

FAITH FOR DAILY LIVING

A non-denominational guide to confident Christian living published by the
Faith for Daily Living Foundation, a duly registered non-profit Trust

"No longer will you be called Abram;
your name will be Abraham, for I have made
you a father of many nations."

Genesis 17:5(NIV)



**IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS BOOK
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*The cover picture courtesy of Alan van Gysen.
(Equatorial Guinea, on the island of Bioko)*

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Between ourselves

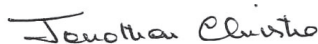
Dear Friends,

The faith journey of Abram, whose name would be changed to Abraham, is our journey. He had faith failures as we do, yet he continued to follow the call of the Lord. We have had the same call from our Lord Jesus. Come follow Me, He said, and I will make you fishers of men and woman. It's in following Jesus, wherever He leads, that we are changed, just as Abram was changed, and his name was changed. In Christ, Paul declares that we have become a New Creation, the old is gone, the new has come. Our hearts have been changed, the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit is in our lives. We have been called to live this each and every day, in the nitty gritty of everyday living. Not in our own strength but in the power of the Holy Spirit. This reminds me of those great words of the Hymn, "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah."

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy pow'ful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.

Let us acknowledge that we are weak and He is mighty, as we follow our Lord, knowing He will hold our hand as we follow Him.

Blessings



(Jonathan Christie)

The Shortness of life

By Dr Charles Stanley

It's sobering to remember how short life is.

Even though we know eternity with God waits on the other side of death, it can feel as though we have unfinished business here or simply more we'd like to do. But there's a blessing in embracing the brevity of our time on earth.

Dr. Charles Stanley shares his thoughts on life, time, and eternity. In response find a quiet place to ponder making each day count with God.

If you only had six months to live, how would you spend your time? More than likely, every week would become increasingly important. In fact, you would begin to count the minutes you had left.

Well, none of us know how long we have to live, so the question becomes: What are we doing with our life now?

Paul gives us a very wise admonition in his letter to the Ephesians, where he says, "Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (*Eph. 5:15-17*). The only way to use our time wisely is to use it as God desires, according to His will – not ours.

Leaving God out of our plans and schedules will always lead to feeling pressured. We look at all we need to accomplish and conclude we don't have time to spend consulting Him. So we ask Him to bless us and then plunge ahead with our plans, without the benefit of God's foresight and wisdom guiding us. Of course we'll wind up feeling stressed, because only God can order our steps perfectly.

To use our time wisely, there are a few steps we can take.

First, we must realize that all our time is the Lord's.

We can't delegate Sunday as the Lord's time and the rest of the week as ours to do as we please. God owns it all, and we are just stewards of the time He entrusts to us in this lifetime.

Second, we must give the Lord top priority.

The most important part of each day is the time we spend fellowshiping with the Lord – as we meditate on His Word, speak with Him, worship Him, and serve others.

Jesus modelled for us what giving God top priority in our day looks like: "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there" (*Mark 1:35*).

When I attended seminary, I realized it was a natural temptation for students to become so busy studying for classes that personal prayer and Bible study would get neglected. But I discovered I could accomplish much more when I began each day with the Lord and asked Him to direct my schedule as He desired. He always gives us enough time each day to do His will by guiding and governing our schedules in the very best of ways.

Third, as believers we're accountable to God.

Paul explained it to the Corinthian church this way: "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (*2 Cor. 5:9-10*).

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Wednesday 1st July

WAR BROKE OUT

“At the time when Amraphel was king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goyim, these kings went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboyim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).”

Genesis 14:1,2 NIV

To many, the Christian life appears dull, uneventful. It is anything but that! If it appears to be so, it is almost certainly a life out of focus with true spirituality. We have seen whenever Abram is found with a tent and an altar in the land of Canaan, he is a wonderful picture of a Christian living in the power of the Holy Spirit and enjoying the pilgrim life, in this world but not of it, daily judging self by the cleansing of the cross. Lot, on the other hand, is a picture for us of the Christian not living a Holy Spirit empowered life but living for self. They have forsaken the place of fellowship with Christ. Lot left Abram up on the hillside and moved down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of the plain. Drawn by the allurements of the world, living for himself and for the pleasures of life. Suddenly, a shattering experience breaks into Abram's quiet, pleasant existence. Life in the Spirit is like that. We are never permitted to rest beside the still waters very long, nor would we want to, for life there soon grows dull and uninteresting. In Genesis 14, we are introduced to the first war ever recorded in Scripture. It is a stirring account, vividly contrasting the blustering armies of earth with the quiet, overcoming power of faith.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, may we never be complacent in our walk with You.

Thursday 2nd July

THE NEED FOR COURAGEOUS FAITH

“All these latter kings joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea Valley). For twelve years they had been subject to Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.”

Genesis 14:3,4 NIV

There are earlier references and pictures of ancient men fighting in battle long before Abram's day, but this war is the first written description of an actual battle between opposing kings and nations. Chedorlaomer is the chief of the invading kings. Historically, he is identified as the Elamite dictator, from the land east of Persia, which is now known as West Pakistan. He came with his satellite kings against the confederacy of five kings from the cities of the plain. His coming represents one side of the world in which we live. A power to harass and enslave, and to remove all freedom. The other is Sodom, a picture of the world in its lust for sensual pleasures. These forces are often found opposed in history. They arise out of the fallen nature of humanity. One is a desire for material gain, economic advancement, luxury, ease, and sensual pleasure. The other is sheer naked tyranny, threatening the very physical existence of others. This is exactly what confronted the cities of the plain, and Lot especially as he now dwelt in Sodom. Lot is enmeshed in the blind commercialism of Sodom. Now he is threatened by a circumstance that would deprive him of his basic freedom. However, the purpose of this account is not to record the facts of a particular war for history. The purpose is to show the courage of Abram and his faith, as he responded to this situation.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, give us courageous faith as we face the battles of life.

Friday 3rd July

THE CALL FOR COURAGEOUS FAITH

“A man who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew.”

Genesis 14:13 NIV

Some person escaped the invading army. He was probably from Sodom, for he knew Lot, and he knew that Abram and Lot were relatives. As quickly as he could after his escape, he made his way to Abram and told him about Lot. The escaped fugitive could have easily made his way to some other sheik out in the country area, and he probably knew some other sheik who also had relatives taken as prisoners of war. But he did not seek them; he sought Abram. Why? Most likely there were two reasons. The fugitive knew that Abram offered the greatest hope for his own personal safety and help for going after the murderous invaders, saving the captives and restoring their stolen goods.

The point is this: Abram was sought in the moment of crisis. Abram was known to be a man of faith and courage, and that was exactly what was now needed: great faith and great courage. A crisis often stirs people to seek persons of courage and faith. Most people seek help during a crisis, and they especially want the help of those who possess courage and faith, people who have a courageous faith. As believers we are called to be strong in faith and courage. Alert to the crises that arise in the lives of others. Alert to the opportunity to help. Ready to help, encourage, and lead the person to trust the delivering power of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Holy Spirit, give us the ears to listen for the call to courageous faith.

Saturday 4th July

WISE PREPARATION

“Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshkol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram.”

Genesis 14:13 NIV

If we desire courageous faith, wise preparation is what is needed. The Lord made rare promises to Abram and Abram believed Him, even against all odds. Abram knew the odds, and he had anticipated the dangers that lay ahead of him as he laid hold of the promises of the Lord concerning the promised land. No one lays claim to a land that is occupied by others without facing opposition. Struggle after struggle was to confront Abram. But Abram had prepared ahead of time. He had joined hands with others, made a covenant—a treaty—for mutual protection. The treaty was with the Amorite, Mamre, and his two brothers, Eshcol and Aner. The valley where Abram and Mamre were living was named after Mamre. It was here that Abram built an altar, marking it as a place of communion with God. What a lesson for us! As we journey through life laying hold of the promises of God, we are confronted with struggle after struggle. Our only hope is to join hands with other believers for mutual protection. But we must prepare ahead, developing Christian fellowship and ministry. Then when the struggles come, we will know others who can stand with us, know them well enough that we can call upon them. This takes preparation, preparation ahead of time. Preparation through worship and preparation through fellowship. May we not forget the words of *Hebrews 10:25* “not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.”

PRAYER THOUGHT

Thank You Lord, in worship and fellowship, comes courageous faith.

Sunday 5th July

CARING

“When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan.”

Genesis 14:14 NIV

Courageous faith leads to caring. Abram was moved by the fact that Lot, had been taken captive and enslaved. Physically, Lot was like a son to Abram, for Abram had reared him since childhood; but spiritually, Lot was a spiritual brother to Abram. When a brother or sister is enslaved by some enemy, we are called to rise to help free them, no matter how great the opposition. This was exactly what Abram did. Abram could have found many reasons why he should not help Lot. Lot had done a terrible wrong against Abram. He had acted with greed and selfishly usurped Abram's rights to the best land. Lot had taken the best land for himself. Abram could have allowed harsh feelings to develop against Lot for having wronged him. Lot was worldly, attracted by the bright lights, pleasures, and possessions offered by the ungodly of the cities. Abram could have responded by saying that Lot was getting what he deserved, that God's judgment was falling upon Lot because of his worldliness. Lot had been captured by a strong enemy. But Abram refused to fall back upon these excuses. He did not even consider them. When he heard that Lot was taken captive, he immediately acted. He arose and went to rescue Lot from his enslavement. Scripture is clear. No matter what the enslavement is, we are to be courageous. We are to do all we can, in the power of the Holy Spirit to free those who have been enslaved.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Thank You Lord for empowering us to set the captives free.

Monday 6th July

STRATEGIZE

“During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.”

Genesis 14:15 NIV

Abram was wise in seeking to rescue Lot. He wisely chose only loyal and trained persons to help him. He took only those who were born in his own household and were trained to fight. They numbered only 318 men. Abram wisely planned his strategy. He divided his men into several groups and instructed them to attack from several vantage points. This would make the enemy think a large force was swarming down upon them. He launched a surprise attack at night. The enemy was caught completely off guard. They were unable to tell who was attacking them, and for safety's sake they had to flee assuming that a large army was attacking them. Abram participated himself. He did not stay behind while others sought to rescue Lot. Abram himself led the rescue attempt. He pursued the enemy, went after total victory. He did not stop the pursuit until the enemy was completely defeated and scattered, and all the enslaved were freed. All our attempts to rescue people from sin and Satan must be planned, wisely planned! We must choose fellow believers to help us. We must plan our strategy through prayer, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It is not enough for others to go; we must go ourselves, each one of us. We must pursue through the power of prayer and the Holy Spirit's leading to see that those who are enslaved are set free. Remembering that the battle belongs to the Lord.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Holy Spirit, in Your wisdom show us how to set the captives free.

