



An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham

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1. We're into our 9th week of our study on: **An Adventure of Faith: Walking with Abraham**
 - we've tried to keep the focus of our study not so much on Abraham, but the GOD of Abraham
 - we've learned a lot from Abraham's life, but we're learning more about God and seeing His hand at work through the life of Abraham
2. Last week: *Genesis 18: Don't Underestimate the Power of God*
 - both in giving of the seed (as promised) to Abraham, through Sarah [even though she laughed about it – isn't it interesting what we laugh at God about -- the problem is our lack of faith and a wrong view of God – that's why God asked the Q: *Is there anything too difficult for Me?*
 - AND the destruction of two cities living in unrighteousness – an example of the holiness of God – and *grace* . . . shown to Lot!
3. Next week we'll conclude our study **Genesis 21-22: "A Reality Check: Faith Put to the Test"** -the birth of Isaac, offering up of Isaac, Isaac's bride, and the death of Abraham
4. Today our study is from **Genesis 20: Your Life Impacts Others** - Abraham made decisions that affected a king. He lied again and said Sarah was his sister and a king suffered
5. The very end of the story contains hints at ***The purpose of this narrative:**
 - 1) **The source of the 'seed'** -- this story makes very clear that despite Sarah being given to other men (Pharaoh in chp. 12 and Abimelech here), the son that she would bear later would indeed be from the seed of Abraham and not from the seed of Abimelech.
 - 2) **The power & sovereignty of God** – the end of the story closes with the clear statement that it is God who opens and closes wombs.
 - Abraham would have a clear demonstration of Yahweh's ability prior to God opening Sarah's womb in chapter 21.
 - So while both Sarah and Abraham laughed earlier, now they have clear demonstration of Yahweh's abilities on which to continue to build their faith.
 - 3) **The need for spiritual growth** – Abraham is seen here to be growing in his stature as a "prophet." In 18 he was an "intercessor" for the righteous. Here he is for the first time called a "prophet" by God. He also intercedes again for Abimelech and God answers his prayer.
 - Yet this prophet continues to stumble – SOUND LIKE SOMEBODY ELSE WE KNOW? US!
 - For the second time Abraham employs the half-truth that Sarah is his sister (cf. notes on chapter 12) to protect him.
 - The battle between FAITH and FEAR continues – and it continues to be based on a person's view of God – this is why you've heard us say, "Every counseling problem is a theological problem"
 - Theology drives our choices/behavior/thinking – that's why it's so important to be a student of the Word and let it be a 'lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path'

[READ Genesis 20] – 3 Lessons for us to learn from Walking with Abraham!

- I. Our Sin Can Make It Easy for Others to Sin
- II. Our Choices Can Be a Blessing to Others
- III. God Uses Us in Spite of Our Choices

I. Our Sin Can Make It Easy for Others to Sin – Gen. 20:1-16

- we understand from v. 1 that Abraham is moving South for unspecified reasons (famine?)
- When these kinds of events happen, we should expect Abraham to again be confronted with a challenge that should teach him a lesson – but like us, he didn't 'get it' yet!.

A. Circumstances reveal what's in our hearts

- This time Abraham fears traveling south. Abimelech states to Abraham, "*What have you encountered* (lit. "seen") *that you have done this*" (v. 10).
- Remember, Abraham had lifted up his eyes and seen in the South—the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah and its destruction.
 - > When the two strangers in chp 19 came to Sodom/Gomorrah, they were to be gang raped by the people.
- Abraham's fear here is most likely tied to what he knew about inhabitants in the South – Abraham states, "*Surely there is no fear in this place.*"
 - > Yet, while Abraham "feared" going South, he apparently didn't "fear" Yahweh enough to warrant a belief in Yahweh's promised protection ("*shield*," Gen 15:1).

[Ironically, Abimelech's men "feared" greatly (v. 8) – it's not a good day when people who don't follow God act more godly than those who profess to know Him!]

Point: The promise of seed to Sarah in chp. 18 with the subsequent fulfilled promise of judgment on Sodom SHOULD HAVE helped Abraham believe that Yahweh can protect Him!

- in fact, *protection* is minor compared to the greater abilities of Yahweh to bring about to DESTROY the two cities (i.e. God is ABLE to bring about chaos and cosmos!

NOTE: Remember the question last week: *Is there anything too difficult for me?*

- Yet Abraham, like all of us, is on a *journey of faith* with a few more lessons to learn.

❖ **Romans 15:4** For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

B. Departing from the truth paves the road of consequences

- v. 2. Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister."

Input: What was going on in his heart that would produce a response like this?

[based on what we just discussed and what comes in the text later – FEAR!]

