

THE LORD'S FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

Where Jesus Christ is truly Lord over all areas of our lives

FATHERS' PRAYER, PRAISE, and LESSONS FOR HIS FAMILY

Genesis Twelve: The Call of Abram (Part 2)

SATURDAY, February 14

Lesson: My Sheep Know My Voice and Follow Me

I. Read Genesis 12:4-6:

So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. And Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

A. In the Bible, the Good Shepherd represents Jesus, and sheep, Jesus' followers. Goats, on the other hand, represent those who follow Satan. How did Abram know God's voice? And why did he obey such a seemingly outrageous command to man's way of thinking? Do we ever need to fear that we will not recognize God's voice? No. God assures us that His children will know His voice.

1. John 10:24-29: The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

2. John 10:4: When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

3. Psalm 100:3: Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

B. A shepherd always leads his precious sheep to the best pastures and to the best streams of water. He loves them and cares for them and protects them. The Lord is our Shepherd and gently leads us in His way, which is always the best way for us.

1. Psalm 23: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

C. A good shepherd puts his own personal safety in jeopardy to save his sheep from wild beasts or from perilous situations.

1. John 10:11-16,28,29: I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, [referring to Gentiles] which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

SUNDAY, February 15

Lesson: Obeying Our Shepherd

A. Sheep can be scattered upon the hillsides mixed in with other

sheep, but when their own shepherd calls them, they know his voice and will separate themselves and run to their beloved shepherd.
◆◆1. Romans 2:13: ◆For it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.◆
◆◆2. James 1:22-25: ◆But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.◆
◆◆3. Matthew 7:24-27: ◆Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell◆and great was its fall.◆
◆B. Notice that Abram, in obedience, complied with God◆s command and went forth as the Lord had spoken to him. Throughout Abraham◆s life we see that it was God who ruled his will and set his course for life, and it was this same speedy adherence to God◆s will that was Abraham◆s constant rule and way of life. This willing spirit to obey was also exemplified by Samuel◆s life. As Samuel, we should always run to God and say ◆Here I am!◆
◆◆1. 1 Samuel 3:1-10: ◆Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And word from the Lord was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place ◆ and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was, that the Lord called Samuel; and he said, ◆Here I am.◆ Then he ran to Eli and said, ◆Here I am, for you called me.◆ But he said, ◆I did not call, lie down again.◆ So he went and lay down. The Lord called yet again, ◆Samuel!◆ So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, ◆Here I am, for you called me.◆ But he answered, ◆I did not call, my son, lie down again.◆ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him. So the Lord called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, ◆Here I am, for you called me.◆ Then Eli discerned that the Lord was calling the boy. And Eli said to Samuel, ◆Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, ◆Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.◆◆ So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Then the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, ◆Samuel! Samuel!◆ And Samuel said, ◆Speak, for Your servant is listening.◆◆
◆C. Indeed, as parents, we must be diligent in making sure our children obey our voice immediately, not in their own good time but immediately after being called or commanded, and that they do what we tell them to and not do what they think best. For example, let◆s say that we ask our children to clean the house while we are away, for we know that company will be arriving shortly after our return home, but we do not determine it necessary to give them all the details. Yet our children decide that they would rather please us by baking a cake for us while we are gone. Well, their intent to bake a cake is perhaps thoughtful but quite odious at this time, because we needed for them to clean the house before the company arrived. And certainly, as we are much wiser than our children and know what is best at the time, our heavenly Father is much wiser than we are and knows best for us. We must also seriously consider that if we do not make them obey our voice immediately, we place them in great peril. For instance, we might be ready to check out in our grocery store and spy an indecent magazine cover, so we quickly tell our children to turn their heads, but they hesitate until it is too late. What if a child is picking flowers

in a meadow and we see a horse galloping towards them at great speed and yell to them to run for safety, but they hesitate for a moment, as is their habit, to pick just one more flower? ♦ One more minute, Mom, just one more minute. ♦ Or what if their kitty runs into the street, but we tell them to wait for us to get the kitty, but they dart out after it? How many times has the Lord commanded us to do something that did not seem that important to us, so we hesitated before obeying, or obeyed but not completely, and paid dearly for our sin of disobedience? Let us consider what it cost Saul and Uzzah. What these men did may not seem wrong to us, and indeed seemed best in their own eyes, but whenever we do what is right in our own eyes, we place ourselves in great danger. For nothing pleases God more than obedience no matter how much we sacrifice.

