

THE EFFECT OF GRACE

Gen 12:1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.

Gen 12:2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

Gen 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Gen 12:4 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram *was* seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Abram's relationship with God started out in grace, continued in grace, and ended in grace. God chose Abram to show what His grace would do in a man who would believe Him. God came and offered grace to Abram in order to reveal the effect of His grace. In the above verses God promised Abram seven things. All of these were **promises of grace**. There is no mention of any stipulations Abram had to fulfill in order to receive these blessings from God. God said **five** times in these verses, "**I WILL**". Grace is what God does for us! The number five in the Bible stands for grace. God established a covenant of grace with Abraham. Its only stipulation was to believe. Later another covenant was established with Abraham's natural race, the Jews. This covenant was altogether different. It was a conditional covenant based upon the **total obedience** of the people. On this condition only would God reveal His blessings to Israel. This covenant was the Law. The covenant of Law, like the covenant of grace with Abraham, produced an effect. It was the opposite effect! On the surface you would think that a covenant in which God blessed freely without personal merit would cause someone's life to deteriorate without Divine rules and punishment for conduct. On the same vein you would think that a system in which someone was put under Divine rules for conduct and a system of Divine punishment would cause someone's life to get holier and more acceptable to God. However, this is not the case. Let's look at the effect of God's grace.

Gen 12:1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.

God only gave Abram one direction starting off. He told him to leave his country, his family, and from his father's house. Abram obeyed the voice of God- **partially**. He did not fully obey God. He actually disobeyed God. He took Lot, his nephew, **AND** his father with him when he left!

Gen 12:4 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him.

Act 7:3 and said to him, 'GET OUT OF YOUR COUNTRY AND FROM YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME TO A LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'

Act 7:4 Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.

Gen 12:5 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.

Abram took Lot, and his dad, and they stopped at Haran and they put down roots there until Abram's dad died. Then God told him to come to Canaan. It is clear that Abram did not fully obey God, but he was not judged for this. God did not judge him for his sin of disobedience but rather blessed him and increased him while in Haran! Now this does not mean that Abram did not experience consequences from his actions. Lot became a Lot of trouble to him! **Being under the covenant of grace DOES NOT mean that there are no consequences from our sinful actions.** THERE IS! When we sow from the flesh, **FROM THE FLESH** we shall reap corruption. [Gal. 6:7] Notice this reaping is **NOT** from God, but natural consequences from our own sinful flesh and actions. It is interesting to note that when God first called King Saul, his first charge was to attack the Amalekites. He was told to kill everyone and every animal. However, Saul partially obeyed and kept the king alive and some of the animals. Because Saul did not fully obey God, he was judged and his kingdom was declared to be taken from him, even though he still was king for some years. [1 Samuel 15] Why was Saul judged for partial obedience and Abram was

not? It was because Abram was under a covenant of grace, and Saul was under the covenant of Law. If you give partial obedience to God's law you will be instantly judged and condemned! God did not treat Abram according to his performance. God gave blessings to Abram freely do to his faith and trust in God's blood covenant. Abram was a man of the altar. Wherever he went he built an altar and offered blood sacrifices. Abram's faith was in the blood of the Lamb. Galatians says that the gospel was preached to Abraham and he saw Jesus and was glad. [Gal. 3:8, John 8:56] God blessed Abram because of his faith, not because of his standard of behavior.

Gen 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine *was* severe in the land.

Gen 12:11 And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I know that you *are* a woman of beautiful countenance.

Gen 12:12 Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This *is* his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

Gen 12:13 Please say you *are* my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

Gen 12:14 So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she *was* very beautiful.

Gen 12:15 The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house.

Gen 12:16 He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

Gen 12:17 But the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

Gen 12:18 And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What *is* this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she *was* your wife?

Gen 12:19 Why did you say, 'She *is* my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way."

