



The Footsteps of ABRAHAM

Hills and Valleys

- Romans 2
- We have tried to tie down a very elusive idea this weekend...
 - We have attempted to explore a little further some conflicting ideas...
- I often found myself rambling...
 - I often found myself unable to share in words the feelings that I felt...
- These are ideas that have two sides
 - Ideas that REQUIRE us to wrestle with them
- But, they are important ideas, because we NEED to BELIEVE them in order to be saved
- Two “seemingly” opposing ideas...
- Summed up quite nicely in Romans Chapter 2 and Chapter 3...
- Romans 2:3-6
 - 3) And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?
 - 4) Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

- 5) But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;
- 6) ***Who will render to every man according to his deeds:***

- Compare this to the next chapter, where Paul says...

- Romans 3:23-24

- 23) *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

- 24) **Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:**

- Obviously, they don't contradict themselves...

- They are simply complex issues

- Not simple

- Not Black and White

- Our Works will NOT save us... We are saved by the Grace of God

- But, our Works can condemn us... If we walk away from God's Grace

- Repentance is necessary for us to lay aside our sins and walk with God

- But, clearly Repentance doesn't save us, as we know we are unable to Repent for every sin, and still depend upon the Grace of God for Salvation

- Works will not save us

- But, Faith without works is dead...

- It is the eye of Faith that sees the wonderful position that we are in, and motivates us to thank our Lord with acts of goodness

- We are not Saved Once – Always Saved...

- We understand that we can place ourselves outside of God's Mercy

- But, we are also not "On Probation"...

- It's not like we are on the verge of losing our salvation...

- ***One more sin, and you're out!***

- We have looked at these issues against the backdrop of Abraham's life...
 - Maybe it wasn't much of a study of Abraham, but I think that is part of the lesson
- Abraham is a wonderful canvas to paint this picture on...
 - We are all able to relate to Abraham and what he went through in his life
- Abraham waxed and waned in his faith
 - But, he was faithful in the Hills as well as the Valleys
- Abraham's life was very much like ours in many ways...
- The challenges that Abraham faced were very similar to the challenges that confront us today
- I'd like to consider some of those challenges this morning in relation to our study...
- Family Issues
 - Learning how to live with a Family
 - How to lead and guide them on a daily basis
- Marital Issues
 - The decisions we make in our lives dramatically affect our spouses also
- People in the World
 - We are not alone on this planet
 - We need to face others, and relate with them
 - Usually we are repulsed by their wickedness, but often we are ashamed by their moral lives in the light of our own weakness
- Abraham is a great example for us... Because he is not perfect
- But, Abraham is FAITHFUL...
 - Hopefully, we've shown that there is a difference between being sinless and being Faithful...

- Let's consider some examples from Abraham's life, and see what lessons we get for our own daily life:
- Family Issues
- The responsibilities of being in charge of such a large company, must have weighed heavy on Abraham
- So many mouths to feed...
 - Dependent upon your decisions and your guidance...
- A lot of them were related to Him also, so he was dealing with Family problems often...
 - Sorting out disagreements and petty jealousies...
 - Personalities...
- And like many families...
 - He had more than he needed
 - And with that additional gift, comes additional responsibilities...
 - And headaches!
- The trip "down to Egypt" had brought with it wealth
 - Even though that point of low faith and mistrust in God was past him now
 - We have to live with the consequences of our actions... And they are not always negative
- Abraham is now to tried with the trials that accompany wealth
- Genesis 13:2-8
 - 2) And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.
 - 3) And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;
 - 4) Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.
 - 5) And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.
 - 6) And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

- 7) And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.
- 8) And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we *be* brethren.