♦♦♦1. 1 Samuel 15:11,17-23: ♦♦♦I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands.♦ ♦ Samuel said [to Saul], ♦Is it not true ♦ the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, ♦Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated.♦ Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the Lord?♦ Then Saul said to Samuel, ♦I did obey the voice of the Lord, and went on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal.♦ Samuel said, ♦Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.♦♦♦

♦♦♦2. 2 Samuel 6:1-7: ♦Now David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel ♦ And David arose and went with all the people ♦ to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim. They placed the ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart♦. But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it. And the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.♦♦♦

♦♦♦a. Exodus 25:14,15: ♦You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it.♦♦♦

♦♦♦b. 1 Chronicles 15:12,13: ♦David said to them, ♦You are the heads of the fathers♦ households of the Levites; consecrate yourselves both you and your relatives, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel to the place that I have prepared for it. Because you did not carry it at the first, the Lord our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance.♦♦♦

♦♦♦c. Numbers 4:15: ♦When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die.♦♦♦

♦♦♦d. Numbers 7:6-9: ♦So Moses took the carts and the oxen and give them to the Levites. Two carts and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon, according to their service, and four carts and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. But he did not give any to the sons of Kohath because theirs was the service of the holy objects, which they carried on the shoulder.♦♦♦

♦♦♦3. 1 Samuel 6:19: ♦He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. He struck down of all the

people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the Lord had struck the people with a great slaughter. ❖
❖D. However, sometimes sheep will wander off the path and get themselves in some pretty difficult and often dangerous places. It is then that the Shepherd goes to look for the lost sheep and uses His staff to direct it back to the fold. There are even some times where the loving Shepherd will break its leg, and then carry it until it heals, to show the sheep that it must obey him and diligently follow wherever He may lead. This the Shepherd does for its own good to keep it from future harm. This, too, our Shepherd does to us, for whom the Lord loves He disciplines. The updated New American Standard Bible defines discipline and chastisement as follows. ❖In the Bible, usually correction given by God the Father to all His children. Discipline often takes the form of difficulties allowed or caused by God to bring about improvement and maturity in their lives. ❖ Let us be diligent, then, to obey the voice of our Beloved Shepherd.
❖❖1. Deuteronomy 8:3-6: ❖He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.❖
❖❖2. Job 5:17,18: ❖Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproveth, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal.❖
❖❖3. Hebrews 12:4-11: ❖You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ❖My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproveth by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.❖ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.❖
❖E. As parents we must be faithful to discipline our own children when they do not obey our voice, for if they do not obey their parents whom they can see, how will they ever be able to obey their Father whom they cannot see? ❖
❖❖1. Proverbs 22:15: ❖Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.❖
❖❖2. Proverbs 13:24: ❖He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.❖
❖❖3. Proverbs 19:18: ❖Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.❖
❖F. For we should not endeavor to do anything without God commanding us to do so, for the best laid plans of man are worthless unto God unless He wills that it should be so. We should always wait in expectation for God to direct us in the way we should go in every area of our lives.
❖❖1. Psalm 127:1: ❖Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.❖
❖❖2. Psalm 25:5: ❖Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day.❖
❖❖3. Proverbs 16:3: ❖Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.❖
❖❖4. Psalm 37:23: ❖The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way.❖
❖❖5. 1 Samuel 2:9: ❖He keeps the feet of His godly ones ❖
❖G. When

God calls us to do something, we must not be slow in heeding His call because of our own fears of failure or danger, for those whom God calls, He equips.

◆◆1. Philippians 1:6: ◆For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.◆

◆◆2. Ephesians 3:20,21: ◆Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.◆

◆◆3. Hebrews 13:20,21: ◆Now the God of peace ◆ through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.◆

◆H. The Lord always looks for us when we go astray to bring us back into the fold.

