

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Last Wednesday night, we went over the events that transpired around God's judgment over Sodom and Gomorrah.

We saw the consequences of a man who compromised in his faith and we also saw the consequences of sin as God judged Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness.

This evening, our text takes us back to Abraham, who unlike Lot, has been on a winning streak regarding spiritual victories. We are going to see a setback tonight and I want you to focus on God's response as well as Abraham's response to the set back and we will see how it applies to our lives as well.

Let's pray...

[Gen 20:1-18 NKJV] 1 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. 2 Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She [is] my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 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." 4 But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? 5 "Did he not say to me, 'She [is] my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He [is] my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this." 6 And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 "Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he [is] a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore [her], know that you shall surely die, you and all who [are] yours." 8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. 9 And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done." 10 Then Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?" 11 And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God [is] not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. 12 "But indeed [she is] truly my sister. She [is] the daughter of my

father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13
"And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my
father's house, that I said to her, 'This [is] your kindness that you
should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He [is]
my brother." ' " 14 Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and
female servants, and gave [them] to Abraham; and he restored Sarah
his wife to him. 15 And Abimelech said, "See, my land [is] before you;
dwell where it pleases you." 16 Then to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have
given your brother a thousand [pieces] of silver; indeed this vindicates
you before all who [are] with you and before everybody." Thus she
was rebuked. 17 So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed
Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore
[children]; 18 for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house
of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

As I read the chapter this evening – if you are asking yourself, **"Haven't I
heard this story before?"**

The answer of course is yes!

Back in Genesis 12 we have a very similar event with Abraham and Sarah.

You see, 25 years earlier, Abraham had gone down to Egypt because of a famine and because he was afraid of what the Egyptians would do to him, he also asked Sarah to lie and claim that she was his sister.

In that event God brought a great plague against Pharaoh and his household and Abraham and Sarah are kicked out of Egypt by Pharaoh.

So despite similar circumstances we have Abraham once again demonstrating a lack of faith to what God had promised him.

He had substituted the fear of man over the fear of God.

And the problem with having the fear of man is that it will also lead us to make decisions based on the flesh.

You see, the fear of man is a product of living in our flesh; living self-centered and self-reliant lives.

The fear of man hinders us in our walk with the Lord.

Faith in God however, produces the fear of God in us.

As our faith in God matures, our fear in God strengthens as well.

We must always remember that the fear of God is essential to experiencing all that God has for us and wants to do in and through our lives.

But even though God had made a covenant with Abraham and despite the fact that God had already promised them both that within a year their son Isaac would be born, Abraham chose to fear man over God.

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

Now, we don't know what Abraham was doing in Gerar –

Gerar was in the outskirts of Egypt – and I have told you in the past that Egypt is always a type of the world in scriptures.

So similar to the way Lot pitched his tent next to Sodom, we see Abraham dwelling in Gerar in close proximity to Egypt.

We see Abraham move around a lot since he had a great herd

However, what sticks out here in verse one is the absence of an altar.

There is no worshipping of God.

So because he is not dwelling in the place that God had given to him and because he is in enemy territory, Abraham begins to fear for his own safety.

That is why he tells Sarah to once again say that she is his sister.

And we see this in verse two,

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

Now, twenty five years earlier, we know why Abraham told Sarah to lie about being his wife.

The scriptures tell us that Sarah was a very beautiful lady and Abraham was worried that he would be killed.

Sarah is 90 years old now. Apparently she is still very attractive for the king of Gerar to have taken Sarah.

It was customary in those days for someone to give one of their daughters to the king – in an effort to find favor with the king.

In both instances, Abraham was putting Sarah in danger.

[Genesis 20:3-4 NKJV] 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." 4 But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also?

Sarah was now a part of the harem of Abimelech – meaning that she was one of the many woman that were made available for him to sleep with. That is what pagan kings did in those days – they had concubines and so on.

So now God intervenes and reveals to Abimelech that he is about to face judgment for taking Sarah into his harem.

Abimelech responds with – I haven't touched her!!!!

And then he says something that is very significant, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also?"