- v. 2 continues . . . **So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.**
- Abraham, acting upon his own wisdom again (even after seeing all the ways God has blessed him and protected him), brings *calamity* upon a nation instead of *blessing*.

Input: Can you think of other examples in the bible where a person's choices affected others?

- ⇒ **Joseph** – sparing the life of his brothers [God even using the sinful choices of his brothers, and the right choice of Reuben to spare Joseph’s life, to get Joseph to Egypt and God would eventually demonstrate His power and love for His people by freeing them!]
- ⇒ **Pharaoh** – not listening to the command to ‘let My people go’ = 10 plagues
- ⇒ **Moses** – leading the Exodus
- ⇒ **Joshua** – who is on the Lord’s side, let him come unto me – then Jericho!
- ⇒ **David** – with Bathsheba – the death of his son
- ⇒ **Achan** – the death of soldiers at Ai when he took things God said not to (Josh. 7)
- ⇒ **Ester** – entered into the kingdom for such a time as this –made her appeal to the king!
- ⇒ **Lot** – the choices to get drunk, have sex with his daughters and the impact of the Moabites and the Ammonites

Yet when God intervenes and acts, he makes sure that his chosen one would bring blessing.

C. God demonstrates GRACE in spite of our sin!

- **Grace = giving what is not deserved!**

[read v. 3: **But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.”]**

- notice how God reinforces His view of marriage – one man/one woman (goes back to Gen. 1:31 and what He said was ‘very good!’)

4. Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You slay a nation, even though blameless?”

- Is Abimelech blameless? A: Only to a degree -- the text aggressively assures us that he did not have sexual intercourse with her
 - > but he was going with the flow of the cultural tendency of having multiple wives or concubines with whom he could propagate his ‘kingdom’ (Point: he took Sarah)
- The anticipated answer: “*No, God does not destroy the blameless with he wicked.*”

5. “Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.”

- in many ways, it sounds like our American culture – the actions are wrong in many ways, but the culture cries out, “*My motives are pure*” -- thank the Lord for v. 6
- but v. 6 reveals . . . :

1. The sovereignty of God: He controls our circumstances!

- ❖ **6. I also kept you from sinning . . . therefore I did not let you touch her** (God kept Sarah from being compromised.)

- God in His sovereignty and grace kept Amimelech from sinning (touching her has the implications of sexual activity and physical contact) – v. 6 also reveals . . .

2. The holiness of God: He takes our sin personally!

- ❖ **6. I also kept you from sinning against Me**

- God views adultery as sinning against Him—not just the other person;

3. The justice of God: Restore the man's wife . . . or face the consequences!

- ❖ 7. "Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

- v. 8 describes his response & the urgency along with the response of his servants they got it better than Abraham did at this point

Q: About what/whom do you think they frightened?

- 1) *Abimelech*: maybe he wouldn't do what God has said for him to do – they already knew about his wife and maids OR
- 2) *God*: His ability to bring about the promised destruction (maybe they had heard about Sodom/Gomorrah?)

D. Sometimes 'the children of the darkness are wiser than the children of the light' - [v. 9]

1. The king at least has the integrity to communicate honestly and ask questions!

[make the application of how the curse of sin affects our communication – how many problems could be prevented and/or solved with truthful, God-honoring communication]

– Wenham, commentator, offers the following comment on this verse

"Abraham, while explaining his motives, actually condemns himself out of his own mouth. The narrative up to this point has given the impression that Abimelech was a just and God-fearing king deeply concerned for morality. More than this, his servants too "were very afraid" when Abimelech recounted his dream. For Abraham to say "surely there is no fear of God in this place" shows how badly he had misread the situation. So within the immediate context of this story, he stands condemned. But in the broader context of the Abraham cycle, he has even less justification for his fears. Divine blessing and success have accompanied him ever since Gen 12:1–3; he has been shown to be capable of defeating kings (Gen 14) and to be on intimate terms with the Almighty (cf. Gen 17; 18). It is surprising that he should now take fright, the more so since he had escaped unharmed from Egypt in quite similar circumstances. Abraham's harking back to this occasion here and in v 13, while it may mollify Abimelech, has the opposite effect on the reader."

[read v. 12-13]

– Wenham goes on to state:

"The rest of Abraham's excuse is also weak. It is especially remarkable that he claims that his behavior in Gerar was his general policy: "wherever we go, say for me 'He is my brother,'" for back in 12:12 this is presented as a device used once only in Egypt. Certainly the intervening episodes never give a hint that Abraham used this story after his expulsion from Egypt. So what are we to make of this discrepancy? We conclude that either Abraham was not being quite truthful in saying this was his usual policy, when he had in fact only once before pretended Sarah was merely his sister, or that he was telling the truth and that wherever he went he misled people about Sarah's marital status. Neither explanation redounds to Abraham's credit. The first explanation makes him lie just to Abimelech; the second suggests he is a man of little faith who often tried to save himself by misrepresenting the situation. The first view seems the more likely. But both interpretations make him less of a saint than might be concluded from other passages."