- There was strife...
 - And the Canaanite dwelt in the land
 - He didn't want to show God's name in a bad light
 - He didn't want his family reflecting poorly on what it means to be a "follower of God"
- But, Abraham's faith is strong
- **"Let there be no strife"**
- It was simple for Abraham
 - The rules were easy to follow
- He didn't want strife
 - Period!
- Why?
 - **"For we be brethren"**
 - THAT was reason enough
- Going to almost any length to keep peace in the family...
 - It's not a sign of weakness... It's often a sign of strength
 - A sign of a bigger person who is able to make allowances in their own lives to show their love to others...
- Abraham gives Lot the choice...
 - Was one choice "better" than the other?
 - One choice carried with it more temptation than the other

- It's not wrong to live in a "well watered" place
 - It's just harder on your faith
- Lot means "One who is veiled"
 - Maybe he didn't have good spiritual insight
- Lot pitches his tent towards Sodom, even though he knew that they were wicked
 - He lifted up his eyes and looked
 - He thought about how it looked like it promised prosperity
 - Then he pitched his tent towards it
- Lot's actions always remind me of Psalm 1
- Psalm 1:1
 - 1) Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
- The gradual slide into mediocrity and sin is what gets us all...
 - Walking by...
 - Then Standing with the Sinners...
 - Then soon your found sitting in the seat of the Scornful...
- Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld Sodom...
- He reflected on the advantages of living there...
- He settled near it...
- He pitched his tents towards Sodom...
 - The next thing we hear about him, he was actually living in the city...
- But, Abraham found out what many Grandparents find out today...
- Even after your family has left you...
 - You still have to deal with them

- You still often have to help them out when they get themselves into trouble

- Genesis 14:11-16

- 11) And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.
- 12) And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.
- 13) And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these *were* confederate with Abram.
- 14) And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained *servants*, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued *them* unto Dan.
- 15) And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which *is* on the left hand of Damascus.
- 16) And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

- Abraham loved Lot, and continued to watch out for him his whole life...

- Marital Issues

- I'm not going to say that Abraham and Sarah were on the verge of divorce or anything, but they did go through some serious issues in their relationship...
- Think about the issues that would have developed when they went down to Egypt, and Pharaoh took Sarah to wife
 - How does his wife think he feels about her?
 - He has put her into a compromising position to save his own life?
 - How does Abraham feel "giving his wife to another for wife"
- These are hard questions to ask... But, an even tougher question to ask is:
 - What tough situations do you put your spouse in?
- In Genesis 16, we have a classic case of married couple miscommunication...

- Genesis 16:1-6

- 1) Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name *was* Hagar.

- 2) 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.
- 3) And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.
- 4) And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.
- 5) And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.
- 6) But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid *is* in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

- This must have been an awkward situation to say the least...
- It was Sarah's idea
 - Sarah approaches Abraham with the idea...
 - It would have been best for Abraham to remind her that God had promised them a Son, and to encourage her to keep faithful to that promise
 - But, a woman who wants a child, and is unable to have one is hard to argue with
- Abraham agrees to Sarah's plan...
 - And... Sarah turns on Abraham when it goes bad
- Instead of taking responsibility and resolving a bad situation in the family...
 - Abraham has Sarah go work it out herself
 - Sarah does a less than stellar job of this...
- And, Wars have been fought over that situation for 4,000 years...
- These are times that wouldn't just bring stress to a marriage
 - They bring stress to one's faith
- But, even through the times of weakness when Abraham's poor decisions cost him heartache and stress...

- He remains faithful to God's promise...
- Abraham's dealings with those around him in the World are also interesting lessons to us...
- People in the World
- I've pointed out already that Abraham acts very righteously with the King of Sin
- Genesis 14:21-23
 - 21) And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.
 - 22) And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,
 - 23) That I will not *take* from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that *is* thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:
- King of Sodom represented sin in Abraham's eyes
 - He didn't want to have ANYTHING to do with him
 - Not even a shoelace...
- But, what about what happened in Egypt?
- Genesis 12:17-20
 - 17) And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.
 - 18) And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What *is* this *that* thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she *was* thy wife?
 - 19) Why saidst thou, She *is* my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take *her*, and go thy way.
 - 20) And Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.
- Pharaoh is the one that acts righteously in this case
 - How Abraham must have felt being chided by this Egyptian
 - How he must have felt being shown to be sinning, by a "sinful" man... An Egyptian!

