

Fate to Promise

(Parallel: Abraham's Future is Ours Series – Part IV)

9/27/2009

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

NOTE: Until Gen. 17:5, Abraham has the name of Abram, but to simplify the discussion we will be using the name God gives him, Abraham.

1. Hindus believe that what we do in this life determines the fate of our next life as the endless cycle of reincarnation continues. They call it karma. While we don’t believe in reincarnation, how does our belief in fate affect how we live?

We believe that we have control over how everything works out in our lives. We blame ourselves when things don’t work out the way we expected even when we’ve done everything we could. We are constantly looking backwards with regret.

Note that in none of the above have we mentioned God. In addition, we have not mentioned the power of Satan to affect events in an attempt to discourage us.

2. Our lives are full of choices. Pastor Thad described three approaches to making the right choice. List them below and then discuss the likely outcome of following that pathway. Are any of them a good pathway for making the right choice?

a) Assume you don’t need to consult with God – we rely on our own abilities (and weaknesses) to get us through. That usually means we don’t give God a chance to show us the big picture to see how this decision affects other things in our lives. In addition, it usually leads to frustration, because we vastly overestimate our abilities to do things on our own strength.

b) Make choices and hope God will understand and bless them – in this case, we think briefly about God, but assume He’s too busy for our little problem, but that He will get around to making sure the actions we put in motion will end up with a good result. Again, we have no consulted God to see what He would want us to do within the grand scheme of things that He has in mind.

c) Try to make up for bad decisions in the past – we know that our current situation to some extent is dependent upon the quality of decisions we made in the past. We try to compensate and do better. Again, there is no mention of God or following God’s will. Thus, we are simply compounding our mistakes.

3. Abraham sometimes acted on his own (see Gen. 12:11-20). The result was often problems of great severity (Gen. 13:7-9). His decision to solve the problem on his own, then led to more problems (Gen. 14: 12-16). Does this cycle sound familiar to you?

Give the group a little time to work through these verses and get a grasp on the seriousness of what happened. Lot owed Abraham for taking him in and helping him get established, but the two could not get along well enough to live together, so they had to live separately. Lot took the best land, which turned out to be infested with bad people and it led to his being captured. Abraham then had to risk the lives of his own army to rescue Lot and his people. Everything was getting more and more complex. The same thing happens in our lives as we try to correct our own mistakes.

4. How does Gen. 15:1, 6 change everything?

God enters Abraham's life and promises to be his shield. By verse 6 he has put his faith in God and decided to let God make things right. No longer would he try to manipulate his own fate.

5. Read Romans 4:19-25 to see how Paul describes the significance of what Abraham did.

Abraham put his trust in God and stuck with it through all his difficulties. God was true to His word and Abraham's descendants were rewarded greatly.

6. Well, that's fine for Abraham and his direct descendants, but what about us? Do we have a similar promise? Read Galatians 3:26-28 and see how that might help answer the question.

We are considered sons and daughters of God if we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior. Thus, we are heirs of the rewards our father will give to all His children. It has nothing to do with being good enough to deserve it. We are there because we are part of the family of God.