Tuesday 7th July

IN COMPASSION

“He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.”

Genesis 14:16 NIV

With courageous faith comes compassion and unselfishness. Abram rescued Lot, but this was not all. In compassion he rescued and brought back, all the men, the women, and the children. All the goods and possessions. Abram could have kept everything for himself, but unselfishly, he returned everything to the people. These were the inhabitants of Sodom! Yet Abram freed them and returned their goods. Why? Because Abram knew that the Lord has always had compassion and acted unselfishly toward humanity. Let us be reminded that the Lord had been compassionate toward Abram after his sin in Egypt, and He had fully forgiven and restored Abram. Abram was showing compassion and unselfishness toward the people of Sodom, demonstrating the very compassion and unselfishness of the Lord Himself. We have been called by Jesus to act with compassion and unselfishness. Why? The reason is clear. The Lord has made it possible for people, no matter what they have done, to be freed and fully restored through our Lord Jesus Christ in the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Let us be reminded of the words of *Proverbs 24:11-12 (NIV)*, “Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, “But we knew nothing about this,” does not He who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He who guards your life know it? Will He not repay everyone according to what they have done?”

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, fill our courageous faith with Your compassion and mercy.

Wednesday 8th July

THE VALLEY

"After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley)."

Genesis 14:17 NIV

Abram is now on his way back to Sodom with all the goods of the city and much of the population, including Lot and his family. It is a time of victory for Abram, and therefore a time of peculiar peril. In our spiritual life, the enemy loves best to strike when we are relaxed and off guard after some spiritual victory or period of great usefulness. His approach then is never open or frontal, but subtle and insidious, taking full advantage of our relaxed defences. Abram is suddenly confronted with a subtle temptation on his way back to Sodom. We shall observe the sensible attitude he displays concerning others who are involved in this incident. But our attention is directed to the place where the king of Sodom met Abram on his way back from the battlefield. It was a valley right outside the little village of Salem. In later Israelite history, Salem became transformed into Jerusalem, the capital of all Israel. The valley outside the city, even then known as the "King's Valley," was none other than the Valley of the Kidron, the little brook that ran down along the eastern side of Jerusalem, separating the mount of Olives from the city. It was into this valley that our Lord went with his disciples on the night he was betrayed, crossing over to go up the slopes of the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane's Garden. In this strategic and historic spot, the king of Sodom met Abram!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, open our eyes to the subtlety of the enemy after victory in our lives.

Thursday 9th July

THE SUBTLETY OF TEMPTATION

The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself."

Genesis 14:21 NIV

Here is the subtle temptation which suddenly came upon Abram. He was met by the king of Sodom, who had somehow escaped capture and was in the city when news came of the triumphant return of Abram with the spoils of war. On the surface, the king of Sodom's offer seems a perfectly justifiable reward. Abram had fought his great battle, not, of course, on behalf of the King of Sodom, but for the sake of Lot and his family. Nevertheless, the effect of his victory was of great benefit to the whole of Sodom. For this reason, the king was there to meet him. The king simply asked for the return of the residents of the city; the goods and riches he gratefully offered to Abram. The wealth of Sodom was all to be Abram's! Now notice the subtlety of this temptation. It appeared to be so right and proper! Abram could well have said, "This is certainly only what I deserve, and after all, it is the custom to do this. Everyone does it! There are no strings attached. I can take the wealth and go on my way back to my tent and altar and never go near Sodom again." Who of us, standing in Abram's shoes, would not have thought like this? It is in the apparent freedom of the gift that the peril lay. To a man of Abram's character, it is impossible to accept this kind of a gift without feeling an obligation to the giver. The gift was a threat to the independence of the man who took orders only from the Lord.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, may we see the subtlety of temptation in what seems right.

Friday 10th July

THE TIMING OF TEMPTATION

But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will accept nothing belonging to you."
Genesis 14:22,23 NIV

The timing of the temptation came when Abram might well have been off guard, enjoying the popularity of the hour. He had earned a few moments of relaxation after the strain of battle, and at this quiet moment in his life the subtle offer came. Satan has chosen that moment to attack. There is no doubt that the pressure on Abram to accept this gift is very great. I have found that many of us Christians, have been trapped by the fear of offending someone if we say, "No!" We are troubled about what they will think, and so often very little troubled about what God will think. We fail to realize if we cannot say "No" now, how can we ever say "No" after the offer has been accepted and we are indebted to some degree. The easiest time to say "No" is now! This is what the Apostle Paul means when he says, "I have the right to do anything—but I will not be mastered by anything." (*1 Corinthians 6:12b NIV*). That is, the only one I wish to serve is Christ. The only power to which I will yield my life is His. Anything else that threatens to control me or limit me I reject! It may be lawful, it may even be in good standing all around, but if it makes any demand upon me that is not His demand, I do not want it! This is what Abram is so beautifully demonstrating in these verses. It is a bold and positive declaration. What a clear-cut victory! The subtle trap of the enemy has been uncovered.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, may our "No" be "No" even when it seems to be right to say "Yes".

Saturday 11th July

MELCHIZEDEK

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High." *Genesis 14:18 NIV*

Before the king of Sodom met Abram with his subtle offer, Abram had already met with another king, the mysterious Melchizedek. He steps suddenly out of the shadows, ministers to Abram, and just as suddenly disappears from the pages of Scripture, and we never hear another word about him until we come to the *110th Psalm*, where David declares that the Messiah to come is made a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Then another thousand years roll by, and in the book of Hebrews we have another extended reference to this strange individual. Who was Melchizedek? The guesses range from Shem, the son of Noah, who, according to some chronologists, could have still been alive at this time, to an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ in human form. All we are positively told of him is that he is the king of Salem, which afterwards became Jerusalem, and that he is the priest of the Most High God. His own name means "king of righteousness." He appears suddenly in the Scriptural record without any mention of his father or mother, no birth date, and no subsequent account of his death. These omissions from the record are seized upon by the writer of Hebrews to indicate that since we have no record of his genealogy, this man is a type of the eternal priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ who, in actuality, has no beginning nor ending of days, who forever lives to make intercession for all those who come unto the Lord by him. Thus, the Melchizedek priesthood is a ministry of help to those who face a time of trouble.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You for always praying for us, not just in troubled times.

Sunday 12th July

HE BLESSED ABRAM

And he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth." *Genesis 14:19 NIV*

Here, then, Melchizedek, who is evidently a Gentile king. The original knowledge of God as the maker and possessor of the heavens and the earth, passed along by Adam to his descendants, has evidently come down to Melchizedek unchanged. He is a worshiper of the true God, and a priest to that true God. The record shows him in such a way that he becomes a type of our Lord Jesus who is our heavenly Melchizedek, ready to minister to us in our need. His specific ministry is to reveal El Elyon, the Most High God, the One who owns everything in heaven and on earth. He is the one perfectly adequate to meet any human need. This is what Paul declares to the *Philippians 4:19 (NIV)*. Now we see why God led Abram back to his home by way of the King's Valley. The king of Sodom is coming to meet him, but Abram knows nothing of his approach, nor of the subtle offer with which he plans to put Abram in his debt. Had he known of it, he would have seen nothing wrong with it, for Abram is not different from you and me. The peril is too subtle to detect; it looks too innocent and attractive. So, God sent Melchizedek to meet him! His first ministry to Abram was to remind him of the character of the God he served. Doubtless he warned Abram of the subtle trap awaiting him in the offer of Sodom's wealth, and perhaps he said, "Abram, your God is the possessor of heaven and earth. He made it all. He owns it. He holds all its wealth in His hands. There is nothing that He cannot give you. This is the God to whom you belong."

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You that there is nothing You cannot give us.

Monday 13th July

BREAD AND WINE

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine.”

Genesis 14:18 NIV

Going back to verse 18, we are told Melchizedek served Abram bread and wine. We need no interpreter for this. These are the symbols of love. They speak eloquently of strength and joy flowing out from the passion of self-giving love. All this is recorded in the Old Testament, yet as we read it, we can see in this historical incident a beautiful picture of the need of our own lives. There is nothing that has such power to motivate the Christian heart as to partake, with the people of the Lord, of these symbols of the suffering of our blessed Lord. He gave Himself in the fullness of His life, poured out all that He was, and as we feast by the Spirit upon the symbols of His life, we are strengthened, enabling us to meet all that comes our way. This is the only power sufficient to make us reject the world's offer and maintain our independence as servants of Christ. The love of Christ constrains us! In the intimacy of this fellowship, under the ministry of Melchizedek, Abram worships his Lord. The record says he gave him a tenth of everything, that is, he gave him tithes of all he had. The tithe is not a debt paid to the Lord, it is rather a reminder that everything belongs to Him. Recognizing that all we are and have is to be given to the Lord in worship. The whole of our life is to be focused on the one aim of serving our Lord.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, everything we have, we offer to You in worship.

Tuesday 14th July

ONLY THE LORD CAN SATISFY

“And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Genesis 14:20 NIV

Here in this place, the King's Valley, where centuries later a greater Melchizedek would sweat in bloody agony in a Garden, Abram enjoyed by faith the high priestly ministry of Christ. His heart ravished with the love of Christ, and refreshed and strengthened in spirit, he saw that God alone could satisfy his heart. Here he swore to the Lord his God he would not touch a single thing that Sodom could offer him, he rose up and went out to meet the fair and innocent-appearing trap. He was ready for it! Have you ever found yourself trapped by some subtle appeal that looked innocent enough on the surface and seemed to be the popular thing to do? Too late, you realized its true nature, when the damage had already been done, and all you could say was, "I didn't realize...", "I never dreamed...!" This happens to many of us, doesn't it? Life is full of subtleties like this - little decisions, little problems, incidents that seem so innocent on the surface. We find it easy to rationalize and justify our choices. Why is it we fail? It is because we do not go to our Melchizedek! We give him no opportunity to minister to us and open our eyes. We do not come to the throne of grace, as we are encouraged to, to find grace to help in time of need. Abram would never have passed by this subtle trap unscathed had Melchizedek not met him. When the king of Sodom came, Abram could say, "I want no man to say that he has made Abram rich. If anyone makes Abram rich, it will be God." What a victory!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, in everything may we come to Your Throne of Grace.

Wednesday 15th July

A SENSIBLE ATTITUDE

"I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me – to Aner, Eshkol and Mamre. Let them have their share."