2. The king has the wisdom to 'clear the air' and make things right! – v. 14-16

v. 16 'brother' may have been said with a bit of sarcasm and/or to communicate to her that he knows the whole story (and she's a liar as was Abraham!)

- on the other hand, . . .

II. Our Choices Can Be a Blessing to Others – v. 17 [read]

- this is RIGHT Abraham – the one - Abimelech was either ‘sick’ or he too was not able to produce children – showing once again that God is the author of life and as the Creator, He knows how to shut things down or repair them!
- For Abimelech to have realized that his women were not fertile must have taken several months.
- So we could conclude that Sarah was probably with Abimelech for several months in the year between chapter 19 and chapter 21)
- As we’ve said all along: Choices Have Consequences
- Are you going to be a blessing to others around you – or are you going to make it easy for them to sin?
- * Your Life DOES Impact Others

❖ **Romans 14:7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.**

III. God Uses Us in Spite of Our Choices

- When the situation is resolved after God’s intervention several important elements of the promise are developed
- A. God makes Abraham a blessing to this nation.**
 - Abraham is becoming more of a prophet/mediator/intercessor,
- B. God ensures that Sarah is uncompromised and ready for the fulfillment of the promise**
 - which occurs in chp. 21

Q: What is the lesson here?

* **God uses the events of one day to prepare us for the next!**

- so, how we respond TODAY has a huge impact on tomorrow (if it comes!).

C. God has demonstrated his ability to open and close wombs!

Q: What is the lesson here?

* **God is the author of life – He is the Creator – He has the power to give life or to take life (“you are a dead man!”)**

D. God has given Abraham even more access to the Promised Land.

Q: What is the lesson here?

- ✓ **God is faithful**
- ✓ **God is gracious**
- ✓ **God is merciful**
- ✓ **God’s blessing are worth waiting for!**

Conclusion:

[apply this parenting // church body life // community impact // missions around the world]

Study Notes: An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham
Your Life Impacts Others – Genesis 20

Introduction:

Next week: **Genesis 21-22: "A Reality Check: Faith Put to the Test"**

***The purpose of this narrative:**

- 1) The _____ of the 'seed'
- 2) The _____ & _____ of God
- 3) The need for _____ -

* 3 lessons for us to learn from *Walking with Abraham!*

I. Our Sin Can Make It Easy for Others to Sin – Gen. 20:1-16

A. _____ reveal what's in our hearts.

B. _____ paves the road of _____.

Input: What was going on in his heart that would produce a response like this?

Input: Can you think of other examples in the bible where a person's choices affected others?

C. God demonstrates _____ in spite of our sin!

- *Grace* = giving what is not deserved!

1. The _____ of God: He controls our circumstances!
2. The _____ of God: He takes our sin _____!
3. The _____ of God: Restore the man's wife . . . or face the consequences!
Q: About what/whom do you think they frightened?

D. Sometimes 'the children of the darkness are wiser than the children of the light' - [v. 9]

1. The king at least has the integrity to _____ honestly and ask questions!

"Abraham, while explaining his motives, actually condemns himself out of his own mouth. The narrative up to this point has given the impression that Abimelech was a just and God-fearing king deeply concerned for morality. More than this, his servants too "were very afraid" when Abimelech recounted his dream. For Abraham to say "surely there is no fear of God in this place" shows how

badly he had misread the situation. So within the immediate context of this story, he stands condemned. But in the broader context of the Abraham cycle, he has even less justification for his fears. Divine blessing and success have accompanied him ever since Gen 12:1–3; he has been shown to be capable of defeating kings (Gen 14) and to be on intimate terms with the Almighty (cf. Gen 17; 18). It is surprising that he should now take fright, the more so since he had escaped unharmed from Egypt in quite similar circumstances. Abraham's harking back to this occasion here and in v 13, while it may mollify Abimelech, has the opposite effect on the reader."

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II. Our Choices Can Be a Blessing to Others – v. 17 [read]

III. God Uses Us in Spite of Our Choices

A. God makes Abraham a blessing to this nation.

B. God ensures that Sarah is uncompromised and ready for the fulfillment of the promise

Q: *What is the lesson here?*

* God uses the events of one day to _____!

C. God has demonstrated his ability to open and close wombs!

Q: *What is the lesson here?*

* God is the _____ – He is the _____

D. God has given Abraham even more access to the Promised Land.

Q: *What is the lesson here?*

- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓

