

Sunday School Lesson for January 4, 2026
Genesis 20

Happy New Year and welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this very first Sunday of 2026, we're launching into a ten-year plan for Bible study entitled, "Vines by the Book." It's a chapter-by-chapter study of the entire Bible developed from the preaching of Jerry Vines, pastor emeritus of the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida. We'll formally begin the study on January 18th in the gospel of Matthew with Pastor Trey preaching from the first chapter and our Bible Fellowship study from the second chapter. Today, we have a preparatory lesson from Genesis, chapter twenty.

The account we find in Genesis, chapter twenty is appropriate for a first lesson of the new year for several reasons. Many of you may have considered making a New Year's resolution--pledging to end some unhealthy habit or promising to get really serious about taking decisive action to start on a path toward a more godly or more healthy lifestyle. The main character in our study today should have made such a decision in his own life before making a serious mistake in his life a second time.

If you recall our lesson from last week, Peter asked his readers the question, "What sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?" As you and I begin a new year, it's as good a time as any to answer that question by evaluating our own lives--our behaviors, our attitudes, our thought life, our choices, our speech--everything about who we are and the way we live, much as David did in Psalm 139 when he prayed in verse 23: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" Again, if the main character in our study today had prayed that prayer and evaluated his life in light of Peter's challenge, it's almost certain he would not have made the mistake he did the first time, let alone a second time.

So, who is this character? It's Abraham. Abraham?--the one who believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness? The father of the faithful?

One of the surest confirmations that the Bible is accurate is that it doesn't hide the true character of even its most faithful personalities. Vines writes, "The Bible tells the whole truth about its heroes. Indeed, from the Biblical portraits themselves, we discover Noah was a drunk; Moses possessed a short fuse; King David was an adulterer, if not an outright murderer ...; and Peter was a Christ-denier. Understand," he warns us, "these sad scenes from God's saints are not recorded to condone our sin, but caution us against sin." Their sins aren't covered over or explained away, but they're revealed in such a way that we can relate to them as we struggle with the same sins they did. And so it was with Abraham--even Abraham.

With chapter twenty of the book of Genesis, we've just seen how the Lord rained down fire and brimstone upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife has been turned into a pillar of salt for looking back, and Lot's daughters decide to get their father drunk and become pregnant by him, thereby giving birth to the nations of the Ammonites and the Moabites--two groups of people who were a consistent thorn in the side of the people of Israel.

As chapter twenty opens, Abraham has been living in Hebron for perhaps as long as fifteen to twenty years. Hebron's located west of the Dead Sea, more or less in the middle of the lowest quarter of the land of Canaan **as you can see on this map**. This land had been given to him by the Lord Who, back in chapter thirteen, had told him to look north, south, east, and west and that all the land he saw would be given to him and his offspring forever. So, verse eighteen, "Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD."

For some reason unknown to us--perhaps a famine in the land, fear of what had just happened in Sodom and Gomorrah, or just itchy feet--, Abraham decided to leave the place where he had been living for quite some

time--the place where God had promised him a son and where he had bargained with God for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah--and heads south. Here's what we find in the first verse of chapter twenty: "From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar." Now, he's coming very close to going beyond the boundaries of the land the Lord had given to him. **You can see the approximate locations of these cities on this map.**

More than just a city, Gerar was a region on the southern edge of the land of Canaan--boundaries weren't nearly so well-defined as they are today. The name of the king who ruled this region was Abi-melech. "Abi" means "father," and "melech" means "king," so, the name means "father of the king." Although we typically pronounce it as one word, "Abimelech," the proper pronunciation is probably closer to Abi-melech.

When Abraham arrives in the capital city, the king naturally takes notice of the strangers, particularly the woman who is accompanying him. Abraham, fearful of the consequences of admitting that Sarah was his wife, lets everyone know that she's his sister. Fascinated by her beauty or perhaps only wishing to create an allegiance with his distinguished visitor, Abimelech takes Sarah, apparently intending to add her to his harem.

Why in the world would a husband ever let that happen to his wife? And why would Abraham--of all people--put his wife in this kind of situation?

It's not the first time this has happened, you know. Once, during a famine, Abraham had gone to Egypt--Genesis, chapter twelve. In verse eleven, we read, "When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, 'I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife." Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.' When Abraham entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes

of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house."

But this wasn't at all how God intended for Abraham to treat his wife. So, what happened? Verse seventeen: "But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. So Pharaoh called Abram and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, "She is my sister," so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go.' And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had." God let Pharaoh know that Sarah was **not** to be treated as just another woman he could add to his harem, and also made it plain to him that she was Abraham's husband and not his sister.

With chapter twenty, perhaps twenty years had passed and Sarah is now 89 or ninety years old, but her beauty is just as stunning as it was before. Abraham thinks his life is more important than his wife's virtue, so he tries yet again to pass her off as his sister. Sarah and Abraham had apparently agreed to this deception before they left Hebron. Whatever the case, Abraham certainly wasn't acting on the faith that had made him righteous in the eyes of the Lord back in chapter fifteen. Instead, he was relying on his own ingenuity, his own cleverness, and his own resourcefulness to keep himself out of trouble - and not just in the moment when he tried to pass his wife off as his sister, but probably in the whole plan to leave Hebron to go to Gerar.

Vines writes, "A serious caution exists here for every believer. On the one hand, no matter how spiritually mature one thinks he/she is, it remains possible to fall into the same sins with which you were tempted at the beginning of your walk with Christ. Our spiritual health is not dependent upon our spiritual progress, but upon the keeping power of God" as we find described in First Corinthians, chapter ten, verse thirteen. "The only reliable hope we have is relying solely upon God's grace. Hence, what we see in Abraham's action in these verses is the recurrence of an old sin."

It's here that Vines inserts what he calls a "reflection connection" where he applies the truth of the text to our own hearts and asks, "Would you distort the truth to save yourself? Explain [your answer]."

He then continues: "Abraham may have thought his old life was dead and buried. However, if we do not deal with our hidden, unjudged sin, the effects will undoubtedly burst out in our life one day, bringing sorrow and remorse."

Just as the Lord let Pharaoh know who Sarah really was, the Lord lets Abimelech know who Sarah is--verse three: "But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, 'Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.' Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, 'Lord, will you kill an innocent people? 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.' Then God said to him in the dream, 'Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore, I did not let you touch her. Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you, and all who are yours.'"

Abimelech immediately pleaded justifiable innocence and ignorance. He asks first, "Lord, will you kill an innocent people?" It may have been that, in addition to what we have recorded in scripture, the Lord also threatened to destroy Abimelech's kingdom for what he had done. If word had gotten to him about what the Lord had recently done to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, his fear of the Lord would have weighed heavily upon his heart. On the other hand, it was not out of the ordinary for a ruler to punish his people arbitrarily, without any reason for it, in spite of the fact that the people may have pleaded their innocence in deserving such treatment. So Abimelech pleaded his innocence.

And he also pleaded his ignorance. What had Abimelech done to bring a death sentence upon his kingdom? He didn't know Sarah was Abraham's wife. Besides, what Abimelech did was a common practice in those days, but God saw things differently. He told Abimelech, "It was I who kept you from sinning against me." God made it clear to him that taking Sarah as one of his wives or even as one of his concubines would have been a sin against God Himself. All sin, by the way, is ultimately against God, for all sin is a rejection of His plan for our lives. Fortunately for Abimelech, God had prevented him from sinning in this way, for he really didn't know that Sarah was Abraham's wife.

Noting that God told Abimelech that he was "a dead man," Vines writes that this is a "more apt picture of the sinner's condition before God" What Paul refers to in the first three verses of Ephesians, chapter two, as being "dead in trespasses and sin." "Abraham's God," he says, "is sympathetic to Abimelech; he seems to have been a man of some integrity even though lost. Honestly, there exist times when people who are unsaved act morally better than people who profess Christ as Lord and Savior. Notice also that God holds Abimelech back. In other words, God was protecting Abraham. He would not allow anyone or anything to ultimately thwart His plans."

