

Abraham Part 10

A Complicated Friendship

Genesis 20, 21:22-34, 26:6-33

Memory Verses: Genesis 21:27

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

In World War 2, the allied nations included friendly countries like England, France, and Australia. But they also included Russia, a country with many conflicting ideals and suspect motives. Why include the Russians? Well, to be honest we only had one thing in common, but that thing in common was enough to create a partnership. We all hated Germany. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, of course. Let's just say it was a very complicated friendship, which ended the moment the war did. To a lesser extent State, Carolina, and Duke all share a close proximity to one another and to some degree must be friendly acquaintances, that is unless they are playing each other in basketball or football and then that relationship gets very complicated.

As we close out our series on Abraham we see a complicated man. There are many times we see Abraham embracing his relationship with God and stepping out in tremendous faith. The way Abraham dealt with God's command to sacrifice Isaac is perhaps the greatest display of faith we've ever seen next to Christ's death on the cross. But the many times Abraham fears for his life and forgets his faith in God illustrates that even the most faithful among us find it very hard to keep our eyes on God. Abraham's relationship with God could be seen as a complicated friendship.

Just like the allies and Russia, or Carolina and Duke or State and Carolina, our relationship with God can be a complicated friendship. God loves us and is willing to be patient and show amazing grace toward us. But eventually our sinfulness, our unwillingness to remain faithful, and our predilection to repel righteousness will cause us to wander from Him. But unlike the illustrations mentioned above, God is unwilling to let us go!

Today we are going to explore the complicated relationship that Abraham had with a king named Abimelech and how it illustrates our sometimes seemingly complicated relationship with God. The main point this morning is simple... **Though we are prone to wander, our God refuses to let us wander too far!**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see here is that... **When We Backslide In Our Faith, God Provides Forgiveness.** Look at *Genesis 20:1-13*. After Sodom, Abraham moved close to the border of Canaan and Egypt

to a place called Gerar. Though Gerar was part of the land that God promised Abraham, it was inhabited by the Philistines. Abraham meets the king of the Philistines, Abimelech, and does something we haven't seen him do for 24 years. He pretends Sarah is his sister so the Abimelech won't kill him to take her. I don't know how we can see this as anything but completely depraved. After all God has done for Abraham up to this point, Abraham is still struggling with his faith. Remember, this is before the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham is still a man who struggles with old habits. So instead of standing in faith and protecting his wife, Abraham stands in fear to protect himself. What's even more amazing is that this is the second time we've seen Abraham do this! Did he not learn his lesson? Perhaps, because of God's grace, he learned the wrong lesson? Perhaps, because God saved him from this predicament before, maybe Abraham is putting his faith in God that he will work it out the same way this time! But that simply means he is putting his faith in God... by doing the wrong thing? Just because God makes a way in the midst of your sin, doesn't give you permission to keep on sinning! We know this lesson from **Romans 6:1-2**.

And besides Abraham's sin, what an awful way to begin a friendship with a new king. No wonder their relationship ended up being very complicated. No one wants to start a relationship through deceit and lies. No one should be okay with starting a relationship where one party is in harms way because of the sins of the other. Abraham is not being a good friend to his new host.

But more than that... this incident shows us how complicated our friendship with God can be at times. **What friend would allow you to go on making the same mistakes time after time and still be your friend? What friend would offer you a home and all the comforts and luxuries of the world, and yet allow you to inadvertently destroy his kingdom because of your sinfulness? Many would call this a toxic relationship. One side is good and benevolent and continues to put up with the other side's mistakes and foolishness. There is an adage, fool me once shame on you, fool me twice shame on me. Our God seems to be one who allows us to "fool" him without end. Why doesn't he just cut us off? Why does he continue to allow us to be his friend? I would imagine it has much to do with God's patient mercy and gracious forgiveness. Without fail, if we sin and repent, God will forgive us time and time again.**

Abraham seems to be repentant. He tries to explain his actions, and though clumsy, he is letting Abimelech know that he meant no harm and is sorry! And so Abimelech, instead of throwing him out of Gerar, or going to war with him, blesses him. Look at **Genesis 20:14-18**. He blesses him greatly with sheep, oxen, servants, and silver! And of course this is so much like our God. We sin, we sin again, we keep on sinning the same sin, and yet, when we repent and ask for forgiveness, he forgives us and even more so, blesses us. I don't understand it, it's complicated! **Though we are**

prone to wander, our God refuses to let us wander too far.

