

SALT Church

Genesis 20

“When Heroes Stumble”

March 25, 2026

“In the Beginning”

Recap Genesis 19

- We closed out Genesis 19 with the sad reality of some bad decisions by “righteous Lot.”
 - He fathered two sons that later became the enemies of Gods people.
 - Two sons that were the offsprings of sexual relations with his daughters.
 - “What a mess” was the title of that teaching which seems absolutely appropriate.
 - We leave Lot and his mess in a cave in Zoar.
 - The Bible will not mention him again until Jesus does in Luke 17 as He reminds His disciples that the day judgement will come without warning.
 - Later Peter in 2 Peter 2 reminds us God knows how to rescue His own by pointing to Lot’s rescue from Sodom.

Genesis 20 is a return to Abraham and Sarah:

- Lot shrinks into the background as Abraham becomes larger and larger.

- Allow me to remind you of what Abraham has witnessed and been blessed with so far:
 - 1st God calls him to leave and follow Him out of his hometown of Ur.
 - He follows and as a result God makes a very important covenant promise to him.
 - God promises to make Abraham into a great nation.
 - Blessing those that bless him and cursing those that curse him.
 - Promising that all the families of the earth will be blessed through him.
 - God promises to give Abraham and his descendants the Canaanite land.
 - All is good until famine struck the land and Abraham took his family toward Egypt.
 - It was there that a series of bad decisions created a mess that we are still dealing with today.
 - Abraham lies about his relationship with his wife.
 - The man of God was quickly called out for his lies, but a strange thing happened, he was blessed because God intervened.
 - This blessing would ultimately be the very temptation that would lead his nephew Lot to Sodom.

- Years pass and Lot eventually finds himself immersed in the Sodomite culture.
 - Abraham however enjoys a life of peace and prosperity several miles away from Sodom.
 - Then Sodom is invaded, Lot was taken, but one of Lot's servants made it to Abraham and told him of Lot's capture.
 - The Lord blessed Abraham and the 300 plus men as they recaptured Lot and returned the inhabitants of the cities.
 - It was after this battle that Abraham received a blessing from Melchizedek the King of Salem and priest of the Most High God, Abraham then made an offering of a tenth of all the goods that he had recovered.
- Later God comes to Abraham and makes a covenant promise with him.
 - In this covenant God promises to protect Abraham and reward him greatly.
 - It was then that God takes Abraham outside and has him count the stars (if he can) and reminds him that he will have that many descendants.
 - Abraham believed and was credited with righteousness.
 - He followed this moment with His covenant promise appearing as a torch marching between the sacrificed animals as a promise that all of the things that he had promised would come true.

- In this promise God tells Abraham of the coming 400 years that his people will spend in Egypt.
 - He also promises all of the land between the Nile River and the Euphrates River will one day belong to Abraham's descendants.
- Just when Abraham has ascended to an unbelievable height he stumbles again.
 - Because he and Sarah are old they decide to help God with His promise to give Abraham a son.
 - The plan was that Abraham would sleep with Hagar Sarah's Egyptian maid and she would give him a son.
 - This of course ends in disaster.
- But God...
 - God comes to the 91 year-old Abraham and once again makes a covenant promise to give Abraham a son.
 - From this boy will come the nation that we know as Israel.
 - This time God adds a responsibility to Abraham in the act of circumcision.
- Later Jesus comes to Abraham with two angels.
 - It is there that Abraham enjoys a feast with them
 - Conversation and fellowship
 - The promise of a son from Sarah (next year)
 - Then Jesus shares with Abraham His plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - Abraham pleads for the cities but God's mind was made.
 - Jesus does agree to rescue Lot and his family.

Through it all, we stand amazed at the life of Abraham and Sarah.

- By now we think that Abraham should have unshakable faith!
 - But Abraham is still in process as God is preparing him for his greatest test of all.
 - But before we get there, there is another test that Abraham has to fail in order to become the man that God wants him to be...

20 Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur.

- I wonder if the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah had anything to do with Abraham's desire to leave.
- It doesn't say that the Lord told him to move but he did.
 - It also doesn't criticize him for moving around.
 - It could be that the land could no longer support his animals and family.

For a while he stayed in Gerar, ² and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

- Before we deal with the obvious, I need to point something out
 - Abraham is at least 100 years old
 - Sarah is in her 90's
 - How beautiful is this woman???
 - It is going to be one of the wonders of Heaven for finally meet and speak with our heroes of the faith!

- She is still so beautiful that Abraham feels the pressure of protecting himself from those who would be willing to kill him for her.
 - What was the plan?
 - It seems to me that they would have had a better plan than this.
 - After all they had already went down this road once with Pharoah.
 - If they knew God would intervene, why not just tell the truth?
 - I think that even righteous men and women when put under pressure can (not always) make a bad decision.
 - Did you notice I included her?

