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December Memory Verse, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Commentary on Genesis Chapters 12 and 13 by Chuck Smith 12.18.24

Chapter 12

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy family ([Gen 12:1](#)),

So Abraham really wasn't totally obedient at this point. And this to me is interesting, because Abraham is always held as the model of faith in the New Testament, the model of a man who believed and trusted God. He's the prime example of the man who believes. And so many times when we read about faith and the exploits of faith, we think, "But I'm so weak and I've blown it so many times, surely I can't do it". It's good to know that Abraham wasn't perfect nor was his faith perfect. It's good to know that you don't have to be perfect and your faith doesn't have to be perfect for God to honor you.

So God said, "Get away from your family". He took his dad with him from the Ur of the Chaldees to Haran. That was an incomplete obedience. Stopping at Haran was incomplete obedience to God. So even men noted as men of faith have their moments. And just because you slipped back and have your moments doesn't mean that God won't honor you and honor your faith, or that God doesn't love you and wants to still work in a powerful way in your life, just because you blow it and you stop at Haran. It doesn't mean that the call of God is going to be removed and there's no chance for you to go on and fulfill that which God has laid upon your life and your heart to do.

Many people have stopped at Haran, but the time came for him to move on, which he did. Maybe the time has come for you to move on from your Haran. "The Lord said, Get thee out of thy country, from thy father's family."

from your father's house, to a land that I will show you (Gen 12:1):

So by the very virtue of the fact that Terah went with him, it could be the old man was saying, "Oh no, don't leave. I want to go with you, son". Or it could be Abraham was saying, "Okay, dad, all right", you know. And he could have been weak in this area. But then his dad began to drag him down and slow him down, until his father died spiritually following after the pagan practices, and Abraham moved on.

I will make of thee [God said] a great nation (Gen 12:2),

Now God is establishing covenant with Abraham. "Get away from your family, your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I'll make you a great nation".

I will bless you, I will make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing (Gen 12:2):

All of these promises God fulfilled to Abraham. He made of him a great nation. God has blessed him and made the name of Abraham great. It's honored and respected. "And thou shalt be a blessing."

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen 12:3).

And from that is the promise that the Messiah would come from Abraham. "In thee all the families of the earth." Not just the Jews but all the families of the earth will be blessed from Abraham's progeny, even Jesus Christ.

So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go to the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came (Gen 12:4-5).

Four hundred-mile journey, which in those days, with all of the animals and everything else, must have taken quite a long time indeed.

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanites [or the descendants of Canaan] were then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there he built an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him (Gen 12:6-7).

Now the promise of giving the land to Abraham's seed at this point would also include the Palestinians, because the Arabs also were descendants of Abraham through Ishmael. So at this point, the land is promised not just to the Jews but also to thy seed, which would include the Arabs, Palestinians. But later on, when God repeats it to Jacob, it excludes the Arabs.

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai [or Ai] on the east (Gen 12:8):

Now when Joshua came in later to conquer the land, he came up from Jericho and conquered Ai and then onto Bethel. Abraham now has a favorite spot there near Bethel in between Bethel and Ai. It's the highest part of the land in that particular area. It gives you just a fabulous view. It's about ten miles north of Jerusalem and about twenty miles or so from Shechem. But from there you can see down into the Jordan valley, you can see up towards the area of Samaria, you can see Jerusalem and the area south. You can look over towards the Mediterranean. It just is a beautiful vantage-point in that mountainous area between Bethel and Ai. And when Abraham came to this area, he built an altar. "And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed I give this land."

he built an altar unto the LORD, and called on the name of the LORD. And Abram journeyed, going on down now to the south. And there was a famine in the land: so Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land (Gen 12:8-10).

So there was a drought and he went on south towards Beersheba. There is always a drought down there. The place is really dry. It's 'deserty'.

And it came to pass, when he was come near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife (Gen 12:11),

Now here's our great man of faith, our example.

Behold now, I know that you are a beautiful woman to look upon (Gen 12:11):

Hey, that's saying a lot to your wife when she's sixty-five years old. But because of the longevity, at sixty-five you were still really, you know, in your prime of youth in a sense of beauty. Abraham lived to be over one hundred and sixty. So at sixty-five you're really not that old yet in those times. But it does, you know, when you think of sixty-five years old and talking about her great beauty, it does sound to be very interesting. "I know that you are a beautiful woman to look upon."

Therefore when it comes to pass, when the Egyptians will see you, they will say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, and keep you alive (Gen 12:12).