The next thing we need to see here is that... **When There Is Conflict, God Makes A Covenant.** Look at **Genesis 21:22-34**. Later on Abimelech comes to Abraham and says, bro, God is with you! Your people, servants, herds, bank account is just as big as mine. Your army is just as big as mine. This could get very complicated if there were any conflict between us. So, let's do this. Let's make a covenant that we will live at peace with one another. And Abraham agrees. At this point, this complicated friendship between a king and a very blessed sojourner seems to be going okay. But of course that isn't all there is to this story. Abraham let's Abimelech know of a small problem. Abraham had dug a well and Abimelech's people had seized it. This could have been a huge conflict but because of the covenant it was nothing. Because of the covenant this place became a holy place. **Verse 34** tells us that Abraham and Abimelech shared many years of peace and prosperity from that point on!

Many years later, a similar issue arose between Isaac and Abimelech. Look at **Genesis 26:14-22, 26-33**. Isaac kept digging wells and Abimelech's people kept filling them in and seizing them. This could have been a problem, but again, Abimelech suggests a covenant to keep the peace. Of course, this again resembles our complicated friendship with God.

We are always in conflict with God because of our sin. We are always wrestling with the tension of wanting to serve God and be faithful and wanting to serve ourselves and be sinful. We will never win this war and remain faithful. We will always revert towards sin. **The only way that we can have a friendship with God is because he has made a covenant with us through the sacrifice of his son!** He tells us that though we are sinners and in conflict with him, he will never forsake us if we merely put our trust in Jesus Christ. We clearly don't deserve this friendship, and yet God goes out of his way to make it work. **Though we are prone to wander, our God refuses to let us wander too far.**

Lastly, we need to see that... **Though Our Sin May Corrupt Our Children, God's Promises Remain.** Look at **Genesis 26:6-13**. You can't make this up. What we have seen Abraham do twice now, Isaac does too, and with the same person no less. This is crazy. I wonder where Isaac learned this particular strategy? No doubt the story of Abraham giving Sarah to Pharaoh and Abimelech years later had become common knowledge. Isaac knew of it, saw that it had worked out, and thought he could try it out. Know this... **Our sins as parents, if not confessed and corrected, will become our children's habits.** Fair or not fair, what they see us doing will be what they end up doing. When it comes to our sins,

we must kill them, repent of them, and stress to our children, please don't make the same mistakes we have. How could God allow our sins to become our kid's sins? Doesn't he love us enough to save them from that? To save them from themselves? Of course I should pay the consequences of my sins, but God, let my kids have a break. This puts strain on our relationship with God. Some of us have children who have wandered from the faith. Some of us have children who don't want a thing to do with God. Be honest it puts a strain on our relationship with your Lord.

So in the midst of Abraham's son, Isaac, going off the deep end, creating conflict and adding fuel to an already complicated friendship, God does this. Look at **26:23-25**. The Lord reaffirms the covenant he had with Abraham with Isaac. We don't see Isaac falling to far from the faith because God won't let him. God shows up and brings Isaac back to himself. Why does God do this? Simple, He doesn't break his promise. He promised Abraham that through Isaac he would bless the whole world, and he meant it. **Our sin, our kid's sin, never supersedes the covenant promises of God!** **Though we are prone to wander, our God refuses to let us wander too far.**

Application

So yes, we have a complicated relationship with God don't we. Not so much on his part, but on ours. We backslide and he forgives. We bring conflict and he remains faithful to his covenant. We are not good parents and role models and yet God is faithful to hear our prayers and bring our wayward children back into the fold. Our relationship is complicated only because we aren't very good friends but he is the best friend anyone could ever have. It's not fair that we can sin and turn our backs on him and he still loves us and forgives us time and time again. **Though we are prone to wander, our God refuses to let us wander too far**

Conclusion

And of course, this complicated relationship can only be achieved and made whole through the most complicated gift we've ever received; Jesus. Jesus is the most complicated gift we've ever received. He gives us salvation though we don't deserve it and all we have to do is remain faithful to Him, which we can't, without Him! Through Jesus we have salvation and through his holy spirit we have sanctification and are able to grow closer to him everyday! If you want a complicated friendship with God, all you have to do is receive the gift of his son.