Genesis 14:24 NIV

What a sensible attitude Abram displayed toward the others who were involved with him. Take note Abram's words to the king of Sodom. Abram, do you mean to say that it is right for these young men to have what is wrong for you to take? Is it possible to have a double standard of right - one for you and one for them? What a lesson there is here for us! These young men had not yet come to the stage of Christian living and maturity that Abram had achieved. Abram is content to let God deal with them directly in these borderline areas. He is not going to force others to walk in the light of his conscience. Somehow, Abram has learned the truth of *Romans 14*, that we are not to judge our brother in these matters, *Verse 5b (NIV)*: "Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind." It is a great lesson to learn that there are areas of our Christian life where we must walk alone before our Lord and cannot force our views on others. Life lies ahead of us with all its possibilities of peril and danger, both spiritual and physical. How we need to go on in the strength of our Lord, Maker of heaven and earth. Nothing that the world offers can fully meet our hearts' need. We are in this world. We are expected to live in it. We are expected to use the world, but not to abuse it. We must not love it, nor demand anything from it. Like Abram, we must say, "I have sworn to the Lord my God, I will not touch anything that you have to offer."

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, teach us to walk with the same attitude as Abram.

Thursday 16th July

LAW OF FIRST OCCURENCE

"After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision."

Genesis 15:1 NIV

The opening paragraph of *Genesis 15* strikingly illustrates for us what is commonly called in Bible study, the law of first occurrence. By this is meant that the first time a word or phrase is used in the Bible, it is used in such a way or in such a context as to highlight the basic meaning of it throughout the rest of Scripture. Four such phrases appear in this paragraph for the first time in the Bible, though they are repeated many, many times afterward. See if you can recognize them. Did you see the first one, in the very first line, "the word of the Lord came"? The recurrence of this phrase many times afterward in Scripture emphasizes the God-breathed character of the Bible. The word of the Lord came to many people, just as it came to Abram, and they wrote as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit, and then actually sat down and studied their own writings to learn what God had said, (*1 Peter 1:10-12*). The second phrase is the word that came to Abram, "Fear not!" How often this is God's word to us, throughout this book. The third phrase is, "I am your shield." In a thousand wonderful variations, we find this thought repeated frequently: God is our refuge and our strength; God is a tower of refuge; God is an overshadowing rock; blessed is the one that hides under the shadow of the Almighty. This is the first intimation of this character of God in Scripture. Then there is that familiar word in the last verse, "And he believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You for Your Word that reveals Your amazing character.

Friday 17th July

FEAR

"Do not be afraid, Abram."*Genesis 15:1 NIV*

The heart of *Genesis 15* does not lie in its great phrases, however, but in its connection with the preceding events of Abram's life. God appears to Abram in a vision, but when he comes, his first words are, "Fear not!" This reveals what is going on in Abram's heart. He was having a sleepless night, and the trouble was that he was afraid. Coming, as this incident does, after Abram's return from his battle with the four eastern kings and his encounter with the king of Sodom, we can see why he is so fearful. He is afraid of this man, Chedorlaomer, the great king whom he had conquered. Abram had publicly humiliated him by overthrowing his vast army with but a handful of men. Dictators do not take this kind of treatment lightly! We can easily understand the justified fear that Abram felt as he faced the possibility of Chedorlaomer's return. Perhaps also there was fear because he had turned down the king of Sodom's offer of a fortune. He did it, of course, in the strength of the fellowship he had enjoyed with Melchizedek. With his heart aflame with the love and grace of God, Abram had said to this king, "I want nothing of all that you have. I don't want you saying that you made Abram rich." Doubt begins to rise in his heart as to whether he did the right thing or not. Doubt is a form of fear! If all this sounds familiar to you, take comfort from the fact that it is a very natural reaction and all the great saints of God suffer from it.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You for knowing that we are not alone when afraid.

Saturday 18th July

DO NOT BE AFRAID

"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

Genesis 15:1 NIV

To insist that life must maintain a steady, even keel at all costs, under every circumstance, is to thwart and miss the very purpose for which God sends difficulties into our lives. He only desires to create an atmosphere where he can manifest his glory. As Abram wrestles with his fears and doubts, there comes a sense of a presence with him. In his heart, he hears that mysterious word of the Lord. Sometimes the Lord spoke audibly to these Old Testament men, sometimes it was in the heart, with a quiet, deep conviction that God is speaking. Every Christian who has ever walked in fellowship with Jesus Christ for very long knows what I mean. We are not told how God spoke to Abram, but in the midst of his fear and doubt and loneliness there comes a sense of relief, and the word of the Lord says, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." Of course, the Lord is the answer! If He be for us. who can be against us? If He is our shield, whom should we fear? I love that verse in Hebrews because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid." (*Hebrews 13:5b-6 NIV*). "I am thy shield." That is what comforted Abram's heart there in the darkness. It was all he needed to settle his worries about the return of Chedorlaomer and the loss of his fortune in Sodom. Have we learned to count on the invisible protection of God?

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You that You have not given us a spirit of fear.

Sunday 19th July

I AM YOUR SHIELD AND REWARD

"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."
Genesis 15:1 NIV

This is what the Lord is saying to Abram, "I am your shield. Abram, a practical defence against any force that would destroy you. Fear not. Nothing shall touch you unless I permit it. Do not fear – I AM!" Have you noticed how many times in the New Testament our Lord Jesus calms His disciples with these words, "Fear not"? The ground of His reassurance is always that He is with them. When the storm threatens to overwhelm the little boat. When the cold fist of fear clutches their hearts as they sense the shadow of the Cross on their path. When Peter goes weeping bitterly out into the night; his words ring in their ears - "Fear not." "Do not let your hearts be troubled." (*John 14:1a NIV*). Why? "You believe in God; believe also in me!" (*John 14:1b NIV*). But God is more than a shield. He says also to Abram, "I am your very great reward." Our Lord is our dearest treasure, the only genuinely satisfying joy we will ever know. The sense of the presence of God is a far richer experience of joy than anything else the human heart can find. This is what Abram experienced when the Lord said to him, "I am your shield, your very great reward." We never again read of Abram worrying about Chedorlaomer or the loss of Sodom's wealth. All these pressures from without were fully met by the sense of God's presence with him, there in the dark. The same is true for us.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You for being our Shield and very great Reward.

Monday 20th July

ONE REQUEST

But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can You give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"

Genesis 15:2 NIV

Abram has one request that lays heavily on his heart! Could the Lord fill that? In the intimacy of the moment, he simply poured out what was in his heart into the ear of his Almighty Friend. The Lord said, "Get up and come outside with me and look up to the night sky." There the Lord gives Abram the promise. This is a great promise, out of the greatness of the Lord's heart. It must surely have reassured and encouraged Abram. Each night to come, until the promise was fulfilled, he could look up into the starlit heavens and remind himself of the promise God had made. There is something of great interest here. The last time God had spoken to Abram about the birth of a son, He had promised him He would make his descendants like the dust of the earth. Now the promise is that they shall be like the stars of the heaven in multitude. Many Bible scholars have seen in this an inference that Abram would have two lines of descendants: an earthly seed and a heavenly one. The earthly seed would be the nation Israel, along with the Ishmaelite (Arabian) nations. But there would also be a heavenly or spiritual seed. That "Seed," we are told in the book of Galatians, was Christ and all those who through faith in Him would be called the sons/daughters of God (*See Galatians 3:7*). As we look back over the time, we can see how the Lord has fulfilled these promises to the letter.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You, through our faith in Jesus, we are Your children.

Tuesday 21st July

ABRAM BELIEVED

"Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness."

Genesis 15:6 NIV

Now the last statement in this interesting paragraph in *Genesis 15* comes before us. It concerns Abram's faith. Paul refers to this mighty act of faith in *Romans 4*. He reminds us that Abraham believed God before he was circumcised, that is, before he had any continual guarantee that God would do this thing. The account of Abram's circumcision comes a couple of chapters later. Paul infers from this that acceptance before God has nothing to do with circumcision, as the Jews were insisting. Paul says that when Abram heard God say, "So shall your descendants be" that he looked up into the stars, saw their vastness, their multitude, and he relaxed. Resting in faith upon the power of God. If we focus our view on Abram's faith, we are going to miss the point of this whole matter. There is a sense in which we make far too much of these men of old and their faith. "What mighty men of faith," we say; "how tremendous to believe the Lord against all the evidence of the circumstances around. If we only had faith like that, we could do the things they did!" Then we compare our feeble faith with theirs and try to work up a feeling of faith within us until we are turned into spiritual hypochondriacs, always going about taking our spiritual temperature and feeling our spiritual pulse. It is indeed true that when God saw Abram's faith, He counted Abram as righteous in His sight. It is also true that when Abram saw the Lord, he believed Him able to perform what He had promised. He rested his faith on the Lord's adequacy.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, we rest our faith on Your total adequacy, not our own.

Wednesday 22nd July

STRONG FAITH

"Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness."

Genesis 15:6 NIV

What was it that made Abram's faith so strong? The answer is that he did not look at the difficulty so much as he looked at the One who had promised. His eye was not resting on the problems, but upon the Promiser. When he saw the greatness of God, the might and majesty displayed before him on that oriental summer's night, he said to himself, "It makes no difference how I feel, nor what may be the difficulties involved, the Creator of that multitude of stars is quite capable of giving me an equal number of descendants. So, we read the great sentence, "He believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness." This does not mean that this was the first moment that Abram was counted righteous before the Lord. The book of Hebrews makes clear that when he left Ur of the Chaldees, in response to the Lord's command, his obedient faith was also counted to him for righteousness. This incident under the stars is simply one instance out of many which illustrates the way in which God reckons righteousness to the person who believes. Abram believed the Lord about the promise of a coming son and was counted righteous. Today we are encouraged to believe in the Son, Jesus Christ. Cease from our own works and rest in helpless dependence upon Him, and we too are counted righteous. This act of faith must become an attitude of faith governing each moment of our lives. One is reminded of the following words: *"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees; And looks to God alone; Laughs at impossibilities; And cries, "It shall be done!""*

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, let our walk with You be one of faith and not sight.

Thursday 23rd July

THE LORD'S REMINDER

He also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

Genesis 15:7 NIV

The Lord reminds Abram of who He is and what He is doing. Abram is also being reminded of Who he is dealing with. We tend to forget just Who is in control of the events of life. It would do us good to remember Whom we serve. He was here before anything, and He will be here after everything. He controls all things that happen in between. He is all-powerful. He is ever-present. He is all-knowing. He is in control of all of life. If we could ever get our souls around that truth, it would revolutionize our lives! Abram is reminded that he is where he is, because of the power of the Lord. Abram did nothing to get where he was, it was all the Lord's doing. May we also be reminded that what we have, what we are and where we are, are all a product of the Lord's work in our lives. Read *1 Corinthians 15:10*. You name the area of your life, and you can count on the fact that it is all the Lord and not you! Abram is reminded that it was the Lord who brought him out so that He might give Abram a new land. The Lord's purpose was to take this childless pilgrim and transform him into the father of a great nation. We need to be reminded that our Lord has a wonderful plan for our lives. Let us be careful not to hinder that plan, bringing pain and hardship upon ourselves. Our Lord's plan is always a good, right and perfect plan.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, may we be open to Your good, right and perfect plan for us.

Friday 24th July

ABRAM'S RESPONSE

But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" *Genesis 15:8 NIV*

Some have taken this question by Abram to be an expression of doubt. His question is not doubt but curiosity. He is merely asking the Lord for more information. All Abram wants to know is the process by which the Lord's promise to him will find its fulfilment. His question is not one born of unbelief or doubt, but it is a desire for further information. Like Mary, when told by the angel Gabriel that she was to have a child, replied, "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" (*Luke 1:34 NIV*). This is not unbelief but wonder and an inquiry concerning the process. So is Abram's question, and God answers him by saying, in effect, "Come along, Abram, and I will show the whole procedure to you. I will reveal the means by which you, through your descendants, will possess the land." God doesn't mind us asking for more information. It is doubt that bothers Him. Remember Zacharias in *Luke 1:18*, he asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years." Zacharias' doubt led him to be silenced until his son, John the Baptist was born. When we hear from the Lord, do we respond by asking for more information, or do we immediately begin to question the truth of what we have heard?

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, may we not be afraid to ask You for more information.

Saturday 25th July

THE LORD'S STRANGE DEMAND

So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

Genesis 15:9 NIV

In response to Abram's question, the Lord makes a strange demand. This demand served as a challenge to Abram's faith. Let us be reminded that faith that isn't tested isn't really faith at all! The Lord's request is for Abram to prepare a sacrifice. This whole event was how men in ancient times made a covenant with one another. They would cut animals in half and arrange the pieces several feet apart and walk between the pieces together. It symbolized the sacredness of a man's word. It said, "May I be like one of these animals if I break my part of the covenant." For Abram, it took a lot of costly, hard, bloody work to prepare these animals as the Lord wanted them to be. We need to remember that when the Lord makes a requirement of our lives, it will often require us to commit to some hard work on our part. The great things of the Lord do not come easy, they do not come cheap, nor do they come to the lazy. The Lord's best is reserved for those who are willing to pay the price. What is that price? Prayer, holiness, separation, obedience, etc. Let us be reminded of Paul's words in *1 Corinthians 3:12-13*, "If anyone builds on this foundation (Jesus Christ) using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light." May our relationship with the Lord be built on that which will last for eternity.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, Your sacrifice to us calls for us to be totally committed to You.

Sunday 26th July

PREPARED AND WAITING

“Abram brought all these to Him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.”

Genesis 15:10-11 NIV

As Abram waited for the Lord to come by and meet with him the birds of prey began to descend on the animal carcasses. Abram had to chase them away to protect the sacrifice from being devoured. When the Lord begins to move in our faith life, we can count on the fact that every vulture in the world will come against us to devour what the Lord is trying to do in our lives. If we allow them, many vultures will try to take away our time, our concentration, or commitment to the Lord and His work. We need to be on guard to protect what the Lord wants to do in our lives and allow nothing to hinder it or prevent us from seeing it come to pass. Protecting the sacrifice took Abram most of the day. Abram is in a holding pattern. He has the sacrifice ready, he is guarding it and the Lord doesn't show up until after darkness has fallen. It was a time that required patience on the part of Abraham. The Lord never runs on our schedule! We seek to get ready for Him and line up with what He is doing in our lives. We wait and we wait for Him to show up and move in us and through us. He will, but only when He is ready! Therefore, if the Lord is working in your life, be patient and wait on His timing. Don't rush in as we have a tendency to do, just wait patiently on Him and He will bring it to pass, read *Isaiah 40:31*. God knows the timing, we do not!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, teach us to wait on Your timing, which is perfect.

Monday 27th July

DARKNESS

“As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.”

Genesis 15:12 NIV

When the Lord did finally appear, Abram was enveloped in a great darkness. Part of the darkness was due to the time of day. The rest was due to the work of the Lord in his life. The Lord brought Abram into a dark time so that He might increase and mature his faith. The Lord still does this in the lives of His people. He allows us into the dark times of life so that we might learn to trust Him more. He allows our faith to be matured in the darkness. The disciples, Daniel, Noah, and many others, all had to face their darkness to learn that the Lord could handle their situation. Let us not fear our darkneses. The Lord is working out His perfect will in our lives and He is growing us into maturity. No one said it would be fun, but it sure is beneficial! During this time of Darkness, the Lord comes to Abram to tell him of His plans for his descendants, who have yet to be born. He goes into great detail to let Abram know that which He was about to do. Our Lord doesn't usually come with all the details of what He is doing. He wants us to learn to walk by faith and not by sight. We are reminded of this truth 4 times in the Bible, *Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38*. When He tells us the same thing four times it means that He wants us to fully grasp it! We are to walk by faith not by sight!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, as You share Your plans for us, we are to walk by faith not sight.

Tuesday 28th July

DETAILS

Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.”

Genesis 15:13 NIV

What are the details? It was a prophecy foretelling the triumphant future of the promised seed of Abram. The outline of the Scripture covers the prophecy well. The promised seed shall enter a foreign land to be oppressed and enslaved for a period of 400 years (*verse 13*). This was a prophecy of the Egyptian enslavement (read *Genesis Chapters 46-50* and *Exodus Chapters 1-2*). The promised seed shall be delivered from the oppressing nation (Egypt), and when they are delivered, they will have great possessions (*verse 14*; read *Exodus Chapters 3-12*.) Abram will join his fathers in peace (*verse 15*). At that time Abram would have peace, but that day was not to come until he reached a good old age. The promised seed shall return to the promised land after 400 years (*verse 16*). Why 400 years? The Lord sought to demonstrate His love, mercy, and above all His patience with sinful humanity. Rather than immediately wipe out the Amorites, He chose to wait for over four hundred years to bring judgment upon them. The enemies of the Lord would be displaced as He settled His chosen people in the land He had promised them. Yet the Lord's enemies did not need to remain enemies. They were given ample time to turn from their wickedness, repent and be forgiven. The Amorites had a chance to repent and be saved, just as the Assyrians in Nineveh did during the time of Jonah. Praise the Lord for His patience!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You for Your plans which are filled with love and mercy.

Wednesday 29th July

FIREPOT AND BLAZING TORCH!

“When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.”

Genesis 15:17 NIV

Now the Lord appeared to Abram and completed the covenant ceremony. He had delayed His arrival so He could give Abram the dream foretelling the history of the promised seed and the promised land. The Lord's presence appeared to Abram in a smoking firepot with a blazing torch. The Lord has often symbolized His presence by using fire. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush (*Exodus 3:1-6*). He appeared to Israel in a pillar of fire throughout the wilderness wanderings (*Exodus 13:21*). He appeared as a consuming fire to Israel on Mt. Sinai (*Exodus 19:16f*). He appeared in the person of the Holy Spirit, coming upon the disciples as tongues of fire at Pentecost (*Acts 2:1-4*). The firepot with the blazing torch passed down the path between the pieces of sacrificed animals. The Lord is completing the covenant. Notice Abram had no part. The Lord alone passed between the parts of the sacrificed animals. He alone was making promises to Abram and assuring the covenant with Abram. Abram was not making promises to God nor making a covenant with the Lord. Abram just like all of us, fail in keeping our promises to the Lord. If the covenant of the promised seed and the promised land was to ever be established and fulfilled, it had to be established by the Lord and by the Lord alone. The covenant had to be by grace and by grace alone. The covenant of the promised seed and the promised land was by grace and by grace alone. We have come to know this grace in Jesus Christ.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, we celebrate Your grace, in that You always keep Your promises.

Thursday 30th July

ONE SIDED!

On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates."

Genesis 15:18 NKJV

As mentioned before this ceremony was part of an ancient covenant ceremony. Here, the Lord comes down in His glory, the first time it has been seen on earth since Adam and Eve sinned in Eden, and He passes between the sacrifice. He is confirming His covenant with Abram. Usually both parties had to pass through together. However, this covenant is one sided. Irregardless of what Abram, or his descendants do, this covenant is as good as the Name of the Lord. It will be fulfilled! Let us take note of the change from "I will", *Genesis 12:1; 12:7; 13:15; 13:17*; to "I have", *Genesis 15:18*. This is a done deal, and it cannot be changed! This covenant cemented the faith of Abram in place and gave him a sure promise to hold on to. Thank the Lord for His promises that make faith possible! Many of His promises are "If you will then I will" in nature, *Romans 10:13; Acts 16:31; Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19*. However, His greatest promises are cut in stone, and they are one sided. Regardless of what we may do, His promises still stand and will stand, *Hebrews 13:15; Acts 1:8; John 10:28; John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18* etc. The promises and covenants of the Lord are given to encourage and confirm our faith in Him. As we accept Him at His word and order our lives after His will, we mature in His image!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You for Your promises that confirm our faith in You.

Friday 31st July

HOW IS YOUR FAITH?

So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River."

Genesis 15:18 NLT

How is your faith? Maybe like Abram you are sitting looking at your life and wondering "**How?**"; "**Why?**"; "**What?**"; "**When?**". Listen, our Lord is not afraid of our questions. He is not opposed to us asking them. All He is looking for is that person who will come before Him in faith. He is looking for that person who will simply take Him at His Word and believe Him, regardless of how things look or how they may personally feel about the matter. He is looking for those that He can mature into His own likeness and for His Own glory. Are you that person? Do you want all that the Lord has for you? Letting Him move you toward maturity. It all begins with us taking that first step of faith. Asking Him to begin working in our lives. This is the way forward to overcome the fears and disappointments of life. Hearing and believing God's Word, His wonderful promise to give us the promised land, to give us heaven itself. This is the very reason God saves us, to give us the promised land of heaven, the glorious hope of living together in fellowship with Him forever and ever. This hope, the hope of heaven, helps to erase fear and disappointment. For we know that whatever happens to us, even if someone kills our bodies, our souls will live on and on forever with our Risen, Ascended, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, we open our lives to the journey of faith with You leading us.

Continued from page 7

The word bad in this verse means “worthless.” You don’t want to spend your time on earth doing things that have no eternal value. Your time is your life, and your life belongs to God. Rely on the Holy Spirit to help you invest your life in what pleases the Lord.

Paul reminds us earlier in the same chapter, that our earthly bodies are only a tent, and that we groan for our final home in heaven. This is meant to give us courage that this life isn’t all there is – that by faith, we set our focus on what is lasting.

Make your life count by being a beacon of Christ and the gospel for everyone around you. See yourself as a person of eternity, not merely a person of time. It’s the difference between spending time and investing it in blessings for yourself and others.



