

## **The Trial of Your Faith**

### **Genesis 16:1-6**

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. 3 Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me." 6 So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NKJV) 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

God is still alive today and through Jesus Christ is calling out a people for His Own Name. And yet those people are often persecuted for their faith. I have been reading this week of believers especially in Moslem countries who face persecution and death for their faith.

I also was reading of fellow believers that live in such poverty that we cannot even imagine what they have to deal with on a daily basis. Why do we have all these problems?

Can't God make the lives of His children easier? Since I have been here, I have seen several who have faced cancer, heart problems. Some just lived long enough to wear their bodies out. And many of them suffered. Some when from relatively good health to death in a matter of days or weeks. Some had to suffer for more than a year. My own mother was on a ventilator for over a year.

None of us like to suffer. But there are other types of suffering. For some it is more emotionally. They are having problems in marriage or with children. Sometimes the burden of finances come upon us and we just want it to stop.

And where do we find help? Some think the medical establishment is their answer. Others seek out attorneys to remedy wrongs suffered. Others look for a counselor or therapist.

Now these have their uses, but none can bring an answer that lasts. Nothing seems to satisfy forever. And most of us have found that one trial is just followed by another.

- I. Abraham's faith was often tried.
  - A. Once Abraham moved from Haran he never had a real place to call home.
    - 1. He was a pilgrim and a sojourner in a land that belonged to others.
  - B. A famine in the land of promise drives him to Egypt to survive.
  - C. His only close relative, Lot
    - 1. Quarrels with the servants of Abraham over available grazing.
    - 2. Makes choices that lead to his downfall and final ruin.
  - D. He lived in a pagan world with his faith in an invisible God.
  - E. He was given many promises and yet never lived to see most of them fulfilled.
    - 1. For year after year Abraham never had a child.
    - 2. While there were scores children born among Abraham's servants but none to him.
    - 3. Imagine the pain of Abraham and Sarah, after they had told everyone of God's promise and yet they seem to be the only ones who cannot have children.
  - F. His wife compounds the "no heir" problem by bringing her handmaid into the story.
    - 1. After the birth of Ishmael, Hagar begins to despise Sarah.
    - 2. First Sarah mistreats Hagar and she flees with the child.
    - 3. Later, after Isaac is born, Sarah asks Abraham to kick Hagar and Abraham's other son Ishmael and drive them into the wilderness.
  - G. Then when Isaac is a teenager God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son.
- II. God's people often have their faith tried.
  - A. All throughout the Bible we see the trials of God's people.
    - 1. Adam and Eve had to deal with the murder of a son by another son.
    - 2. Noah spent 120 years building the ark while the unbelieving world looked on.
    - 3. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all lived as strangers in the land of promise never having possessed the promises.
      - a. Hebrews 11:13-16 (NKJV) 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and

pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

4. Joseph was betrayed and almost killed by his 10 older brothers.
5. Moses was rejected by the people even though he had received a divine call.
6. David was pursued by a relentless Saul.
7. All of the prophets were rejected by the people, some even being put to death.
  - a. Hebrews 11:35-40 (NKJV) 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

### III. How did Abraham face these trials.

- A. With faith and patience.
  1. Hebrews 6:13-15 (NKJV) 13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.
- B. Paul commends the church at Thessalonica for their faith and patience.
  1. 2 Th 1:3-4 3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,
- C. James ties faith and patience together in the face of trials.

1. Jas 1:2–4 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing
  2. James 5:10-11 (NKJV) 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.
- D. John the beloved also faced trials in his later years.
1. Revelation 1:9 (NKJV) 9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- E. The Psalmist calls on us to wait on the Lord.
1. Psalm 37:7-9 (NKJV) 7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret--it only causes harm. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth.