight down!" \*I think Uncle Oscar was not fully trusting the airplane, right?

Our passage today is about Abram, who is learning what "fully trusting" really is. As many of you know, God changed his name from Abram ("big father") to Abraham ("father of the nations") in Genesis 17 as an indicator of God's plans for him. Because God told Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you", Abram went to Canaan. But problems arose – like they always do!

He obeyed God's word and came there, but he still had difficulties and problems. There was a big famine, so Abram went to Egypt without seeking God's input. In fact, he wasn't used to asking God's will and obeying it. This was the very beginning of his journey of faith. He went to Egypt to avoid the famine, putting him in another difficult situation. Specifically, Abram was worried that the Egyptians will try to kill him to take away his beautiful wife, Sarai.

We might think Abram is being a bit absurd here, given what we take for granted today – the rule of law, personal security, etc. But at the time, it was really a matter of life and death. It was commonplace to kill in order get what they want. Considering the social conditions at that time, Abram came up with his own method too hastily, instead of being led by God.

Amy Carmichael, missionary to India wrote, "Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace...If you refuse to be hurried and pressed, if you stay your soul on God, nothing can keep you from that clearness of

spirit which is life and peace. In that stillness you know what His will is.”

We live in an impatient society. We want what we want, and we want it right now. There is even a pot roast now that you can cook in a microwave in less than ten minutes—but it’s not as good as the real thing. When we refuse to wait on God and allow Him to work according to His schedule, when we take matters into our own hands, the results are often far from the best.

Perhaps there are some of us gathered here this morning who are dealing with a similar struggle, maybe even of life and death. You are not alone. Abram went through the same thing. So let’s take a look at the passage in more detail:

In verse 10, we learn that Abram was on the move because of God’s lead, but there is no record that God pointed him towards Egypt. Abram relied on his own judgment to go because of the famine. It’s easy to do this – when the famine is rampant, when the problem in my life appears serious. We say we live by faith, but fail to turn to God in prayer at times. We find it very difficult to get into the habit of reading the Bible on a regular basis in order to know God's will.

When Martin Luther was at his busiest season in life immediately after the Reformation, he said: “I pray because I am too busy. Because I am too busy, I can’t handle all these things without praying.” Dear beloved, his story, I believe, applies to us today as well. Let us set aside time to pray and read the Bible even when – or especially when – we’re busy.

Turning back to Abram, God nonetheless gave Abram a chance to learn. God gave him the strength and opportunity to turn back his own way and rely on God. And Genesis 13 tells us what Abram did. Abram and Lot separated, as a result of the fight among their shepherds. To his nephew Lot, Abram said: “If you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the

left.” This is a dramatic change from Abram, who wanted to rely on his own strength to resolve a problem, to rely on God to address a conflict between his servants and Lot’s.

Abram was a weak person, just like us. Like us, he certainly made mistakes. He had relied on his own methods and his wisdom rather than on God. But Abram didn’t repeat his errors. He realized that he had made a bigger mess by insisting on his own ways. He also realized that nevertheless, God protected him, and is caring for him. And therefore, Abram gained the faith that was strong enough to overcome the comforts of Sodom and Gomora as well as the hardship of the wilderness. He had learned that regardless of where he goes, what is important is following God’s lead. He didn’t boast or feel arrogant because he was chosen. Instead, he humbly reflected on himself at each moment that God gave him the word. Let us resemble Abram and become people of faith, and sources of blessing for others.

In 1799, Conrad Reed discovered a seventeen-pound rock while fishing in Little Meadow Creek. Not knowing what it was made of, his family used it as a doorstep for three years. In 1802, his father, John Reed, took it to a jeweler who identified it as a lump of gold worth about \$3,600. That lump of gold, which was used as a doorstep for three years in North Carolina, is one of the biggest gold nuggets ever found east of the Rockies.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, until its composition was determined, its value was unknown. Even so, until the composition of our faith is determined, its strength is unknown. God allows trials in our lives, not to hurt us, but to strengthen and prove us. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.

“God delights to increase the faith of His children. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God’s hand as a means. I say—and say it deliberately—trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith...We should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that faith which He is seeking to strengthen in us.”—George Mueller