

## 1 THE LUCK

### of ABRAHAM

- In a down economy, more and more people are looking for lucky breaks—hoping to hit it big. But how does faith teach us anything different?

## 2 Economic Troubles

- Yesterday, the U.S. Labor Department reported more bad news.
- The economic recovery that everyone was hoping for seems to be faltering.
- Unemployment is now 9.1%
- Many are also suggesting that we may soon see runaway inflation as the value of our dollar is being undermined by our nation's debt.

## 3 Lady Luck

- According to the experts, when things get bad and people get desperate, they often turn to Lady Luck to bring happiness.
- In fact, there is today a “cottage industry” of people whose business is to (for a fee) help others “attract” luck.
- No, we're not talking about the Dark Ages, but we are talking about modern America—where luck and chance are more of a hope than faith in God.

## 4 Traditional Plan

- During recent economic downturns, people cut down on things like . . .
  - eating out,
  - delaying the purchase of a car,
  - maybe even trying to downsize their home.
- Some people are wisely cutting back,
  - on using credit cards and
  - are vacationing at a local park rather than heading to an exotic destination.

## 5 Lady Luck

- But one thing Americans are not cutting back on . . .
  - it is the dream of striking it rich, and
  - doing it the easy way by relying on Lady Luck.
- People are no longer going to the bank for financial advice.
- Instead, they're heading to the local Gas-n-Sip to snag a bunch of lottery tickets.

## 6 Lady Luck

- A 2009, report by USA Today indicated that more than half the states with lotteries saw an increase in sales during the teeth of the recession.
- In 2010, the total revenue from state lotteries was up by \$1 billion from the previous year.

- But why would people invest their hard earned money on lotteries when the odds are against them.
  - The odds of winning a state lottery are generally 18 to 120 million to one.
  - In other words, we are 6 to 45 times more likely to die from a lightning strike than to win the lottery.

## 7 To Strike it Rich

- Albert Atwood, a 68-year-old telephone company retiree, said he has spent at least \$75,000 on lottery tickets since the Tennessee lottery began selling tickets in 2004.
- Playing recently at a Nashville convenience store that boasts it is the home to two \$1,000 scratch-off winners,—Atwood handed a winning scratch-off to a clerk. That got him a \$5 scratch-off ticket and \$1 discount toward another.
- “I am absolutely not acting in my best economic interest,” Atwood said. “But we always hope that we win big and that is what drives us.”

## 8 Luckology.com

- If your luck is so bad, that if it wasn't for bad luck you wouldn't have any luck at all, I got good news.
- Check out luckology.com!
- According to their web site, they promise to their clients “the ability to successfully attract good luck and turn bad luck into good luck over and over again.”

## 9 Luckology.com

- According to Ric Wallace, the site's proprietor, the formula for being lucky is . . .
  - Belief + Attitude + An Item of luck = Results.
- In other words, if you just believe and think positively, plus rub your lucky squirrel charm, then the millions you seek will be yours.

## 10 Get Lucky & Win Big!

## 11 Get Lucky & Win Big!

## 12 Luck Philosophy

- Luckology is really just another retread of a philosophy that's been around nearly as long as humanity.
- Ancient people assumed the world was a rather random place and that forces beyond their control gave them good or bad luck in arbitrary ways.
- Pantheistic religions believed the gods used fortune and misfortune to manipulate human lives; thus, it was best to please the gods who might give you fortune and avoid ticking off the ones who could give you a run of bad luck.

### 13 ☐ Luck Philosophy

- In the Roman Pantheon, for example, a cult formed around the goddess Fortuna, whose worship emerged around the time that the Carthaginian general Hannibal was threatening Rome.
- Then, as now, people in crisis tend to organize their theological worldview around the immediacy of the lucky break.
- Paying attention to the gods of fortune or luck, whether their altars are in a casino or at the counter of a convenience store, is what Wayne Oates calls a "secular religion."

### 14 ☐ Luck Philosophy

- Oates' similarly titled 1995 book, *Luck: A Secular Faith*, traces the human fascination with luck and challenges it as being bankrupt.
- Oates defines luck as "confidence – in fate, in chance, in cleverness, in figuring out probabilities."
- All are focused upon the immediate time situation, upon the here and now.
- All are distinctly dependent upon human existence apart from any fellowship with or interdependence on the supernatural or the everlasting realities of life.
- Luck is an isolating belief, where the individual stands over and against the community.

### 15 ☐ Was Abraham Lucky

- Abraham certainly could have considered himself to be really lucky.
- After all, God had seemingly chosen him at random out of all the people living in Mesopotamia at the time and had given the wandering man from Ur the news that he'd hit the patriarchal jackpot.
- "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:2–3).

### 16 ☐ Was Abraham Lucky

- God will teach Abraham, however, that luck really has nothing to do with his fortune, his prosperity or the birth of his son.
- Unlike the gods of the pantheistic Canaanites in whose land Abraham wanders, this God isn't doling out arbitrary blessings and curses, luck and "unluck," but is instead focused on the obedience that comes through faith and what we might call blessings."

### 17 ☐ Testing faith

- "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love," says God, "and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you" (Genesis 22:2).

- Abraham, however, doesn't seem to flinch, at least not according to the text.
- He immediately does what God says and starts out on his journey.
- Once they come to the place where God has directed them, Abraham proceeds to offer Isaac on the altar as a burnt offering.
- Then something special happens . . .

## 18 God Responds to Faith

- But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”
- “Here I am,” he replied. “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son. (Gen 22:11-12 NIV)

## 19 God responds to Faith

- The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.
- Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” (Gen 22:15-18 NIV)

## 20 Why Did Abraham Obey God?

- By faith Abraham, even though he was past age — and Sarah herself was barren — was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. (Heb 11:11 NIV)
- By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”
- Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. (Heb 11:17-19 NIV)

## 21 Faith & Blessings

- In the Garden, the serpent destroyed Adam & Eve’s faith by placing doubt in their minds concerning God’s faithfulness and goodness.
- The result was disobedience and a hard life.
- Nevertheless, through Abraham’s life we see that when we trust God’s faithfulness, recognizing that He is good and knows what’s best for us, obedience is restored and so is God’s provision and blessings.
- We don’t have to trust in lucky charms, do mental gymnastics, or hope in Lady Luck.

- Faith teaches us that blessings and grace are not the result of random luck but the byproduct of trusting God and obeying His commandments.

## 22 Conclusion

- So when hard times come, we should not give in to fear and unbelief and start complaining, pointing fingers, and go out and buy a lucky squirrel charm.
- Faith should tell us that God is faithful—if we are faithful to Him.
  - Even in hard economic times God can make a way in the wilderness.
  - So let us hold on to our faith—ignoring the lies of the Evil One, and find out what pleases the Lord.
  - For if through faith we are faithful to God, He will be a blessing to us.