They'll take you into their harem. Now this was a common practice among the Egyptian kings is to just, if he saw a beautiful woman, he'd kill her husband and take her as his wife. And so he said,

I pray that you'll tell them that you are my sister: that it might be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee (Gen 12:13).

Hey, this is our great man of faith, Abraham. You see, even great men of faith have their weaknesses and their moments. Now that encourages me for some silly reason because I also have my moments of weaknesses. But I have the concept that when I get weak, God just says, "All right, that's it. You had your chance". You know, wipe out, but not so. God continued to honor Abraham. God continued to bless Abraham. He wasn't perfect.

God doesn't use perfect people because they don't exist. So don't worry that you're not perfect. Don't think that God is going to reject you because you're not perfect. Don't think that God can't use you because you're not perfect. God blessed Abraham. God used Abraham though he had his lapses of faith, just like we have our lapses of faith.

So it came to pass, that, when Abram was come to Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very beautiful. And the princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and they commended her before the Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into the Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram [or he treated Abraham] well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and asses, and menservants, maidservants, she asses, camels. And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. And the Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, She is my sister? I might have taken her to be my wife: now behold your wife, take her, go your way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had (Gen 12:14-20).

So he came under then a special protective edict of the Pharaoh so that he would not fall prey to the men in order that they might take Sarai his wife.

So an introduction now to Abraham. We're beginning now to follow and we will from now on follow Abraham as we come on down towards Christ, as the Bible now is developing the nation of Isreal and from that nation will come forth of the Savior of the world.

Chapter 13

In chapter twelve, we find that Abraham had gone down into Egypt because of the famine. And there as the result of a lack of faith and trust in God to take care of him, he had Sarai pass herself off as his sister. But God brought a plague upon the

Egyptians because the Pharaoh had taken her into his harem and he rebuked Abraham for the deception and ordered his men to allow Abraham to travel freely. And so now Abraham is returning from Egypt in chapter thirteen.

He went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south (Gen 13:1).

That would be into the south part of the land of Canaan into the area of Beersheba, Kadesh, Barnea, Hebron there in the southern part.

And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold (Gen 13:2).

So God had blessed Abraham in a material way, "rich in cattle, silver, gold."

And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai (Gen 13:3);

So when Abraham first came into the land, his first stop was at Shechem, and then he came back towards the Jordan River at a high point. This is the highest point in the Jerusalem range of mountains, which begins actually in the area of Samaria and goes almost to Beersheba. Just before you get to Beersheba, the Jerusalem mountains sort of fade out. But this is the highest point and there is this mountain between the city of Bethel and Hai, the mountain in which he had just a tremendous view of the entire land. Abraham, when he first came there, was able to see the entire land, and there he built an altar unto the Lord and worshipped the Lord, and now he returned again to this spot of Bethel.

The place is actually sort of a significant place. It was near Bethel there that Jacob was fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, and he used a pillow of a rock, and he had a dream and the awareness of the presence of God. And there God made the covenant with Jacob, and said, "I am going to be with you whithersoever you go. I'm going to bless you. I'm going to prosper you and I'm going to bring you back into this land". And Jacob sort of made his deal with God and said, "If You'll be with me, if You'll bless me and prosper me, I'll give you a tenth of everything I get".

And so Jacob made his deal with God and he left from the place of Bethel. Later on in Jacob's career, God said to him, "I am the God of Bethel" (Genesis 31:13). And the Lord commanded him to return to Bethel. It was at Bethel that Jacob first became conscious of God, and God then challenged him to return to that place, really, of your first consciousness; more or less as Jesus called upon the church of Ephesus to return to their first love, that place where you first met God or you first became conscious of God.

And it seems that God seeks to call us back to that place of our beginning, the beginning of our faith, the beginning of our devotion, the beginning of that

excitement of knowing God and walking with God. Sometimes we begin to take things for granted. Our Christian experience begins to sort of just become a prosaic kind of a thing. I just, you know, go along with it and I lose the excitement.

God said to Israel at one time where is the excitement of the espousal? You know, when I first called you out and upon all the people with holiness unto the Lord. In other words, the consciousness of the people was a God-consciousness. They were so aware of the presence of God and they were so excited in the things of God. And God is saying, where is the excitement of that espousal when I first drew you out of Egypt and all of you were aware and conscious of Me?