- A great example of Abraham's love for people, and desire to help others is when the angels come to tell him about their plan to destroy Sodom

- Genesis 18:29-32

- 29) And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do *it* for forty's sake.
- 30) And he said *unto him*, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do *it*, if I find thirty there.
- 31) And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty's sake.
- 32) 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 said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake.

- "Bargaining" with God for the lives of strangers...

- The lives of "sinners"

- I probably would have just agreed with God...

- Wondered why he didn't do it sooner

- Abraham wanted to see people reach salvation...

- He knew that God wants all men to be saved

- He understood that God doesn't want anyone to perish

- That is why God extends His grace to us...

- That is why we are saved...

- Because God is merciful

- Because He wants to show Himself great...

- While he will extend that mercy to us, even if we haven't repented of every sin we commit...

- He still looks for a repentant heart

- It's the Unrepentant Heart that should fear the Judgment

- The Hard-Hearted person is the one who should be concerned with the concept of God “*rendering to every man according to his deeds*”...

- Romans 2:5-6

- 5) But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;
- 6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

- God’s wrath and the “Fury of His Judgment” are stored up for those who are unrepentant

- Romans 2:5 NIV

- 5) But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

- Those who have repentant hearts are promised justification by grace...

- Romans 2:7

- 7) To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

- Romans 2:7 NIV

- 7) To those who by persistence in doing good; seek glory, honor and immortality, God will give eternal life.

- It doesn’t say,

“To those who by persistence have successfully avoided the sins of the flesh, God will give eternal life.”

- The message is that God is looking for people who are more concerned with living lives full of Good Works, than they are concerned about avoiding Bad Works...

- I’m not saying that we don’t need to concern ourselves with avoiding sin...

- But, I am saying that we need to be primarily focused on serving our Lord, and have faith and confidence in the promise that He has given us that He will justify our actions, and forgive us our shortcomings

- A logical question to ask, therefore, is...

“If it shows the greatness of God to justify us sinners by His grace, then why doesn’t God justify ALL men, and save us all, regardless of our repentance?”

- Paul addresses that question in the next chapter?

- Romans 3:5-8

- 5) But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)
- 6) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?
- 7) For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?
- 8) And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

- Confusing... Let’s try NIV

- Romans 3:5-8 NIV

- 5) But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)
- 6) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?
- 7) Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?"
- 8) Why not say - as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say - "Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved.

- Let me try paraphrasing it, because this is important for us to understand...

- Romans 3:5-8 MESSAGE

- 7) It's simply perverse to say, "If my sins serve to show off God's righteousness all the more gloriously, why blame me? Why call me a sinner? I'm actually just helping God out..."
- 8) Some people are actually trying to put such words in our mouths, claiming that we go around saying, "The more evil we do, the more good God does, so let's just do it!" That's pure nonsense.

- So, Paul (and I) are not trying to say that you can sin all you want...

- To say that we shouldn’t concern ourselves with Sin, isn’t to say that Sin shouldn’t concern us...

- We all need to have a healthy and clear understanding of our own sinfulness

- Paul goes on to explain that in Romans 3

- Romans 3:9-18

- 9) What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;
- 10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
- 11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
- 12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 13) Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips:
- 14) Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness:
- 15) Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:
- 16) Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:
- 17) And the way of peace have they not known:
- 18) There is no fear of God before their eyes.

- But, we have no need to focus on our sinfulness, because we have been blessed with justification through Jesus...

- Romans 3:23-26

- 23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

- Romans 3:23-24 NIV

- 23) For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- 24) and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

- Amen...

- Thank you God!