Genesis 20:3

3 But God came to Abimelek in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”

- Some time had passed, and Sarah was still with this Pagan King.
 - What was going through Abraham’s mind
 - What was going through Sarah’s mind
 - Unless God intervenes, this was going to be very bad!!!
 - But God...

4 Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?”

- It sounds Abimelek understands the power of God better than Abraham.

- Nations are at stake here
 - Gerar and the nation that will be Israel
 - **Don't miss what is not being said.**
 - Don't think for one moment that Satan isn't at work in all of this.
 - He knows the promises that were made to Abraham and Sarah
 - He knows that it is the seed of the woman that will one day come and crush his head.
 - He will do anything to make God a liar!
 - But God...

Genesis 20:5

5 Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister,' and didn't she also say, 'He is my brother'? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands."

- Abimelek sounds more righteous than Abraham

6 Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her."

- That sounds like there was an attempt
- Again I remind you that one of the joys of Heaven will be getting the rest of the story.
 - Perhaps Abraham will teach a Sunday School class

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7 Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live.

- Did you see what God did there?
 - He makes Abimelek's life depend upon how he treats Abraham and Sarah.
 - Then He adds...

But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.”

- Few things motivate a man like the fear of dying
- There is but one thing that carries more weight and that is the fear that your family could be killed do to your actions.
 - God has put the “fear of God” within Abimelek and his family.

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8 Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid.

- Like Pharaoh before him, Abimelek can't sleep so he wakes everyone up early in the morning
 - This alone would have caused alarm
 - Then to find out that the whole nation was at stake would cause further fear.

9 Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done

things to me that should never be done.”¹⁰ And Abimelek asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”

- You can feel the anger and fear in his statement.
- If Abraham had not had the power God before him, Abimelek would have surely put him to death.
 - But God...
 - God had told Abimelek what to do
 - This was Abraham’s moment to confess and repent, let’s look at his response.

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¹¹ Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’

- I want so bad to point my finger at Abraham
 - Did God not promise to protect you and Sarah?
 - Did He not protect you when you took on five Kings with 318 men?
 - Did He not give you the victory?
 - Didn’t God promise to bless those that bless you and curse those that curse you?
 - Come on Abraham!!!!!!
 - But what do we know?
 - Heroes do stumble
 - And God allowed this moment because Abraham’s lack of faith needed to be addressed before his greatest test of faith would come.
- Abraham sort of confesses

12 Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife.

- Abraham knew what he and Sarah were doing.
 - They were misleading Abimelek
 - This next sentence causes me pause for it sounds like Adam when he got busted in the garden.

13 And when God had me wander from my father's household, I said to her, 'This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"

- Adam had blamed God in the garden by saying “the woman that you gave me”,
 - What's my point?
 - When you stumble, confess, without excuse, or justification.
 - The fact is this:
 - Abraham did not trust in God's provision or protection.

What should we take away from this?

- 1st everyone has the capacity to sin, even leaders.
- 2nd know that these kinds of test are coming for all of us and when they come resist the old nature to help God by justifying sin.
 - Don't lie
 - Don't manipulate
 - Don't justify bad behavior

- Trust in Gods provision and protection.
- 3rd know that if you fail this test there will be another one just like it so humble yourself before the Lord and make the right decision the first time.

Genesis 20

14 Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. 15 And Abimelek said, “My land is before you; live wherever you like.”

- Why would Abimelek do this?
 - God had warned him is the easy answer.
 - But there is more to it
 - Abimelek could see the value of having a powerful prophet of God on his side.
 - So, he offers him wealth and property which is saying loud and clear that this man is no longer to be considered a foreigner.
 - Not bad for a Philistine!

Genesis 20

16 To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver.

- I think that was a bit of sarcasm on Abimelek’s part
 - 50 shekels of silver was the standard price for a bride according to the historical record that we have from that time period.
 - This 90-year-old woman was worth 20 times that of a normal bride. (she must really be something to look at)

This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”

- Not your fault nor did I touch you
- And I see your incredible value
 - Not bad for a woman who did not see her own value
 - Not having a child was a big deal to women in those days

¹⁷Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again,

¹⁸for the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelek’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.

- I wish we had mor information
 - Like how long was Sarah with this group?
 - Was it obvious that no one could have children?
 - Was there something wrong with Abimelek (man issues?)
 - That would explain why he hadn’t touched Sarah and not be able to conceive with his wife.
 - Whatever the issue God had made it clear that He was the cause of all of it.
 - In the end, Abimelek is the obedient one and Abraham is the disobedient one.
 - And God is the one that poured His grace on both.