

Bible Studies for Life: October 24

Confidence in the Face of Fear • Genesis 12:10-13, 17-13:4

By Laura Lee Leathers



Leathers

Someone said there are 365 “Fear Nots” in the Bible. Lloyd John Ogilvie (1930-2013), the Presbyterian Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, said there are 366 because of Leap Year (Facing the Future without Fear).

However, if you look in a Bible concordance, usually there is not a heading for “Fear Not.” Instead, you might find the word, “fear,” and then a list of verses and there will be “fear of the Lord,” or “love casts out fear,” etc. The Bible has a lot to say about fear. It is one of the most repeated commands, and it is the cause of much anxiety.

Here’s another thought: “F-E-A-R has two meanings: ‘Forget Everything and Run,’ or ‘Face Everything and Rise,’” (Zig Ziglar). After you study today’s lesson, which meaning would you apply to Abraham?

Trust God despite fear of circumstances (Genesis 12:10-13). Abraham and his family have now settled between Bethel and Ai, the hill country, built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord. Then he and his group continued their journey toward Negeb.

Now comes the test of circumstances: a famine in the land and more. What does Abraham decide? First, note he doesn't built another altar or call upon the name of the Lord.

Look at the progression of his decisions: "He went down to Egypt (v. 10), about to enter Egypt (v. 12), and then entered Egypt (14)."

"In the Bible Egypt is a symbol of the world system and its bondage, while the land of Israel is a picture of the inheritance of blessing God has for you. It means doubting God's promises and running to the world for help. (Be Obedient, Genesis 12-25: Learning the Secret of Living by Faith by Warren W. Wiersbe).

Out of fear, Abraham devises a plan to protect himself being killed by Pharaoh. He tells Sarah to say she is his sister so that it will go well for him – a half-truth. She was his half-sister (cf. 20:13), but it is a lie. Sarah was very beautiful and Pharaoh did bring her into his house. "And for her sake he dealt well with Abraham (v.16)."

Do we see Abraham trusting God in these tough situations? It doesn't appear so, but more importantly Abraham's choices did not change God's covenant promise. However, it would require Him to intervene to protect Sarah and expose the lie.

Our fear can affect others (Genesis 12:17-20). Wiersbe calls this the test of people. Have you ever noticed that when you are afraid, your fear can grip the heart and emotions of another individual? What were Sarah's fears? Scripture does not relay this information, nor do we know the time frame in which all of this was occurring.

Now it was time for the Lord to intervene and He did so by afflicting Pharaoh and his house with great plagues (v. 17). Where have we read about a Pharaoh and great plagues before? Then notice the three questions Pharaoh asks Abraham in vv. 18-19: What? Why? Why?

We don't have Abraham's answer; perhaps he simply confessed, "I was afraid." Pharaoh had his men send Abraham, his wife, and all that he had away.

Return to confident trust and worship of God (Genesis 13:1-4).

Abraham went up from Egypt and returned to the Negeb with Sarah, Lot, and all that he had. He is now rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

Then in verse three, Abraham went "to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai." He returned to the altar (12:8), "And there Abraham called upon the name of the Lord." He has returned, adding more insight about walking in confidence.

"It has been said that true courage is not the absence of fear, but a willingness to act even in the face of fear. The world can be a very dangerous place at times because of sin; however, God also calls us to live out our lives in this world. This requires faith in God, that He will be with us and enable us to endure and overcome whatever circumstances we may encounter" (LifeWay).

Everyone deals with fear! This is our confidence: "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10 ESV).

Abraham did face everything and arose!

Leathers is a member of First Church, Lexington. She may be contacted at laura.l.leathers@gmail.com.