From the Hymnal

*Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
To His feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like thee His praise should sing?
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise the everlasting King.*

*Henry Francis Lyle 1793-1847
Methodist Hymn Book No 12*

A DAILY PRAYER

(from Freedom in Christ Ministries)

Dear Heavenly Father,

I honor You as my Sovereign Lord. I acknowledge that You are always present with me. You are the only all-powerful and wise God. You are kind and loving in all Your ways. I love You and thank You that I am united with Christ and spiritually alive in Him. I choose not to love the world, and I crucify the flesh and all its passions.

I thank You for the life that I now have in Christ, and I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit, that I may live my life free from sin. I declare my dependence upon You, and I take my stand against Satan and all his lying ways. I choose to believe the truth and I refuse to be discouraged. You are the God of all hope, and I am confident that You will meet my needs as I seek to live according to Your Word. I express with confidence that I can live a responsible life through Christ who strengthens me.

I now take my stand against Satan and command him and all his evil spirits to depart from me. I put on the whole armor of God. I submit my body as a living sacrifice and renew my mind by the living Word of God in order that I may prove that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect. I pray these things in the precious name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Saturday 1st August

TROUBLE WITH HAGAR

“Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar.” *Genesis 16:1 NIV*

It is amazing the depths to which we, as those who have responded to the call of the Lord can sink. Here is Abram, a man who is following the Lord by faith. He has believed the Lord enough to leave his homeland and his family behind. He has trusted the Lord through battles and trials that would have made many turn around in defeat and return home. Yet, for all his faith and his good deeds, Abram is still a human. He is still made of sinful flesh and there is still within him a pull towards the world and all its allurements. We all know what this passage is about. Sarai and Abram trying to help the Lord give them a son by having Abram take Sarai's maidservant Hagar as his wife. Of course, this was never the Lord's will for their lives, but, as with us, this did not stop them from rushing headlong into it anyway. Their decision brought with-it far-reaching consequences for them and for our world today. It's a real lesson in impatience. What is impatience? It is the emotion that gets tired of waiting; that gets fed up with something that delays us; that arouses us to act or react before we should. Waiting and delay are the key words: we just get tired of waiting, of being delayed, and want to move on and act or react. All too often we do, and we cause all kinds of problems for ourselves and for others, often painful and catastrophic problems. When has impatience lead you down a path that our Lord did not want you to take?

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, we repent of the sin of impatience which led us away from You.

Sunday 2nd August

THE DESIRE FOR ACCEPTANCE

“Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar.” *Genesis 16:1 NIV*

In that society, it was considered a disgrace for a couple to be childless. In our day, many couples choose that lifestyle for themselves and that is okay. Others have that choice forced on them by physical reasons. In Abram's day, regardless of the reasons behind it, if a couple had no children, they were mocked, looked down on and largely were not accepted in society. This was a society that also thought nothing of multiple marriages. If a man like Abram were to take Hagar as a concubine, or secondary wife, no one around them would think a thing of it. If that concubine were to bear a child, it would be considered to be the child of the first, or primary wife. In this way, Sarai could get the child she desired and be accepted in the community. As followers of Jesus, we are often guilty of lowering our standards to those of the community around us in order to fit in better. It is better to please our Lord and be rejected by others than it is to please others and be rejected by our Lord! There **MUST** be a clear line of demarcation between the people of the Lord and the world around them. Let us be reminded of Paul's words as he addressed the Corinthian church in *2 Corinthians 6:17*, “Therefore, ‘Come out from them and be separate’, says the Lord. ‘Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.’” Seeking to be accepted can lead to our downfall!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, we repent of seeking to be accepted by others instead of You.

Monday 3rd August

BAGGAGE AND DOUBT

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar." *Genesis 16:1 NIV*

The Bible tells us that Hagar was an Egyptian. She is part of the possessions or baggage that Abram brought back with him from his sinful journey into Egypt, *Genesis 12:10-20*. Had he never journeyed to that country, there would have been no Hagar to marry! He is still reaping the harvest he sowed in Egypt! We never go into sin and come out clean! There is always some reminder, some evidence that we were there! That is the Law of Sowing and Reaping (*Galatians 6:7-8*.) *Genesis 15:1-6* told us the story of the Lord's great promise to Abram. When the promise was given, Abram reacted in faith, but as time has gone by, Abram has begun to doubt. He, along with Sarai, decided that the Lord needed help in fulfilling His promise. After all, the Lord only said that Abram would father a son; He didn't say by whom he would father that son! It is my conviction that doubt towards the Word and promises of the Lord accounts for more of our troubles than any other single thing. We can read what He has promised us, but when the promise isn't fulfilled immediately, we begin to doubt and try to find a way to make it happen ourselves. When will we ever learn that our Lord always keeps His Word, *Hebrews 6:18; Romans 4:21; Psalm 119:89*. Our Lord is a Lord of order, and He doesn't run on our schedule. We needed a Saviour for 4,000 years before He came, but God sent Him "in the fulness of time", *Galatians 4:4* and our Lord doesn't need our help to accomplish His will, *Psalm 50:12*.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, lead us to surrender our baggage and doubts to You.

Tuesday 4th August

MISTAKEN THOUGHTS

So she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Genesis 16:2 NIV

A lot of emotion was wrapped up in Sarai's statement, years of pent-up emotion. She was expressing disappointment in the Lord and somewhat blaming Him for making her barren. She was expressing remorse, regret, sorrow, and a broken heart before Abram, feeling that she had failed him so miserably as a wife. She had just been unable to bear him a son, but she could not help it. The Lord had just closed her womb. Now this was a mistaken thought of Sarai. The promise of the Lord did cover and include her. True, the Lord had closed her womb temporarily, but not because she was not to be a part of His promise. It was because the time had not yet come for the promise to be fulfilled. It was not yet time for the Lord to give the promised seed to Abram and Sarai. The Lord's timetable was not Sarai's timetable. A mistaken thought often leads to impatience and wrong action. We face some problem or crisis and wonder why the Lord has not helped us or given us the answer. We may even question if the promises of our Lord apply to us, if the promises are even true for us today. Such thoughts are mistaken thoughts: our Lord has promised to help us in every crisis and problem of life. No problem is too small for the Lord's concern. He is concerned about us and will help us through all the trials and temptations of life. Let us not become impatient and act on our own, running ahead of our Lord.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, through Your Holy Spirit, prevent us from running ahead of You.

Wednesday 5th August

A COLLAPSE OF FAITH

“So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.”

Genesis 16:3 NIV

Abram had been walking with the Lord for a long time, for over ten years. Just a short while before this event, the Lord had given Abram a glorious vision of Himself and His promises. He had reassured Abram that he was to bear the promised seed and inherit the promised land (*Genesis 15:1-21*). But now, Abram was facing the test of his life. Why? Because the test was thrust upon him by his wife and her strong arguments. She must have argued that the Lord never mentioned her name in giving the promises; that the promises must not, therefore, include her. The promised seed must involve another woman. Moreover, she had never been able to have children; therefore, she could not be the Lord's appointed mother to bear the promised seed. On and on Sarai must have argued. The test struck at the very heart and purpose for Abram being on earth. The very reason he had left Ur of the Chaldees and moved to Canaan. He wanted above all else to see the promise of God fulfilled, and he wanted to have a significant part in God's glorious plan of salvation for the earth. The test appealed to the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh, to sex, the most intimate relationship existing between man and woman. Sarai won the argument and stirred Abram to question! Abram's faith and patience collapsed. He felt he could wait no longer, so he took matters into his own hands. Oh, the results!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Whatever the test, Holy Spirit, we keep our eyes on our Lord.

Thursday 6th August

THE RESULTS

“He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.”

Genesis 16:4 NIV

The results of taking matters into our own hands and allowing for a collapse of faith is disastrous. The results are malice, spite, insolence, reproach, scorn, and a haughty spirit. Hagar despised Sarai. She had been misused for Sarai's own end, and Hagar despised her for it. But there was probably something else as well. When Hagar discovered that she was pregnant, she probably looked upon Sarai with scorn and reproach because Sarai was childless. Hagar must have walked around with a haughty and insulting spirit toward Sarai. Then came jealousy and blaming others: Sarai was now jealous of Hagar and Abram's relationship. She blamed Abram for the affair (verse 5). Apparently, she felt that Abram was favouring Hagar for he had not stepped in to correct Hagar's scorn of her. Abram had obviously chosen to favour Hagar because she was bearing the son for whom he had yearned so long. Sarai reacted by appealing to the Lord for help. She called for the Lord to help her, to judge between her and Abram (verse 5). Then there is the result of disturbed relationships, the relationships between Sarai and Hagar and between Sarai and Abram. These are the results of Abram and Sarai taking matters into their own hands. I am sure we can all identify with Abram and Sarai and seen the results when we have taken matters into our own hands experiencing a collapse of faith. The outcome having a huge effect on our personal lives, our family and others. Even in these times the Lord never abandons us.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, even when we have a collapse of faith, You do not abandon us.

Friday 7th August

REACTIONS

“Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

Genesis 16:6 NIV

Notice reactions of Sarai and Hagar. She was miserable because of the pride and haughtiness of Hagar, so she tried to make everyone else around her miserable too. She tried to blame Abram for the problem. She tried to blame Hagar for the problem. She even dragged God into the problem. There are many who approach the problems of life with a similar attitude. If they are unhappy, they want everyone else around them to be unhappy as well. So, they get grouchy, mean-spirited, short-tempered and become hard to get along with. This is not a Christlike response to trouble and problems. He would have us learn to handle the problems of life without attacking others or attempting to make them as miserable as we are! Hagar reacted by being unavailable. She decided that the answer to her problems was flight. She just packed up and left to get away from the problem. This is the most common response of all! When problems arise at church, don't seek a solution, seek a new church. When problems arise on the job, don't fix it, find a new job. When problems crop up in the marriage, don't work it out, just find yourself a new mate. God's business isn't to make us happy. He wants to make us holy! Forcing us to face our problems is one way of accomplishing that end!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You that You don't make us happy but holy.

Saturday 8th August

HAGAR IS FOUND

“The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.”

Genesis 16:7 NIV

The angel says four things to Hagar. First, "where do you come from and where are you going?" These are always arresting questions. Hagar answers the first, but she has nothing to say to the last. She does not know where she is going. Where can she go? The question draws her helplessness sharply to her attention. Then the angel says, "Return and submit." This is the only way to experience the grace and blessing of the Lord. Had she gone on wandering into the wilderness, it would have been disastrous. Both she and the child in her womb would have died. When the Lord finds us wandering, this is always what He says, "Return and submit!" "Submit to the circumstances you dislike, and I will work it out. To do anything else is folly." So, Hagar returns. With the command to return comes the promise of blessing. Blessing always follows obedience. "I will multiply your descendants so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." Then follows the prophecy of Ishmael's nature. "He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him." Have you found the Lord to be the One who lives and sees, the One who knows all about your life, and your circumstances? The One who knows the past and the future, and says to us as He said to Hagar, "Return and submit?" This is always difficult but it is the place of promised blessing.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, it's always hard to return and submit, yet it leads to blessings.

