

JESUS IN GENESIS

SEASON 2

JESUS IN GENESIS - SEASON 2: GENESIS 20:1-18

COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY GUIDE - WEEK OF JUNE 6, 2021

Introduction:

- After making huge strides in his faith, as shown in the past several chapters of Genesis, in a period of bitterness, Abraham returns to an old habit and sin in order to find comfort and security. He gives away his wife, Sarah, to a foreign king, upon entering his land, for the second time in ~25 years! This chapter shows us that past victory means nothing for today's war against sin, Satan and the world.
- Abraham puts the covenant between him and God in jeopardy, and we see the measures that God takes to preserve the covenant, discipline Abraham and Sarah and bring about peace between Abraham and the occupants of the land.

1. Abimelech Restrained

- v1: It is not clear why Abraham went on this journey into a land that would have been hostile territory, shortly after God promised to give him a child in one year. Perhaps he was afraid of the retaliation of the people who saw God's wrath poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah, or, maybe, he was upset that God did not seemingly answer his prayer to relent from destroying the cities.
- V2: Under pressure and fear in the new land, when he gives away Sarah to Abimelech, Abraham relapses to what is natural to his flesh. We must be aware of the sins and habits that we are prone to return to under pressure and stress, and call upon the Lord to reverse engineer us as we pursue greater faithfulness to Him.
- Very few people have the power and money to have physical harems, but many people today have digital harems through the use of pornography. We need to check ourselves in mind and heart in order to fight the desire to have power over other humans and to take what we want from them.
- v3: God saves Sarah before Abimelech consummates the marriage in order to protect the marriage to which his covenantal promises are tied.
- V4: Abimelech is innocent with regards to Sarah, but still a guilty sinner as a man who has a harem.
- v3-7: Abimelech, the unbeliever, appears more righteous than Abraham and Sarah, the believers. This still happens today; unbelievers are often more moral than believers. Why? Christians are made Christian because they realize that they're wicked sinners. What's going on in Abraham's heart? He knows he's elect and God has given His promise, but he's presuming upon/cheapening God's grace. We need to be careful not to do this. God will forgive you if you're a Christian if you sin, but He will discipline you when you disobey Him. See Heb. 12:5-11.
- Does God discipline Abraham? Yes, when he's publicly shamed by Abimelech and when God ordains this story to be in the written scriptures. The primary lesson we derive from Abraham's repeated folly is that salvation is received by grace through faith, and is not a result of morality. Abraham was deemed righteous because of a righteousness that was imputed to him (that of Jesus Christ). God is the hero of this story; He intervenes on behalf Abraham and Sarah's faith (before having a child) even though Abimelech was more righteous in conduct in this particular situation.
- v6-7: God essentially says to Abimelech, "Yes, you didn't sin, but you didn't sin because I didn't let you." He brings in His sovereignty and the category of sin. In a single dream God shows that He's God, Creator, judge and sovereign ruler with laws, and if we break those laws we sin. This might have been the first time Abimelech heard of sin, and God mercifully gives him a choice.

2. Abraham Rebuked

- v8: "Feared for their lives": There are two kinds of fear: believer: (1) The fear of disappointing one's Heavenly Father, or reverence, and non-christian fear, which is like the fear a little child has of a stranger whose intentions are unclear. Abimelech and his people fear God like a child fears a stranger, while Abraham, fears Him as a Father.
- V9: The unbeliever is preaching to the "prophet." God mercifully exposes Abraham's sin through Abimelech, and shows him to be a hypocrite. As a man, an image-bearer of God, even Abimelech knows what is right and wrong.
- V10-11: Abraham says, "there's no fear of God." He uses perverted logic: "You're all sickos, weirdos and perverts, so I'm going to pimp my wife to you." He does it because he's blinded by own hypocrisy, like the hypocrite of Matthew 7. Sadly, he didn't go to this place on mission for God, but to make money and pursue comfort like Lot when he went to Sodom.
- V12-13: Abraham is caught and he's trying to justify himself here. Instead of repenting by acknowledging his

DISCUSSION GOALS

Head

To understand that past victory means nothing for today's war against sin, Satan and the world.

Heart

To trust in God's grace for our salvation when we struggle to have victory over specific sins in our lives.

Hands

To see that every time that we miss the mark as an opportunity to revel in God's grace toward us, and to be empowered to pursue genuine repentance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kids' Summer Nights: Registration is now open for kids ages 4-11 to attend our free, weeklong VBS program this summer! You can register your child(ren) or sign up to volunteer [here](#).

Please remind covenant members to fill out their **membership covenant recommitment** (link available on their email) if they have not yet done so.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

sin and need for grace, he gives an excuse that's worse than the sin. "Indeed my sister" just makes Abraham's case worse. It was technically true, but he is lying. Half truth masquerading as a full truth is a lie, and is a sin.

