Hope in uncertainty

Uncertainty is one of the most challenging of all human problems to have to contend with. It is a place of being somewhere in the middle. You have traveled too far from the start but not far enough to get to the destination. It is that deadly middle of uncertainty.

Have you ever been in a place of uncertainty?

Have you ever been in a place where it just seemed like your couldn’t get a firm foundation to stand on?

Have you ever been in a place where you weren’t certain how the next day was going to turn out?

Have you ever been in a place where you didn’t know where the next house payment was coming from?

Have you ever been in a place where hope had been crushed and faith had fled?

Have you ever been in a place where uncertainty had pushed you to a place of panic?

Uncertainty has a way of unnerving us almost to the point of paralysis. You won’t live very long until you come to understand that a lot of people live in places of uncertainty. The reality is that each and every single one of us has, may be experiencing right now and will face uncertainty, its just a part of life.

I believe this is where we find Abram. Abram is now stuck in the middle, he has traveled far with God ever since God revealed godself to Abram in Ur and then in his traveling the way of the fertile crescent to the land of Canaan. Abram even traveled to Egypt to escape famine in Canaan. And just recently in chapter fourteen he had seen God help him to rescue Lot who had been taken away.

But Abram still has a problem, yes he has followed God, and has worked to be faithful to God, but there is still something looming over his head, it is a weight that s heavier than any other, it is the proverbial elephant in the room. Abram still has no heir to carry his name. Abram and Sarai have not had a child .

So we see a person of faith, a person who has followed God full of stress and anxiety about what is going to become of his wealth after he dies. In the ancient near east and especially in ancient Israel Land was a family’s most important economic asset. It could be bought and sold, but inherited land was special. During that, if a family sold inherited land for its full price, ownership passed permanently into the hands of the buyer. If a family sold it for a lower price, due to economic hardship and the need to sell quickly, family members were generally allowed to redeem (repurchase) the land at the same or a similarly low price. It was important to give families the chance to keep their inheritance (see, for example, the story about Naomi’s land in Ruth 4).

It is difficult to paint a complete picture of family law in ancient Israel; the Hebrew Bible presents a variety of texts from different times that may be used to reconstruct this law, and it is uncertain whether the rules and concepts in these texts all functioned simultaneously. Several texts suggest that a man’s principal heirs were the sons born to him by his wife (or wives). Sons by other women (concubines, slaves, prostitutes) were not included (Judg 11:2). Daughters were provided a dowry in lieu of an inheritance share but could be granted possession of their father’s estate in the absence of sons. If they were, they were not allowed to marry outside their father’s clan or extended family (Num 27:5-11, Num 36:5-9), in order to keep all property within the clan. After daughters, according to Num 27:11, the next in line were the deceased’s brothers, followed by his paternal uncles, followed by “the nearest kinsman of his clan.

Therefore the problem for Abram is that as he states he has no offspring. He has no offspring, no boy or girl that can keep all he has accumulated in the family. Everything he had worked for, everything that he treasured would no longer be in his family name, and everything for a jewish man was in his family name and his land. Having an heir is so important that not even a trusted servant was good enough in Abrahams eyes to receive everything because it would have been as if his family were wiped off the face of the earth.

 A common custom in those days was for couples with no children to adopt a servant as an heir to take the place of a firstborn son. Eliezer of Damascus was likely the same “senior servant” in charge of all Abraham’s possessions who, many years later, was commissioned by Abraham to go and find a wife for his son, Isaac, from among Abraham’s own relatives in his native land (Genesis 24:1–9). Eliezer traveled some 450 miles, where he found Rebekah in the town of Nahor in Mesopotamia. By offering water to Abraham’s servant, Rebekah revealed that she was God’s chosen wife for Isaac. Eliezer gained permission and blessing from Rebekah’s brother Laban to present her to Isaac (verses 10–59). Then Rebekah returned with Eliezer and married Isaac (verses 60–67). This was someone who was trusted and honored amongst the servants and yet still Abram was stressed and insecure about not having a child to pass everything down to.

And God knows that Abram is troubled and so appears to Abram and tells Abram, do not be afraid for I am your shield; your reward shall be very great. Do not be afraid, I am your shield. Do not be afraid, I am your protection. Do not worry or be anxious, I have your back. Do not be afraid, I got this. Do not be afraid you are in my hands and my hands are in the fathers hands. Do not be afraid I am in control of everything. And God tells Abram that his provision will come in the form of an heir that comes from himself. And Abram believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

But how could he believe God? What has changed? What changed is now he has a promise from God. What has changed is that he was given Gods word that Eliezer from Damascus would not be the heir of his fortune, it would be his own son, and in that promise lies the hope.

The hope comes from the fact that God is faithful. The hope stems from the fact that when God says God is going to do something, God always comes through. God is not the person that says they will be there and repeatedly never shows up. God is not the person who promises one thing, and does another. Abram could look back over his life and see that Gods track record is like no one elses.

Therefore, when God makes the promise Abram can say to himself, I do not know how this is possible, I do not know how this is going to happen, I do not know what is going to change, but what I do know is that God has spoken, and when God speaks worlds have been created, and when Gods speaks mountains can move, when God speaks, god can make a way out of no way, and God has spoken and so shall it be.

And there is a word in here for all of us. Whatever it is that is going on in our lives, God is on our side. Whatever it is that is going on in our lives, God is our shield. Whatever it is that’s going on in our lives, we have someone in heaven who intercedes on our behalf. Whatever it is that going on in our lives, God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, we will make it to the other side. It might get muddy, it might get dirty, it might get hard, temptations might get strong, situations might rise up, satan might get in the way, uncertainty will be all around, but fear not for the Lord is our shield and with the Lord as our shield we will make it to the other side.

Just ask Daniel if he made it to the otherside, just ask shadrach meeshack and abendigo if they made it to the other side, just ask David if he made it to the other side, just ask Elijah if he made it to the other side, just ask abram if he made it to the other side. God always gets us to the other side of uncertainty and it starts by holding onto the hope of Jesus Christ, and all of Gods promises.