◆◆1. Luke 15:4-7: ◆What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulder, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ◆Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!◆ I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.◆

◆I. The following verse speaks of the restoration of Israel and is a beautiful testament of our Shepherd◆s love for His sheep. ◆◆1. Ezekiel 34:11-16: ◆For thus says the Lord God, ◆Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,◆ declares the Lord God. ◆I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.◆◆

◆J. God will judge between the sheep and the goats.◆◆1. Matthew 25:31-34,41,46: ◆But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ◆Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.◆ ◆ Then He will also say to those on His left, ◆Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels ◆ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.◆◆

MONDAY, February 16

Lesson: Great Blessings Await Those Who Follow the Lord

◆A. Abram was commanded to leave his country, his relatives, and his father◆s house to live in a tent in a place that was not disclosed to him. Can you just imagine what it would be like to leave our own country and home, which we know and love, to set out for a place unbeknownst to us, even uncertain in where God was leading us? Would we give up these things right now if God called us to this same path? What a lesson of faith and trust in things not seen, uncertain in all his ways◆certain only of God. Are we not to cast all our cares upon Him? This sacrificing of his desires and wants was certainly a lesson in self-denial, and it was this that molded Abram into a mighty man of God. It is truly self-denial that forges ordinary

men into men of God. In essence Abraham clearly shows the way for all his descendants that they should give up all to follow God. In counting the cost, are we willing to leave all for Christ? It takes a firmly rooted faith in God to continue in such dire circumstances.

1. Matthew 10:38,39: ♦And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.♦

2. Proverbs 3:5,6: ♦Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.♦

3. Zechariah 4:6: ♦♦Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,♦ says the Lord of hosts.♦

4. 1 Peter 5:6,7: ♦Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.♦

5. Hebrews 11:6: ♦And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.♦

6. Habakkuk 3:17-19: ♦Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds♦ feet, and makes me walk on my high places.♦

7. Hebrews 11:8-16: ♦By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised; therefore, also, there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.♦

B. We, too, are just sojourners here, really aliens in a foreign land ourselves, for this is not our own home either, for our home is in heaven. Far greater riches await us who forsake this world and all its glitter and take up their cross to follow Him.

1. Psalm 56:8,9: ♦You have taken account of my wanderings ♦ This I know, that God is for me.♦

2. Matthew 19:29,30: ♦And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name♦s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.♦

3. John 14:2,3: ♦In My Father♦s house are many dwelling places ♦ for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.♦

4. Romans 8:18: ♦For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.♦

5. 2 Corinthians 4:17,18: ♦For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.♦

6. 1 Peter 1:1-9,13-16: ♦Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
7. Colossians 1:9-12: we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.
C. God took Abram to a land that neither he, nor his immediate descendants, would possess, yet Abram obeyed because he possessed a generational view, taking seriously his responsibility for his future descendants, while his eyes also rested on a far greater destination, that of his heavenly home where he would truly have peace. How incredible that both Isaac and Jacob were also aliens in a strange land, yet by faith they, too, believed in God's promise for their posterity. We as descendants of Abraham are also aliens in a foreign land. Do we have faith in God's promise to us and to our descendants?
1. Hebrews 11:9,10: By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
2. Deuteronomy 11:8-15: You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it; so that you may prolong your days on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year. It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will

give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.
3. 1
Corinthians 4:10-16: We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.
TUESDAY, February 17
Lesson: Obedience Sweet Aroma to God
I. Read Genesis 12:7,8: And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your descendants I will give this land. So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.
A. Abram built an altar to honor and give thanks to God for His mercy and graciousness, His goodness and divine protection. Do we go to our altar daily and call upon the name of the Lord to give Him thanks for all He does for us? God dwelt with Abram because Abram made his dwelling God's house by building an altar wherever he went. Do we worship God wherever we are that those around us may see? Are we faithful to this pattern of worship set down by our forefather that our children may receive the blessings of their inheritance? For Jacob, like his grandfather before him, built an altar to God after God had appeared to him, as well.
1. Genesis 28:10-19: Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top. He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. Bethel means house or temple of God.
2. Genesis 8:21: And the Lord smelled the soothing aroma
3. Psalm 50:23: He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me
4. 2
Corinthians 2:14-16: But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?
5. Romans 1:8: First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.
6. Ephesians 5:1,2: Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.
WEDNESDAY, February 18
Lesson: Run the Race

with Endurance

I. Read Genesis 12:9: ♦And Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev. ♦

A. Are we faithful to push onward? Are we content to be a stranger in this land, pushing ever onward whichever way God leads, bearing testimony to the hope that we have within us, bringing God into every place we go, taking possession for Him, and bearing that sweet aroma of Him in every place? Abram was doing just that, going where God led, building altars to God wherever he went so as to take possession for the Lord and make known His name wherever he went.