- Abraham through his half truth caused the king to sin. This gives us a lesson on discernment. We need to understand that every person has an agenda. Facts are often given to spin a reality and a narrative that is subject to a person's motives and desires. The only source that we can fully trust is the Bible. We need to be discerning of all information that we are given in life.
- "When God caused me...": This statement reveals that there is bitterness in Abraham's heart. He desires to hold onto sinful parts of his past life like Lot did after being saved in the last chapter.
- "This is the kindness that you must do to me...": Instead of laying himself down for his wife, Abraham asks his wife to sacrifice herself for his needs. Abraham mirrors the pathetic, unbelieving, disappointing behavior of Lot when he offered his daughters to the men of Sodom. This is the anti-gospel. In Scripture, Jesus suffers and sacrifices for his bride, the church, because he loves her. Abe does opposite.
- Verses 14-16 make no sense. Abraham should have been the one to say sorry and pay damages, but the opposite happens. The one who is sinned against gives gifts to the one sinned against him and pays an amount showing that he is vindicating Sarah's honor.

3. Abimelech Restored

- v17-18: The sinner prays for the one who didn't sin. Such is how salvation works for God's elect.
- Why is this text in Scripture? It reveals a doctrine that most theologians hold to personally, but don't include in systematic theologies, called *O felix culpa* ("oh happy thought"). It says that sin is inexcusable, abominable and detestable, and should be avoided and hated. However, as the doctrine says, sin also provides the occasion for some of the deepest lessons that any one of us will learn. Falling into sin allows for us to grow more than as if we had not sinned. The most powerful graces of God and displays of His divine attributes would have been kept within divine Godhead if we had not sinned. Some see Romans 7:14-25 as an expression of this doctrine.
- We can't use this theology that God will shape us through our sins as an excuse for future sins, but we can use it to remind ourselves that God is greater than our sins and can use our past sins to shape us, humble us and grow us in our faith. We see this happen in Abraham's life as he finally turns away from this sin once and for all, and goes on to commit great feats after this episode.

Conclusion

- Abraham gave God reason to withdraw His promises, but God would not. God didn't just forgive him and rescue him, He also blessed him abundantly and financially.
- God explained the problem to Abimelech in order to motivate him to restore Sarah's honor. Why did God do this? Because He chose to pour out grace on Abraham, and to promote peace and harmony between Abraham and the inhabitants of the land.
- From a human perspective this isn't fair. Abimelech didn't know what he was doing when he sought Sarah, yet he has to give up cattle. It's no fair that the guy who sinned gets blessing and the guy who is sinless gives the blessing. It doesn't make sense in the perspective of social/societal justice, but does from perspective of celestial justice. The God of the universe can pour out grace on whomever He wants and who are we to say that that's not fair. God decides what's fair. This points to the gospel. How is it fair that the innocent son of God dies on the cross bearing the penalty for our sins? It's not fair, it's God grace, love and mercy for His children on display. How is it fair that when we repent of our sins that our sins are forgiven and God gives us the righteousness of Christ? It's not fair, but it shows that God is better than fair, He's good and great.
- Further, this chapter points us to the fact that Jesus intercedes for us in the same way that Abraham intercedes for Abimelech. However, Jesus intercedes for us perfectly because he never sinned. God love is immutable; even when we sin, He intercedes for us.. Morality doesn't get us to heaven, only the grace of Jesus does. When we repent of our sin and turn to Christ, He pours out His grace on us. See Isa. 53:12 and Heb 7:25.

Read Genesis 20:1-18

1. Can someone take a moment to summarize some key points from the sermon?
2. What are some of the statements, excuses and actions that capture the state of Abraham's faith in this chapter?
3. In this chapter, in a moment of stress, frustration and/or bitterness, Abraham reverts to an old habit to seek comfort and relief instead of recalling his identity and the promises associated with being God's chosen and beloved child. What are the habits/patterns/sins that you are tempted to turn to when you are facing stress, frustration or bitterness?
4. What does it mean to presume upon God's grace?
5. What are some of the lessons that we learn about salvation when we think about Abraham's repeated folly?
6. How does God discipline Abraham in this chapter? (See Hebrews 12:5-11 for more about God's discipline of His children.)
7. Pastor Jan mentioned a doctrine called *o felix culpa* ("oh happy thought") during the sermon. What are the primary teachings of this doctrine?
8. Why must believers apply the doctrine of *o felix culpa* carefully in their lives?
9. In the narrative of this chapter, the one who sinned gets blessing and the one who did not sin gives the blessing. How does this run counter to societal concepts of justice? How does it direct us to the gospel?
10. What does this chapter teach you about the character of God?