If you remember last week, these were the exact words that were spoken by Abraham to the Lord, as the Lord revealed to Abraham the imminent judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. That is when Abraham started interceding for Sodom and asking God if He would still destroy Sodom if there were 50 righteous people there and then he went down to 45,40,30,20 and he finally stopped at 10.

Abimelech is questioning God's righteous judgment.

[Gen 20:5-6 NKJV] 5 "Did he not say to me, 'She [is] my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He [is] my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this." 6 And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.

God's response to Abimelech is that the only reason that you didn't touch her was that I did not allow you to touch her.

In verse 5, this is the first time in all of scripture that the word integrity is used and it is used by a pagan king – not one of the Patriarchs.

Abimelech was a man of integrity.

God responded to Abimelech's integrity by further helping him and preventing him from blowing it big time.

Here is a question for you guys - Does God always keep us from sinning?

Obviously not. Because we do sin.

But sometimes God stops us enough to give us a warning.

We saw this example a few weeks ago in Genesis 4,

[Gen 4:5-7 NKJV] 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire [is] for you, but you should rule over it."

God gave Cain a warning - But Cain didn't pay attention to God's warning and he gave in to his anger and killed his brother.

With Abimelech, it seems that his "integrity" played a part in God keeping him from sinning.

Integrity causes us to set some boundaries in our lives.

It keeps us from going places that we are not supposed to.

It's when I lack integrity that I find myself in places of temptation.

If I was trying to lose weight and decided to cut off my morning donut on the way to work, my integrity would have me take a different path to work.

Lot lacked integrity by residing in Sodom.

There is one thing that we have to be cautious when we talk about integrity -

Integrity doesn't equal knowing God

Integrity is important, but it's not the same as knowing God.

Abimelech was a man of integrity, but he didn't know God.

Abraham was currently lacking in integrity, but Abraham knew God.

Integrity alone isn't going to get you to heaven.

You may consider yourself to be a good, moral person, but if you think that your morality is good enough for God, you're not even close.

It's like the athlete who feels good because he can long jump 18 feet, pretty good for an athlete.

But God's standard isn't for you to jump 18 feet to get into heaven.

God's standard is a little more like saying you must be able to jump from here to Hawaii without getting your feet wet.

You see, human style integrity is a good thing, but it's far short of the standard that God sets.

However, the standard was already paid in full.

That's what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us.

He did what we can't.

When we couldn't do anything to pay for our sins, Jesus died on a cross to pay for our sins.

Does this mean you can believe in Jesus and not have integrity? No.

God's desire is that you be a person who knows God and who maintains integrity.

[Gen 20:7 NKJV] 7 "Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he [is] a prophet,

I asked you to underline the word prophet. Because here in the 20th chapter of the book of Genesis – is the first time that this word is utilized.

Even though Abraham has acted nothing like a prophet in his dealings with Abimelech, God still lets Abimelech know that the man that just lied to you, that man that misled you and jeopardized not only his wife but your nation as well –

Abimelech, I am going to use that man, that man is my spokesman, that man is my prophet.

7B and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore [her], know that you shall surely die, you and all who [are] yours."

Even though Abraham was in sin, he was still a prophet and man of powerful prayer.

God's mercy did not leave Abraham, even though Abraham didn't trust God the way he should.

Let's take a look at Abimelech's response,

[Genesis 20:8-10 NKJV] 8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. 9 And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done." 10 Then Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?"

For the believer, there is nothing worse than being rebuked by a nonbeliever.

Being called out by someone of the world for doing something so uncharacteristic of a godly person.

And we find multiple examples in the scriptures.

When we studied the book of Jonah – the pagan sailors are the ones that confront Jonah, who was also a prophet by the way, for not praying during the storm and they also rebuke him for being disobedient to the commission that God had given him.

Verse 10 is an interesting question in that Abimelech asks in the NKJV, what did you have in view? Meaning what guided you – what did you have your eyes set on to make this decision?

Unfortunately for Abraham, **his eyes were not set upon the Lord.**

Let's look at Abraham's response...

[Genesis 20:11-13 NKJV] 11 And Abraham said, "Because **I thought, surely the fear of God [is] not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. 12 "But indeed [she is] truly my sister. She [is] the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13 "And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This [is] your**

kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He [is] my brother." ' "

Now, we get to the bottom of Abraham's lapse of faith, **he thought**.

Despite all the promises of God, he thought.

Let's turn to one of my favorite proverbs.

[Proverbs 3:5 NKJV] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;

Instead of seeking the Lord and trusting Him, Abraham leaned on his own understanding.

Abraham also begins to make up excuses – Sarah is technically my sister because she is my half-sister.

A half-truth is still a lie.

It also appears that Abraham is placing the blame on God starting in verse 13, because God caused Abraham and Sarah to leave the home in Ur of the Chaldeans, from way back then – everywhere they had gone, Abraham and Sarah had this agreement that Sarah would say that she is his sister.

Scriptures only reveal this happening these two times – but this is probably something that happened over and over in their journey.

Rather than pray, Abraham thought.

Instead of resorting to excuses and trying to clear his name, Abraham should have apologized to God and Abimelech and demonstrated to Abimelech the true nature of God.

'Forgive me, Abimelech, for dishonoring both you and my God. My selfish cowardice overwhelmed me, and I denied my God by fearing that He who called me could not take care of me.

He is not as your gods of wood and stone. He is the God of glory. He is the living God, the Creator, the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.

He told me He would be my shield and my exceeding great reward, and supplier of all my needs... In sinning against Him, I sinned against you.

Forgive me, Abimelech.

That is what Abraham should have said.

[Genesis 20:14-15 NKJV] 14 Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave [them] to Abraham; and he

restored Sarah his wife to him. 15 And Abimelech said, "See, my land [is] before you; dwell where it pleases you."

Abimelech does not reward Abraham with these gifts because he is impressed with Abraham – Abimelech gives Abraham and Sarah these gifts because he is impressed with the God of Abraham.

Notice how Abraham received these gifts from Abimelech.

Let's go back a few chapters because I find it interesting that Abraham accepted these gifts from a pagan king.

[Genesis 14:21-23 NKJV] 21 Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 "that I [will take] nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that [is] yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'-
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In chapter 14, Abraham did not receive the gifts from the pagan king because Abraham had professed his allegiance to the Lord.

Here in chapter 20, because of his compromise, he couldn't stand on that higher moral ground.

He couldn't tell Abimelech, I have raised my hand to the Lord – because his actions spoke the opposite.

[Genesis 20:16 NKJV] 16 Then to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand [pieces] of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who [are] with you and before everybody." Thus she was rebuked.

Notice how Abimelech addresses Abraham as Sarah's brother – this was way that Abraham had initially referred to himself.

At the end of the verse, when it says that Sarah was rebuked – the Hebrew word utilized there actually means vindicated – meaning that Abimelech did not blame Sarah for any of this.

[Genesis 20:17-18 NKJV] 17 So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore [children]; 18 for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Scriptures do not tell us how long Sarah was living in the house of Abimelech – it must have been a few months as the Lord had prevented those that lived in the king’s house to become pregnant.

At the end of the chapter, we see Abraham interceding for them – just as the Lord had told Abimelech in the dream and they were healed.

Now, what can we learn from this chapter.

- Just because we passed the test the first time – it doesn’t mean that we are not going to have to retake that test later on in life. Satan knows our weaknesses. Whatever we struggled with before, even though we feel that we have conquered that sin – we shouldn’t let our guard down.
- As I read this chapter – there is no way that one can miss God’s grace. God doesn’t rebuke Abraham for his lapse of faith. Even when the same thing happened in Egypt 25 years earlier– God didn’t rebuke Abraham, Even when Abraham took Hagar and had Ismael God - didn’t rebuke Abraham.

God didn’t say, “Abraham you knucklehead – I am taking my promise to someone else”

God understood that Abraham is going through a process where his faith is maturing.

Every time he has a lapse of faith it is another lesson learned.

You see, all these tests are building Abraham's faith for the ultimate test in Genesis 22. When God will ask Abraham to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering.

This is why we too must continue in our walk – even when we fail. Our faith being strengthened is a process – it doesn't happen overnight.

God's grace allows us to get back up and continue the walk that He prepared for us.

Amen.

Let's pray...