1. Hebrews 13:7: ♦Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. ♦

2. Hebrews 12:1-3: ♦Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. ♦

3. Hebrews 10:36-39: ♦For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. ♦

4. Isaiah 40:28-31: ♦Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

THURSDAY, February 19

Lesson: Be On Guard to Keep Our Eyes on God

I. Read Genesis 12:10-20: ♦Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. And it came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, ♦See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ♦This is his wife♦; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you. ♦

And it came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels. But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, ♦What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, ♦She is my sister,♦ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go. ♦

And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him. ♦

A. Not only did Abram have to wander around in Canaan, but then he was driven out of the land which God had given to his posterity because of a famine in the land. Many men would have given up all hope of God's promises and given in to the wiles of the devil to weary us in doing what is right. However, Abram's example of thankfulness and his faith in God kept him from complaining and so sinning against God. Yet even after sustaining such hardship and coming through with an admirable faithfulness, Abram, because of his own fears, then falls into

unbelief and so sins. Let this be a lesson to us that greater men of faith than we have fallen prey to unbelief and allowed fear to rule their hearts instead of trusting in God. Would God make such promises to make a mighty nation from his seed and then abandon him to death before He fulfilled His promises?

1. Isaiah 66:9: Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery? says the Lord. Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb? says your God.

2. Proverbs 9:11: For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you.

B. We can see that when we take our eyes off of God and allow our eyes to fall to the earth upon our present circumstances, we are certain to sink further and further into the abyss of despair, which will cloud and corrupt our thinking.

1. Matthew 26:31-34: Then Jesus said to them, You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered. But Peter said to Him, Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away. Jesus said to him, Truly, I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.

2. Matthew 14:28-31: Peter said to Him, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water. And He said, Come! And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me! Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, You of little faith, why did you doubt?

3. Luke 12:4,5: I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

C. Abram did not commit all his ways to the Lord, but abandoned His presence and therefore acted without thought to the consequences to those around himself. When drowning, we will inevitably pull down those around us in our attempt to save ourselves. Let us be admonished as well as the Pharaoh said to Abram, What is this you have done to me? How disgraceful when the world witnesses the sinful ways of those who call themselves Christians. Are we good ambassadors for Christ, always careful to do all things righteously that the world can see His Spirit working in us?

D. Our disobedience often places others in peril, just as Jonah placed the ship and its crew in great peril because of his disobedience.

1. Jonah 1:4,7-12: The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. Each man said to his mate, Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us. So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you? He said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, How could you do this? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. So they said to him, What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us? For the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. He said to them, Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.

2. 2 Samuel 24:10,15,17: Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly. So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was

striking down the people, and said, Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me and against my father's house.

E. That God sent a plague upon Pharaoh and his household shows that indeed although others around us abandon us, God will not, for He is ever present and mindful of all we do. God would not allow Sarai to be touched, so He intervened where her husband failed. Let this be a lesson to all wives, that when God calls the wife to submit to the husband, regardless of how wrong a husband may be and into what dangers he may lead, God is ever mindful of His own and will intervene to protect them. All of us should lean upon the Lord's grace and not our own understanding. We are precious in God's sight and are preserved by His divine protection that we may fulfill His divine appointment for our lives.

1. Psalm 119:114: You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Your word.

2. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-3: Finally, brethren, pray for us that we will be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

3. Psalm 31:20: You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man.

4. Psalm 37:28: For the Lord loves justice and does not forsake His godly ones; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.

F. Let us persevere through the land in which we wander until God brings us to the promised land.

1. Psalm 119:116: Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope.

G. God was very gracious to Abram when He allowed him to leave unscathed for the wickedness he wreaked upon his wife and the household of the Pharaoh. God often protects us even when we place ourselves in perilous positions of our own making.

1. Psalm 105:13-15: And they wandered about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people. He permitted no man to oppress them, and He reproved kings for their sakes: Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.

H. Finally, how interesting it is to see the similarities between Abram's journey to Egypt and his descendants' journey to Egypt, both because of famine. Both were also removed from the land because of the plagues God placed on Pharaoh's household. And both were given riches before they left Egypt.

1. Hebrews 13:8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.