And we see movements of God's spirit such as we are experiencing here. And it's so exciting just the work of the Lord and the excitement of everyone just being, you know, turned on for Jesus and just, you know, we realize His presence, His power. We see His work. And there is that beauty of the excitement of God's work in our midst. It's always a sad and tragic day when that excitement begins to wane a bit and we begin to take for granted those things that at one time were so special and important and exciting to us. God help us that we will never take for granted His goodness, His grace and the blessings that we've experienced. I pray that that excitement shall never diminish. But each day we'll be excited with the presence of God and with the work and the power of His Spirit within our lives. That we'll never lose that just overawed kind of an experience that God is working in our midst. God is demonstrating His love and His power. That we'll always have that fresh relationship with Jesus Christ.

And so Abraham returned to Bethel, the place where he had built an altar and offered a sacrifice unto God and God had first promised to him the whole land that was before him.

And Lot also, which went with Abram, had his flocks, and his herds, and his tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for the substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there developed a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled in the land (Gen 13:5-7).

And so here there began to be a division between Lot and Abraham. Lot was Abraham's nephew but Lot's father Haran died very early. And Lot was left as an orphan. And so Abraham more or less adopted, inasmuch as he did not have any children of his own up to this point. He had more or less adopted Lot and raised Lot. So Lot was really like a son to Abraham and journeyed with him. But now they had both become very prosperous, the hand of the Lord's blessing upon their lives.

And you remember Abraham had about three hundred menservants that he could arm for battle, gives you a size idea of the size of the multitude that was going with Abraham and Lot was probably just about in the equal position. And so because the

land just wasn't big enough to-for all of them to graze their cattle and sheep together, and strife began to rise up between the servants of Lot and the servants of Abraham.

Abraham called Lot.

And he said unto him, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: and if you will take the left hand, I will go to the right; if you'll depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, it was even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest to Zoar (Gen 13:8-10).

So at that time, of course, it was not too long after the flood. The great African rift was probably somehow related to the flood. As we mentioned, there was a whole change in the geographical surface of the earth at the time of the flood. And in the beginning, the Dead Sea was formed actually, because there was no outlet for the Jordan River. And in the beginning there would not have been the high salt content which has been leached out of the soil through the years. And because there is no outlet for the Dead Sea, all of the mineral salt content has just continued to build up over the millennia so that today, of course, it is not possible that anything can live in the Dead Sea. But at that time, there was probably not the high concentration of salts that we have today. And before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, it was all well watered and it was a place of really lush vegetation.

Of course, you're in a deep depression, twelve hundred feet below sea level, almost thirteen hundred feet below sea level there at the surface of the Dead Sea and the weather is tropical-type weather; gets very hot in the summertime and stays quite mild in the wintertime. Usually in the wintertime it's in the seventies, high seventies, low eighties, can get up into the nineties even during the wintertime down there. And so it's great for growing tropical kind of foods-papaya, mango, and of the tropical types of foods. And of course, all kinds of vegetation, citrus fruits and so forth grow very profusely down there around Jericho today, where they have a good water supply, fresh water supply.

So it is interesting because you're in such a deep rift, so low that there are springs that just come out of the mountains and flow then on into the valley. And before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, much more it was like the garden of the Lord. It was like the Garden of Eden. So Lot looked down at that lush tropical area and he chose to move down in that direction.

And Lot chose all of the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves one from the other. And Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot

dwelled in the cities of the plain, and he pitched his tent toward Sodom (Gen 13:11-12).

This was, you might say, sort of the beginning of the backsliding of Lot. First of all, his choice was a fleshly choice. He really didn't consider Abraham and Abraham's needs. But looking to himself first, he chose the plain of Jordan and then he pitched his tent toward Sodom. And next time we find him, he is sitting in the gates of Sodom, or actually he's living in Sodom because he's captured as he lives in Sodom. So the beginning, pitching toward Sodom, attracted somehow by this wicked city.

But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly (Gen 13:13).

It's a very wicked place and yet Lot seemed to be somehow attracted by it. There does seem to be a certain type of an attraction to sin. Satan does make it look very attracting. "There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). You want to look down the road and find out where it leads to. Sin can be very exciting. Sin can be very thrilling. It would be wrong to say that it isn't. It can be very pleasurable, but it eventuates in death. The wise man will look down and see where is the road leading. It might be a fun road to travel. It might be filled with allurements, excitement, but where is the path leading me?

Lot was attracted. He pitched his tent toward Sodom; this exceedingly wicked and sinful city even before Lot ever got there. "And Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, he pitched his tent."

And then the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him (Gen 13:14),

It was probably a difficult experience. Lot had become like a son to Abraham. He was close. He loved him and parting is never an easy experience. You see Lot taking off, and it's always harder to be the one that's left. It's always easier, I think, to go than to be the one that's left behind. And to see them going always gives you sort of an empty, sinking feeling as they sort of disappear over the hill, you know. And I can imagine for Abraham it was hard, they been traveling together now, for probably something like fifty years they've been together, close. And now, he sees Lot taking off and there has to be an ache in the heart, a lump in the throat. And so the LORD comes to comfort Abraham. "And the LORD said unto Abraham after that Lot was departed from him."

Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, southward, eastward, westward: For all the land which you see, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever (Gen 13:14-15).

God's promise to Abraham; from the area there at between Bethel and Hai, this mountain peak, looking towards the north you see the area of Samaria. You can look clear on up and see Mount Hermon on a clear day. And he wasn't bothered with smog in those days. Looking towards the east, you see the mountains of Moab. Looking towards the south, you see the area of Jerusalem, the southern ranges of Jerusalem, mountains clear on down to the area of Beersheba. Looking towards the west you see the Sharon plains and the Mediterranean. And so God said just look to the north, the south, the east, the west. Just as far as you can see, Abraham, I'm going to give you this land to you and to your seed. And God was going to give it to him forever.

And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered (Gen 13:16).

Now God promised, Hey, I'm going to multiply your seed like the dust of the earth. Now later on, we will get to it this evening a little later on. God said to Abraham in chapter fifteen, "Look up into the heavens and I am going to make your seed like the stars of the sky innumerable" (Genesis 15:5). Hey, that's an interesting, interesting thing because modern science in that day thought that there were six thousand one hundred and twenty-six stars. They didn't think they were innumerable. Many of the ancient people had counted the stars. And up until the time of Galileo, we didn't realize that there were so many stars out there in the universe.

But now, they estimate the number of stars to be just so vast that you really can't count them all. There are billions of galaxies like our Milky Way galaxy, and there are billions of stars in our Milky Way galaxy. Someone has estimated that there might be as many as ten to the twenty-fifth power stars. But it's also interesting they've estimated that if you would take the amount of sand in a cubic inch, and take the volume of the earth, there's probably ten to the twenty-fifth grains of sand that make up the earth.

So when God's saying I'm going to make your seed as the sands of the sea or as the dust of the earth, and then as the stars of heaven, they're probably sort of an equal number here. But the interesting thing is God said the whole idea is that they'll be innumerable. You won't be able to count them.

Now God's promise was that you can't count them and David's sin was what? He tried to count them. He took a census. God didn't want a census taken of His people because God's promise is they're going to be innumerable as the sands of the sea. You're not going to be able to count them. David's sin was in taking a census and counting the people and it brought God's judgment against Israel because of David's sin in counting the people. So since then, they didn't take census in Israel, but everyone had to put a shekel into the temple treasury and then they'd count the shekels.

But the Orthodox Jew to the present day will not count off in a group. If you're in a group and you're playing party games, you've got a number in the group; an Orthodox Jew will not be numbered. And so they'll say, "You're not one, not two, not three, not four, not five". You can always figure out ways to get around things, you know. So we're not really not numbering because you're not one and you're not two. But the promise of God is the dust of the earth cannot be counted or numbered, so the descendants that I am going to give unto thee.

Now the Lord said

Arise, and walk through the land through the length and the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD (Gen 13:17-18).

So Abraham moved from the place about twenty miles north of Jerusalem or twelve, fifteen miles north of Jerusalem actually to a place approximately twenty-two miles south of Jerusalem, still on the Jerusalem hills or the mountains of Jerusalem they call them, down now south of the valley of Eshcol. Now Eshcol was a place with a beautiful stream and well-watered and the grapes in the area of Eshcol were just phenomenal. They still are today. Some of the most delicious grapes ever had in our life came from the valley of Eshcol and right near of course is adjacent to the area of Hebron.

When Joshua and Caleb came spying out the land some four hundred years later in order to prove to the people that the land was a very fertile land, they picked a cluster of grapes that was so big that they had to carry it in a staff between them. And they took back this huge cluster of grapes to show the people, hey, this land is really fertile. This is great.

So Abraham moved south, plains of Mamre which are near Hebron some twenty miles or so south from Jerusalem.