Gen 12:20 So Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

God told Abram to go to Canaan and dwell there but when he got there, there was a famine in the land. Instead of trusting God he went down to

Egypt instead. We often come up with a “better” plan than God! There he got into fear and talked his wife into saying she was just his sister. The Pharaoh saw her and took her when Abram told him she was his sister. **What a cad! What a jerk!** You think that God would have judged Abram for this! NO! Instead of judging Abram, he judged Pharaoh! Instead of being judged by God, Abram actually was blessed more than ever! He was given sheep, oxen, donkeys, servants, and camels. He left Egypt very rich! This was grace! Even though God blessed Abram by his grace, Abram had consequences for his actions. He not only got riches in Egypt, but he also got a servant girl Hagar who would prove to be a big headache later!

Gen 20:1 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar.

Gen 20:2 Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She *is* my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

Gen 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you *are* a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she *is* a man's wife."

Gen 20:14 Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave *them* to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him.

Later, Abraham was traveling in the land of Abimelech and he repeated his sin by lying to the king about his wife, calling her just his sister. Surely, now that he had sinned repeatedly the same sin, the Lord would now judge him for it! NO! Again, it was not Abraham that was judged, but the king who he had lied to! God told Abimelech that he was a dead man! Once Sarah was restored Abraham was given even more riches! Every time Abraham blew it God would in turn bless him. **God was not condoning Abraham's sin**, but He was showing to Abraham and all of us that His blessing comes on the basis of faith in the blood of the Lamb and upon His merits and not upon our own imperfect obedience. No person has ever given God unqualified, perfect, sustained obedience, except Jesus Christ. It is on the basis of the merits of Christ that we are blessed and not our own.

It is interesting to see that each time Abraham messed up and when God would bless him, that Abraham would return to the Lord and build an altar and worship God. God's goodness would lead him to repentance. **[Romans 2:4]** Each time God revealed his grace to Abraham, the more he

fell in love with the Lord. The more God revealed his unfailing covenant grace the more Abraham learned to trust in the Lord.

Not long after this last mistake with Abimelech we see that God gave Abraham his promised son, Isaac. God then came to Abraham and asked him to give the son He had given him back to Him in sacrifice. He was asked to sacrifice to God what was most dear to his heart. By this time, Abraham had learned to trust the Lord. He also loved the Lord more than anyone or anything else. It was the grace of God that had wrought this in his heart. He instantly obeyed the voice of God and went to sacrifice him to God. Of course, God had no interest in Abraham killing Isaac. He used this as a beautiful picture of what He would do with His own son on Calvary many centuries later. He also did this to test Abraham. He really was not testing Abraham, but was testing the work of grace that was wrought in his heart. **Grace has worked so greatly in Abraham that in the end of his life he was willing to sacrifice up the dearest thing on earth to him.** He was willing to give up the one that his soul was bound to. Grace empowered him to do this. This was the effect of grace.

What was the effect of the Law? What was the effect of a system of rules and rigid obedience in order to be blessed? We see that Moses was not off the mountain yet with the tablets of commandments when the people of Israel broke the very first commandment- Thou shalt not make any graven image or idol! They had made molten calves and worshipped them. Because of it they were instantly judged and 3000 people died that day! I wish I could say that the testimony of the Jews under the Law was that they served the Lord in holiness and that they grew in love for the Lord, but I can't. The opposite is the case. They became increasingly unholy, evil, prideful, and sinful. Towards the end of their history in the Promised Land they were actually sacrificing their children to demons! Notice that grace caused Abraham to be willing to give up his only child to God in obedience, but the Law produced people that were killing and sacrificing their children to demons! Grace taps you into the life and nature of God. The Law taps you into the life and nature of the flesh. One has the power to make you holy and live a God honoring life; the other will destroy you and leave you more and more ungodly.

Abraham grew in grace and therefore, grew in love and holiness. We mentioned King Saul earlier which was under the Law. His life got worse and worse. He ended up seeking out a medium to get answers to his problems! Living under a code of right and wrong and trying to merit God's blessings will actually lead you to a more sin-filled life! Trusting in the gift of

righteousness and receiving God's blessings based upon the merits of Jesus Christ will actually empower you to love God and live a God-honoring life through the power of the Holy Spirit. What are the effects you are experiencing in your life? This will reveal if you have been living under covenant of grace or of the Law. Let grace effect you!