Sunday 9th August

THE RESULTS OF TROUBLE

“He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.” *Genesis 16:12 NIV*

Ishmael is called a wild man. He would be difficult to handle and would be aggressive towards others. Ishmael represents the difficulties that arise when sin is allowed to divert us from the Lord's path for our lives. Remember, sin brings its own club. Ishmael is a picture of this truth. As Ishmael grew, the tensions surrounding him grew as well. In other words, the sin of Abram and Sarai, even after many years, still brought heartache and trouble into the home! Our sins, no matter how small and insignificant we may think them to be, always affects us and those around us! They poison our spirit, they sabotage our family, and they hinder our walk with our Lord. The answer to sin is to drag it into the light, *Proverbs 28:13*. Sin cannot live when it is brought out of the darkness into the marvellous light of the glory of God, *John 3:19-21*. Even though this sin was accomplished by the will of Abram and Sarai, it was going to be used for the glory of God. Those involved could not see how things would play out in our day. Yet, much of the trouble the world is dealing with, is a direct result of Abram's sin with Hagar. Nothing, even our sins, catches God by surprise. He can take the worst of our failures and use them for His glory. That is not an excuse for evil. When we have sinned, let us not run from it. Let us return to the Lord in repentance and experience His forgiveness. (*1 John 1:9*)

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, as we turn to You in repentance we experience Your forgiveness.

Monday 10th August

THE GOD WHO SEES

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

Genesis 16:13 NIV

Hagar is alone, frightened and is sure that the Lord is nowhere around. Yet, in her trial, the Lord knew exactly where she was. He saw every move she made, and He came to her to offer comfort and hope. We often struggle to get away from the question “Why?” While I cannot tell you the answer to that question, I can tell you about the Lord who always sees. We cannot always define His purposes or explain His Person. The one thing that we can be sure of, He is well aware of all that is going on in our lives. When the Lord showed up in the middle of Hagar’s nightmare, she stood amazed in the profound truth that the Lord Almighty had His eye on her. She was amazed that the Lord cared about her. She was so amazed that she called His name “El-Roi” – “You are the God who sees me!” We all need to know that the same Lord who saw Hagar has His eye on us as well. He knows where we are. He sees what we are going through. May we grasp this wonderful truth that He sees us. He sees us, but it is not with disinterest. He sees us and He cares about us. It may be that the devil or others have been telling you that the Lord is not seeing what you are going through. The devil is a liar. Our Lord sees and He cares. Do you need to talk to Him about some things?

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, as You are fully aware of our lives, we thank You for Your care.

Tuesday 11th August

HE SEES THE SUPPLICANT

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

Genesis 16:13 NIV

When we think of the Lord seeing everything, we often think of just the negative side. We think about how the Lord sees everything we think, say or do, and this thought may bother many. The complete knowledge of the Lord is one of the most comforting truths there is! Why? He sees the supplicant - that person who is making a humble or earnest plea to Him. Hagar is on the run. She is in a time of terrible distress. In the midst of her trial, she has a conversation with the Lord. We call this prayer. Are you not glad the Lord hears us when we pray? That is His promise. These verses remind us of His promise; “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear.” *Jeremiah 33:3* “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.” But there are times when we cannot put our prayers into words. What then? The Lord Who sees all things sees even the thoughts of our hearts that cannot be expressed. He hears the prayer that remains unspoken. He interprets the message of our tears. He reads the unspoken message of the burdened heart! He does not need for us to frame our prayers in words; He can comprehend the depth of our petition, because He knows us intimately. Rejoice that our Lord knows us intimately and desires the very best for us even in the most trying circumstance. Call to Him!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You for knowing us so intimately and that You care for us.

Wednesday 12th August

HE SEES THE SUFFERER

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

Genesis 16:13 NIV

Hagar is suffering. She has been rejected, abused and hated. She is all alone and on the run. Her heart is broken, and she does not know what to do. In her pain, she encounters the Lord Who sees. No person sees it all! All around us today, there are people who suffer. They have pain and heartache that they keep well hidden from those around them. Take heart! People around us may not see nor understand, but there is a God in Heaven, the God and Father of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, who knows all about the path we walk. He knows where we are today, and He knows what is around the next bend in the road. Since He knows, He helps us as no other! He knows our pain, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet He did not sin.” (*Hebrews 4:15*). He cares about us as Peter reminds, “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” (*1 Peter 5:7*). He gives us peace in our valley, *Philippians 4:6-7*. He works in our situation to bring about the best conclusion. Paul reminds us from his own journey, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” (*2 Corinthians 4:17*). He knows how to bring joy out of our dark night, *Psalms 30:5*. Do not give up! He knows!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You for seeing our suffering and being our comfort.

Thursday 13th August

HE SEES THE SLANDERED

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

Genesis 16:13 NIV

Hagar had been slandered. She is but a slave and she had been forced by her mistress into a situation she could not avoid. Now, she is forced to bear the brunt of Sarai's anger. In that place of misunderstanding and slander, she found help from the Lord Who sees. There is no shortage of people who would slander our good names and our pure motives. Who hasn't been misunderstood, misrepresented or become the focus of some malicious gossip and their hateful words? We all have, but our Lord sees the truth! While others might spread their lies, our Lord knows all there is to know about us and the circumstances we are in. One day, He will set the record straight. How do we answer our accusers? By doing good. In *1 Samuel 17*, David was ridiculed by Eliab, in *verse 28*, “When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, ‘Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.’” David is also ridiculed by Saul, but David's answer was to walk across the plain and slay the giant. Our answer to slander should be that we always do the right thing. Live for the Lord and stay the course and the Lord will allow us to live down those who would damage our name!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, as we encounter slander, by Your Spirit, let us do the right thing.

Friday 14th August

HE SEES THE SINNER

"That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered." *Genesis 16:14 NIV*

By birth, Hagar, like all of us, was a sinner. Yet, the eye of the Lord was upon her. She ran away, but she could not get away from the gaze of the One Who sees. If you are lost, you may think the Lord doesn't think about you. The truth is, He sees all we do. He is there when the thought of sin is conceived. He is there when the deed of sin is carried out. He will be watching when the sentence of sin is carried out. Imagine the difference in any trial held on this planet, if the judge enters the courtroom and says, "I saw it all!" Well, the Lord of heaven and earth can and will say that! There will be no hiding. But the One who knows the past and the future, and says to us as He said to Hagar, "Return and submit?" That is the place of promised blessing. We are also told that this well is located between Kadesh and Bered. Kadesh means "holiness" and Bered means "hail" or "judgment." Here is the well of grace, lying between holiness and judgment. When we begin to stray from the place of God's blessing toward the certainty of judgment, God meets us on the way, at the well of grace, saying, "Now wait a minute. I don't want to have to make this known to others. I don't want to judge you openly. I don't want to bring trial or affliction or heartache into your life to make you listen. Listen now. Return and submit so I won't have to do this." That is the well of grace. Will you drink from the well of grace?

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, thank You that we can return to drink from Your well of grace.

Saturday 15th August

THE LORD SPEAKS AGAIN

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me faithfully and be blameless."

Genesis 17:1 NIV

Our last view of Abram found him attempting to help the Lord. He was trying to solve a problem he felt was far too hard for the Lord. He and Sarai felt they had the solution to the problem, and Abram took Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, for a wife. Of that union was born Ishmael, Israel's continual thorn in the flesh until this day. Thirteen years elapsed between the account of *Chapter 16* and that of *Chapter 17*, and we can well suspect these were years of unhappiness and unrest in the household of Abram. The presence of Ishmael in the home created endless contempt, bitterness, envy, jealousy, weariness of spirit, and rebellion. These thirteen years were designed of the Lord to teach Abram the folly of acting on his own. Perhaps you have had some similar experience, when the Lord has allowed you to have your own way, and the results have been most distressing. You were permitted to go your own headstrong way in order that you might learn the folly of acting apart from the Lord. One of the most frightening things about life with the Lord is this fact: that, if we insist upon having our own way, He will often let us have it, till you are sorry you asked for it. "So He gave them what they asked for," (*Psalms 106:15 NIV*) But after thirteen years of heartache, a new aspect of God's grace opens before Abram. New developments are unfolded in *Chapter 17*.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, we repent of insisting on doing things our own way.

Sunday 16th August

A NEW REVELATION

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me faithfully and be blameless."

Genesis 17:1 NIV

After thirteen years of silence, the Lord appears to Abram in a new revelation and with a new name - God Almighty. In the Hebrew it is El Shaddai, which essentially means "the God who is sufficient," the all-competent God, the adequate God, who knows what He is doing and how to do it. There is a tenderness in this name because the word "Shaddai" comes from the Hebrew word for "breast". Just as a baby receives strength and nourishment from its mother's breast, so the children of the Lord receive all they need from the hand of the "Almighty God". This is an indication that Abram has learned something from his recent bitter experience. The Lord says, in effect, "You have been learning for thirteen years the total inadequacy of your own efforts, through Ishmael. Now learn a new thing about me. I am El Shaddai. You have discovered by sad experience how futile your plans and efforts can be without Me. Now learn how capable I am to do everything that I desire to do, whenever I desire to do it." Would that we could all discover this truth afresh! We need desperately to recover the reality of El Shaddai, the Lord who is sufficient for whatever we are going through right now! This is what Abram learned. In this new light from the Lord came a new demand from Him. "Walk before me faithfully and be blameless." We too, like Abram, have been called to walk faithfully and be blameless before our Lord.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, help us to walk faithfully and blameless through Your Holy Spirit.

Monday 17th August

OUR WALK

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me faithfully and be blameless.”

Genesis 17:1 NIV

How can we arouse our faith, have a fresh, stirring experience with our Lord? Make a new commitment to walk before Him and to live a blameless life through the power and ministry of His indwelling Holy Spirit. Our lives as followers of the Lord Jesus are not a static, complacent life. When Our Lord gives us a fresh revelation, some new insight or knowledge, He expects us to act, to put the new knowledge to use, and to grow thereby. This was true of Abram. The Lord gave Abram a fresh revelation of Himself as the Almighty God, but He also told Abram to recommit his life and to do so more diligently than ever before. Abram was to make some commitments. He was to walk before the Lord. This means to live step by step in the presence of the Lord. To live moment by moment in fellowship with the Lord. To live in an unbroken consciousness of the Lord and to always be aware of His presence, power, and security. This means that we are to live before Him in a spirit of devotion, worship, fellowship and service. That we do not walk behind Him nor ahead of Him. But we walk before Him, conscious that He can see us and that He has the power to look after and care for us. It means that we are aware of His power to see and know all, aware that He will judge us for all we do. This can only result in a life blessed by the Lord.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, may we always walk before You, not behind nor ahead of You.

Tuesday 18th August

HIS PROMISE AND PLAN

"Then I will make My covenant between Me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." *Genesis 17:2 NIV*

The Lord simply reminds Abram of the promises He has made to him in the past. He will make of him a great nation and He will bless Abram. This revelation and reminder cause Abram to fall at His feet in worship! Do we see His blessings in our lives as a catalyst to worship and praise? This covenant is one-sided. The Lord will bless Abram because He wants to! In other words, the covenant is good because it depends on the Lord and not a human being! Praise the Lord, our salvation is in His hands and not ours. Here, Abram receives a name change. His name is changed from "Abram", which means "Exalted Father", to "Abraham" which means "Father of a Multitude". To Abraham it does not appear that this is the case. From the Lord's perspective, it is a done deal! Notice the words, "You will be the father of many nations." (*Genesis 17: 4*). Even though Abraham couldn't see it, God had already completed His plan through Abraham. Life is never like we think it is! All we can see are the obstacles and the trials that we face in life. Our Lord sees our present as well as the future that He has already accomplished. The essence of faith is merely walking in the present, holding in our hands the things the Lord has placed in the future! Whatever we may be facing, our Lord has already taken care of it for you. We merely need to be patient until we arrive at that time where His provision is manifested.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, teach us to be patient as we wait for Your provision.

Wednesday 19th August

FACEDOWN

“Abram fell facedown, and God said to him.” *Genesis 17:3 NIV*

Abram immediately fell on his face at the first appearance of the Lord. The brightness of the Lord's glory would strike any person to the ground. The point is this: Abram humbled himself before the Lord, he got as low as he could to show reverence for the Lord, that he was ready to listen and to receive whatever message the Lord had for him. The Lord said two things to Abram: He reminded Abram that it was He who had been chosen to receive the covenant of the promised seed. He and he alone, not someone else, had been chosen to be the father of many nations. This was the Lord's call alone. The Lord alone called Abram. When our Lord calls us, any of us, to serve Him, we must humble ourselves before Him and listen to His call. The Lord changed Abram's name to Abraham (*Genesis 17:5*). The meaning of Abram is exalted father; the meaning of Abraham is the father of a multitude. This experience with the Lord was to be a turning point in Abram's life: the promised seed was soon to be born through Sarai. The Lord gave Abram a new name to remind him of this experience with Him. This was the Lord's great call and covenant, His great assurance to fulfil His promise. Our Lord has given each of us the very name of His own dear Son, Christian (*Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16*). The great need of the hour is for us to humble ourselves before the Lord and remember the great name He has given us, the name of Christian. Reminding of our conversion, call and His promises.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, remind us of what it means to carry the name of Christian.

Thursday 20th August

FRUITFUL AND FAITHFUL

“I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.”
Genesis 17:6 NIV

The Lord promises Abraham children, crowds and crowns. He promised him things that, at that moment in his life, he couldn't even imagine! Sounds like us, doesn't it? Think of where He found us, what He has done in our lives and where we are headed. Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? I have discovered that the farther I travel down this walk with our Lord, the sweeter His promises become! We can only be thankful that every single one is true! Remember, He will make our lives fruitful for His glory if we will abide in Him, *John 15:5*. The Lord promises not only to bless Abraham, but his children and all the generations of Abraham's seed as well. This is a covenant that is as good as the Name of the Lord and that will endure as long as He endures. We can only thank the Lord that we can count on His faithfulness! “Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (*Lamentations 3:22-23*). Praise the Lord that He is faithful and true. He will not renege on His promises. He will not fail us. We may fall short, but He never will! He is ever faithful! The Lord promises to be personal to the seed of Abraham, to you and me. What a blessing to serve the Lord who desires a personal relationship with the likes of you and me! Enabling us to be fruitful for He is faithful.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, as You are faithful to Your Word, make us fruitful to Your glory .

Friday 21st August

A NEW REQUIREMENT

"This is My covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised."

Genesis 17:10 NIV

Abraham and all his descendants are required to be circumcised. They were to be identified as followers of the Lord by a mark in their bodies. Submitting to circumcision was a statement that "this person is part of the Abrahamic covenant, and the promises of the Lord are his." This mark was both painful and private. Whether anyone else knew of it or not, the person circumcised, and the Lord knew about it. We are not required to do this to be followers of the Lord today. However, the New Testament speaks of a "circumcision of the heart" performed not with human hands, but through the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit. These verses speak of the circumcision of the heart - *Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 5:6; Colossians 2:11; Galatians 6:15*. Without being circumcised, no one could enter this covenant relationship with the Lord. For us a spiritual circumcision is necessary for a relationship with the Lord. This is accomplished only through coming to Jesus Christ by faith. Being born from above through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Many in our day think that rituals are still how one approaches the Lord. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Works can never save the soul! It takes faith to please the Lord. It always has and always will! It took faith to follow the Lord and carry out this command, which Abraham did without hesitation. Have you experienced that spiritual circumcision that forever changes your life and your destination?

PRAYER THOUGHT

Holy Spirit thank you for changing my heart to follow the Lord.

Saturday 22nd August

THE PROMISE EXTENDED

God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah."

Genesis 17:15 NIV

The Lord's promise to Abraham is extended to Sarai also. She is to have this child of promise, and she is to be the mother of multitudes. Her name is also changed from "Sarai", which means "My Princess" to "Sarah", which means "Princess". When Abraham hears this, he laughs. It is not a laugh of doubt, but of joy at what the Lord is about to do in his life. He is so excited thinking about the power of the Lord that he prays for the Lord to bless Ishmael also. What prayer? Asking the Lord to bless the result of a decision that was made from impatience. This prayer is heard and answered by the Lord! Here is Abram who was looking at a bleak future when the day began. Now he is thrilled by the possibilities. Let us be reminded today as there is no cause that is beyond hope when it involves the Lord. Our future is as bright as the size of our faith! When we involve our Lord in every situation of our lives, the impossible becomes immediately possible. Remember the Living Lord we serve holds today and tomorrow in His hands, and He is greater than both! Rejoice that we serve a wonderful Lord Who is interested in us. When we exercise minute faith in His Word, He honours that with blessings which cannot be calculated for value. What are you trusting Him for this day? Is there a dark spot on your today or on your future? Bring it to Him, fall down before Him and worship Him like Abraham did and He will bless your life!

PRAYER THOUGHT

In humble worship, Lord, we surrender all to Your possibilities.

Sunday 23rd August

MANY HATS

“The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.”

Genesis 18:1 NIV

We all wear many different hats. For instance, I am a husband, a father, a brother, a Pastor, a friend, among many other things. Genesis 18 reveals various hats of the man named Abraham. In the beginning of this Chapter, Abraham is visited personally by the Lord. During this visit we are given a glimpse of these various hats of this man of faith. As Abraham is revealed to us here, we see some characteristics in his life that could be seen in all our lives. Abraham wore the hat of being a Servant of the Lord. He sprang into action to serve the Lord who came in the form of three visitors. He wore the hat of a Saint. A “saint”, Yes! One who has been set apart by our Lord, not perfect, but in the process of being perfected by the Lord. The One who set Abraham apart and has set us apart to serve Him with enthusiasm as did Abraham. Abraham wore the hat of Mediator or Intercessor. He stood before the Lord on behalf of Lot and his family. We have been called to wear the same hat. Some questions: Are you His servant, running eagerly and speedily to do His will? Are you His saint, listening intently as He reveals His will and ways to you? Are you His son/daughter, His child, interceding before the throne of the Heavenly Father on behalf of those who do not have access to Him? Do you need to work on one or more of these areas of your relationship with the Lord?

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, may we serve You as eager servants, saints and intercessors.

Monday 24th August

THE SERVANT HAT Part 1

“Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.” *Genesis 18:2 NIV*

The identity of Abraham's visitors. It seems that Abraham recognized the heavenly origin of his guests, because he sprang into action to serve them when they appeared. That response sets a good example for us because you never know when the Lord will show up in our lives, wherever we are! When He does, He is looking for the same servant heart He found in Abraham. Notice three aspects of that servant's heart. Abraham springs into action speedily trying to supply every need of his heavenly visitors. He may be 100, but there is not a hesitation as he flies from one task to the next, until all is completed. Here is someone who recognized his duty and set about to do it as quickly as possible! May we be reminded that our Lord deserves the best service we can give Him! When we are serving Him, regardless of how menial the task, we should do our best to recognize Who we are serving, and we should seek to do the best possible job for the glory of the Lord! Paul reminds us in *Colossians 3:23*, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” If it is worth doing for the Lord, it is worth doing right. The Father of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, gave us His best, His only begotten Son. Let us give our best to our Lord.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, whatever service You call us to do, we will give out best.

Tuesday 25th August

THE SERVANT HAT Part 2

“Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way – now that you have come to your servant.”

Genesis 18:5 NIV

Not only was Abraham swift in his service to the Lord, but he was also sacrificial in his service to the Lord. He went to his flock and personally selected, killed and prepared a calf for their meal. We haven't really become a servant until our service costs us personally. Being willing to sacrifice for our Master is a sign that we are possessed of a servant's heart. Whether the service is time, tithe or talents, it is willingly rendered at the request of the Master and for His glory. The greatest sacrifice we can offer, of course, is ourselves! That is a sacrifice that no one else can give to Him! When He has us, He has everything we have anyway! While his visitors were eating their meal, Abraham stood quietly by to serve them in any way they might need. He simply stood beside them, adopting the pose of a servant, listening for the voice of his Lord! Imagine the response of Abraham's servants as they watched him assume the role of a servant to the Lord. What a powerful testimony it was to them! By the way, others are watching! Let us make sure our service and testimony are all they should be! Servants of the Lord are those individuals who make themselves ever available to the Lord and His work. They are His and they have no will of their own, but they are lost in His will for their lives! That is a servant's heart!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord may our service to You give a testimony to others.

Wednesday 26th August

THE SAINTLY HAT

Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” *Genesis 18:13,14 NIV*

The Lord always rewards the faithful service that is rendered to Him. In Abraham's case, He does this by reassuring Abraham regarding the birth of Isaac. These verses tell us of the great affection, knowledge and care God possessed for this man Abraham. He knew what calibre of man Abraham was. He knew that Abraham would stand the test and be all that God wanted him to be. He is clearly pictured as God's saint in these verses. The Lord had given this promise repeatedly to Abraham. The last time in, *Genesis 17:17*, Abraham had laughed for joy when he heard again the glorious promise of hope from the Lord. This time, the promise is repeated for the benefit of Sarah. All she had heard was second hand promises from Abraham, this time she hears the promise directly from the mouth of the Lord. Her reaction is vastly different from that of her husband. He laughed for joy, she laughs from doubt! She is confronted and rebuked. This episode is a reminder that our Lord knows everything there is to know about us. He knows our motives, our secret sins and all things that we do. Nothing is hidden from His eyes, *Hebrews 4:13*, “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” May this be an encouragement above all else!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, in Christ You see us as saints, just as You saw Abraham.

Thursday 27th August

THE INTERCESSORS HAT Part 1

Then the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" *Genesis 18:17 NIV*

This is a precious point in Abraham's relationship with the Lord. Because of who he is, how he has conducted himself and the future he is to enjoy, the Lord is determined to share His heart with Abraham. Imagine being in a position of closeness to the Lord that motivated Him to share His heart with you. No doubt this is among the many passages that prompted the Jews to refer to Abraham as "the friend of God.", *James 2:23; Isaiah 41:8*. What is so wonderful is the Lord wants to have that same kind of relationship with each one of us! When we are in a position of closeness to Him, He will share His heart and His will with us. Let us never feel that this kind of relationship is only for the super saints! Be reminded of *James 4:8*, "Come near to God and he will come near to you." As we seek to get closer to Him, He responds by moving closer to us. The message that the Lord had shared with Abraham was a difficult message to hear. It had been revealed to him that his relatives, Lot and his family, were in danger of death and destruction. To many, Sodom must have been viewed as a showplace and a success story. They probably bragged about how it had been rebuilt after the great war of *Genesis 14*. Abraham knew different. He knew the city was slated for destruction. Our world thinks awfully highly of itself. It too is slated for destruction! May we learn to pray like Abraham did. Interceding for others!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, may we be like Abraham, interceding in prayer for others.

Friday 28th August

THE INTERCESSORS HAT Part 2

“The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord.” *Genesis 18:22 NIV*

Abraham stood before the Lord and when the angels departed, he drew near to the Lord. We, too, can approach Him and draw as near to our heavenly Father. Listen to His invitation to us, “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (*Hebrews 4:16*). Abraham’s prayer to the Lord arises out of several burdens he carries because of the revelation he has just received. First, he is concerned about the Lord’s reputation. If the Lord simply destroys the people of Sodom out of hand, Abraham is concerned that people will get the wrong impression of Him and of His love for sinners. Secondly, he is thinking about Lot and his family, who live in Sodom. He wants to see them spared, at the very least. He begins to talk to the Lord about the situation and gets the Lord to agree to spare the city if just 10 righteous people can be found there. In Lot’s family, there was Lot, his wife, two unmarried daughters and at least two married daughters and their husbands. This was a total of at least eight people in that family. Although Abraham did not know it at the time, his prayer was answered! God did spare the righteous when He destroyed the wicked. Sometimes, our prayers seem to be very ineffective and weak, but only in eternity will we know the full impact of our personal ministry of prayer in the lives of others. Therefore, do not be discouraged, just pray and trust the Lord to bring it to pass!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, we will persevere in prayer and continue to trust You.

Saturday 29th August

OUR PRIVILEGES Part 1

Then the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”

Genesis 18:17 NIV

The Lord is about to bring His wrath to bear upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Before He does this, He takes the time to speak to Abraham about His plans. In this passage, we are permitted to see a glimpse of the special relationship that existed between Abraham and the Lord. From this glimpse at their relationship, we are also permitted to see a snapshot of the relationship that is possible for every godly person living today. Few of us grasp the intimate relationship that we possess with our Heavenly Father! Abraham looked upon the Lord with awe and reverence, and rightly so! *Verse 17* indicates that God looked upon Abraham as a friend. How does He see us? Probably with a desire for far more intimacy than we ourselves desire! Be reminded that, if you are saved, you are a child of God. His Spirit dwells within your heart. We are on intensely intimate terms with our Lord. He knows us, and His knowledge of us should cause us to gravitate toward honesty with Him. Is it not time we became transparent in our walk with the Lord? Regardless of what we try, we can never hide anything from the Lord! The Lord opened a dialogue with Abraham, giving Abraham the opportunity to become an intercessor for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. We have the privilege of being an intercessor for our family, friends and neighbours. The fact that we have unhindered, unfettered access into the presence of the Lord is a blessing without compare.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, what a blessing we have to come to Your Throne of grace in prayer.

Sunday 30th August

OUR PRIVILEGES Part 2

“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.”

Genesis 18:18 NIV

Abraham's privileges extended beyond his relationship with the Lord. All the world would be blessed because of this man. What a privilege to be used by the Lord to touch those around us. What a privilege to be used to impact the lives of those yet unborn! Yet, that is how the Lord used Abraham and that is how He intends to use each of us to influence the lives around us! It is the grace of our Lord that allows us to be involved in the lives of others. *Genesis 18:19* speaks of Abraham “directing,” (NIV) his children. We have the great privilege of directing others to follow the commands of the Word of God. We have the privilege of passing on Truth through our words! This speaks of our personal witness. As we pass through this world, we should leave behind a trail of heavenly counsel for others to follow. Let us be quick to share the message of the cross and the word of God with a lost world. We only pass this way once, let's make sure we leave a mark for the Lord as we do! It isn't just our words that are important, it is also our walk that matters greatly! We have been given the privilege of walking in integrity. People are watching, let's be sure they see the right thing! One of the greatest privileges of life is that of being able to walk like Him. What we do and say will not die when we die! Our involvement with those around us will continue to bear fruit long after we have departed this world.

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord may our walk and talk be filled with integrity as we live like You.

Monday 31st August

OUR PRIVILEGES Part 3

“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.”

Genesis 18:18 NIV

Abraham didn't realize it yet, but his investment in the generations unborn are going to make the Lord's promises to him a reality. As Abraham understood and walked in his privileges as a godly man, his future was far more glorious than his past. His investment continues to pay dividends today and will continue to do so forever! In fact, we enjoy the fruit of Abraham's investment every day we live on this earth! The Lord is as good as His Word! When we see the investment of our lives as a privilege before the Lord and we exercise that privilege in faith, and we can rest easy knowing the Lord will honour His promises to us! When we share His Word, remember that He has promised to honour that Word. (*Isaiah 55:11*). When we sow the Gospel seed, know that He will water it and give the increase in His time. Let us not be afraid to live full tilt for Jesus, knowing that He will honour our sacrifice and that He will keep His promises to us, as He did with Abraham. Abraham was watched over by One Who is always there! What a privilege to exist in the presence of One Who will never leave us. What an honour to dwell with One Who knows us intimately yet loves us still and Who refuses to leave us! We serve the Lord Who is able to do everything He has promised and more! It is a privilege to serve our Lord Who is so powerful and so mighty. We serve our Lord Who not only proposes, but He also disposes!

PRAYER THOUGHT

Lord, what a privilege to serve You, the One Who keeps His Word.



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Your July 2026 Bible Readings

(As supplied by and with grateful acknowledgement to the I.B.R.A)

PARABLES (Old & New Testament)

Wednesday	1	Luke 15:1-10
Thursday	2	Luke 12:35-48
Friday	3	Luke 18:1-8
Saturday	4	John 10:1-21

READINGS IN ROMANS (2)

1 Dead to sin, alive through Christ

Sunday	5	Romans 4:13-25
Monday	6	Romans 5:1-11
Tuesday	7	Romans 5:12-21
Wednesday	8	Romans 6:1-14
Thursday	9	Romans 6:15-23
Friday	10	Romans 7:1-13
Saturday	11	Romans 7:14-25

2 Fruits of God's Spirit

Sunday	12	Romans 8:1-17
Monday	13	Romans 8:18-30
Tuesday	14	Romans 8:31-39
Wednesday	15	Romans 9:1-18
Thursday	16	Romans 9:19-33
Friday	17	Romans 10:1-13
Saturday	18	Romans 10:14-21

MENTAL HEALTH AND FAITH

Sunday	19	Psalms 42:1-11
Monday	20	Ecclesiastes 1:2-18
Tuesday	21	Job 3:1-24
Wednesday	22	Luke 8:1-3
Thursday	23	Mark 5:1-20
Friday	24	1 Samuel 16:14-23
Saturday	25	Jonah 2:1-6

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (4)

1 The authority of Jesus

Sunday	26	Matthew 13:53-58
Monday	27	Matthew 14:1-12
Tuesday	28	Matthew 14:13-21
Wednesday	29	Matthew 14:22-36
Thursday	30	Matthew 15:1-20
Friday	31	Matthew 15:21-39

Your August 2026 Bible Readings

(As supplied by and with grateful acknowledgement to the I.B.R.A)

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (4)

1 The authority of Jesus

Saturday 1 Matthew 16:1-20

2 Understanding what is important

Sunday 2 Matthew 17:1-13
 Monday 3 Matthew 17:14-23
 Tuesday 4 Matthew 17:24-27
 Wednesday 5 Matthew 18:1-14
 Thursday 6 Matthew 18:15-35
 Friday 7 Matthew 19:1-12
 Saturday 8 Matthew 19:13-30

SEASONS OF LIFE

1 Nurture

Sunday 9 Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
 Monday 10 Hosea 11:1-11
 Tuesday 11 1 Samuel 3:1-21
 Wednesday 12 Jeremiah 1:4-10
 Thursday 13 Daniel 1:1-27
 Friday 14 1 Samuel 1:9-20
 Saturday 15 Exodus 18:9-27

2 Maturity

Sunday 16 1 Timothy 4:7b-16
 Monday 17 Ephesians 4:11-16
 Tuesday 18 Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:7
 Wednesday 19 1 Peter 5:1-11
 Thursday 20 Luke 2:36-40
 Friday 21 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
 Saturday 22 Revelation 21:1-5a

WISDOM

Sunday 23 Psalm 119:33-40
 Monday 24 Ecclesiastes 7:1-14
 Tuesday 25 Proverbs 8
 Wednesday 26 2 Chronicles 1:7-12
 Thursday 27 Job 28:20-28
 Friday 28 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
 Saturday 29 James 3:13-18

READINGS IN ISAIAH Chapters 1-39 (2)

1 Provision from God

Sunday 30 Isaiah 25:1-12
 Monday 31 Isaiah 26:1-13

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ABBREVIATIONS

GNB	–	Good News Bible
NIV	–	New International Version
NLT	–	New Living Translation
NKJV	–	New King James Version
RSV	–	Revised Standard Version

I love You,
O Lord,
my strength.

Psalm 18:1

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