

• *Challenges to faith*

Abraham falls into a false position

1. *Fear*

The life of faith is a life full of challenges. Almost as soon as he got to the land, he left it! Faith gets attacked. Sarah was barren ^{☐1}; the land of Canaan is occupied ^{☐2}. Now there comes another challenge. He had not been long in Canaan when the land was troubled by famine ^{☐3}. When God calls us to a certain area of life, we must not be surprised if pressure comes which tends to move us out of what has been revealed as God's will. Abram had been called in this direction but suddenly it seems that Canaan is not a good place in which to stay.

☐1 11:20
☐2 12:6
☐3 12:10

1. **Abram falls into fear.** He faced a serious lack of food ^{☐1}. What should we do if we lack vital provisions for ordinary health and livelihood? Abram was doing God's will, and was doing God's work, but suddenly there is a severe shortage of food.

☐1 12:10

He could stand firm and simply trust God. Or he could take practical steps to provide for himself, but if he is not careful this might open up the possibility of his stepping out of what God wants for him. This is in fact what happens. He steps out of God's will for his life. God had not called him to Egypt but to Canaan, and Abram had only just arrived in Canaan. But he is afraid.

2. *Premature action*

2. **Abram acts prematurely.** He has not had much experience in Canaan yet, and is still young in this kind of life. In alarm he feels he must do something, and it seems that he will have to go to Egypt where there is likely to be more food. But it is premature.

3. *Deceit*

3. **Abram falls into deceit.** Sarai was beautiful ^{☐1}. Egyptians, politicians and kings liked to have plenty of women in a 'harem' – a household of wives, and Abram fears he might be killed ^{☐2}. It is strange that he has boldly travelled to Canaan in the faith that he will be made into a great nation, but now he does not think he will be alive for more than a few weeks! Yet it is not so strange, since all Christians find it easier to trust in God for their eternal salvation than to keep trusting God when something alarming happens at this very moment!

☐1 12:11
☐2 12:12

• *A half truth*

• *Deceit*

• *Blind spot*

He suggests she should pretend to be only his sister ^{☐1}. It is half true, since Abram and Sarai had the same father but different mothers. Yet it is deceitful. It is also a case of self-centred and arrogant male supremacy – as was the universal norm in the ancient world. 'Say you are my sister so that it may go well with me!', says Abram. He is risking Sarai's safety and purity but that does not seem to worry him. It was a blind spot in his life, and typical of the world in which Abram lived, which treated all women badly. It is seen also in his polygamy, his treatment (and Sarai's treatment!) of female servants. Even Abram the father of believers was immature at this point.

☐1 12:13

4. *The result – a false position*

4. **Abram ended up in a false position.** Sarai's beauty is noticed ^{☐1} and Abram has acted in a way that makes her more available to danger than if he had told the truth. She is taken into Pharaoh's house ^{☐2}, and is on the way to being added to the number of Pharaoh's concubines. Abram does rather well out of it ^{☐3} and does not seem to be worrying about Sarai.

☐1 12:14
☐2 12:15
☐3 12:16

But it is terrible to be in a false position. It is dreadful to be in a position where your conscience is not clear and you feel you are not really being honest. It is awful to be in a place where you do not belong and living in a way that you know is not really right for you, and where you are claiming something that is not true.

• *The cause– a lack of openness*

God is faithful – He rescues and restores Abraham

• *God's intervention – Pharaoh afflicted*

Abram got himself into a false position because he was not open about his relationship to Sarai and to God.

However **God is faithful**. God stepped in, and was loyal to Abram. God is steadfast even when His servants fall into bad mistakes. God unmasked Abram. Since Abram would not extricate himself from his false position, God stepped in and did it for him, but it involved Abram's being exposed and disgraced. Abram was thrown out!

Pharaoh was afflicted with problems and reckoned his trouble was connected with Abram. Soon the truth came out ^{☞1} and Abram was sent away ^{☞2}. There was nothing voluntary about it. Sometimes when we will not extricate ourselves from a compromising situation, God arranges to have us thrown out! God would prefer us to repent ourselves, but if we will not do so, He can arrange for us to be thrown out of a false situation somewhat violently. He does it for the sake of His purpose, because of His great determination to use us.

• *Return to Bethel*

Abram made his way back to the area of Bethel ^{☞1}. God had been good to him. He had not suffered as much as he might have done. God overruled in great mercy, and Abram and Sarai left Egypt unharmed.

• *Restoration*

After God had acted powerfully in this way Abram felt the need of forgiveness and restoration from God. So he went back to the place where he had sought God once before, and called on the name of Yahweh ^{☞1}. Soon God would speak to him again ^{☞2}.

• *It is better to stand firm when faith is challenged*

We all know what it is to panic in a crisis and go through a lapse of faith. When we are young in Jesus it is understandable, but God wants us to recognize crisis for what it is – a testing of faith. If we lapse God will stand by us but there will be disgrace and pain. Better to continue believing and stand firm when faith is challenged.

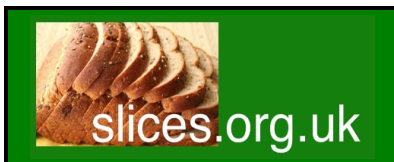
^{☞1} 12:17–19

^{☞2} 12:20

^{☞1} 13:1–4

^{☞1} 13:4

^{☞2} 13:14



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