The last thing God tells Abimelech is--verse seven: "Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you, and all who are yours."

The Lord identifies Abraham as a prophet. This designation heightens Abimelech's culpability and also elevates the spiritual character of Abraham. A prophet is one who speaks with divine authority on behalf of God Himself. This implies two things; first, that the prophet is aware of the things of God, and, second, the prophet is especially equipped by God to pass on those divine truths to others, both in terms of things yet to come as well as those things that the average person cannot know regarding the will of God.

In times past, Abraham had spoken with God, but this didn't make him a prophet. What made him a prophet is God's instruction to Abimelech to go to Abraham "so that he will pray for you, and you shall live." This would be Abraham's first act in his office as a prophet. If Abimelech failed to return Sarah to Abraham, the Lord told him, "know that you shall surely die, you, and all who are yours"--death being the penalty for adultery even before the Law of Moses according to Genesis, chapter 38, verse 24.

Not only had Abimelech been warned by God in the dream, he and his family had been afflicted by some kind of disease as we read in verse seventeen. This may have been the means by which God had prevented Abimelech from touching Sarah. Just another example of the providence of God in allowing something that Abimelech would have called "bad" to keep him from doing something that's worse. We should never forget the truth of Romans, chapter eight, verse 28 that "for those who love God, all things work together for good," even those things that happen to us that we might think are not good.

"So," verse eight, "Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, 'What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.' And Abimelech said to Abraham, 'What did you see, that you did this thing?'"

Abimelech was so distressed that he got up early in the morning and went about doing whatever he could to comply with everything God had told him. Then he called Abraham in and confronted him with his deception. In asking, "What did you see, that you did this thing?," Abimelech wanted to know what Abraham had witnessed among the people of Gerar that gave him the impression that that's the kind of thing they did there, or if Abimelech had offended Abraham in such a way that he would put him in a position where God would destroy him and his people.

Vines writes, “The first thing Abimelech did was confront Abraham. The saved man incurs the wrath of the lost man. Our sin also incurs our suffering, not to mention the shame which usually follows. Abraham’s lies risked Sarah’s virtue. Indeed, he jeopardized the promised seed by his own selfish plans. Hence, Abraham dishonored God. God’s prophet failed to make a good showing for himself. Abraham marred his testimony. How could he be a credible witness to Abimelech when his actions failed so miserably to honor the God Whom he served. Christians cannot give a positive witness for the Lord if they live under the influence of the old man”--the person we were before we came to Christ.

Abraham responded to Abimelech’s accusations by offering two very weak excuses--verse eleven: “I did it because I thought, there is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.” Because strangers rarely had rights among the people they visited, and he figured they didn’t know about his God, Abraham was afraid that they wouldn’t hesitate to kill him and take his beautiful wife for themselves.

But, even though Abraham is soundly rebuked by Abimelech, he still doesn’t fully appreciate the depth of his sin--verse twelve: “Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. And when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

You could almost hear him saying, “Well, she really is my sister--sort of--, so I wasn’t really lying.” Abraham and Sarah had the same father--Terah--but different mothers, neither of whose names we’re told. A marriage to a half-sister was apparently permitted in David’s time, as we find in Second Samuel, chapter thirteen, verse thirteen, but it was forbidden by the Mosaic Law as we find in several places in the book of Leviticus. So, Abraham’s excuse was

based on a half-truth. Sarah may have truly been his sister; but this statement was no moral justification for his quibbling about the fact that she was his wife.

Not only does Abraham try to explain away the family connection, he also lays part of the blame on Sarah by saying that she agreed to the plan they came up with, so it wasn't all his fault. Now, we don't know for sure if this was really what Abraham was thinking, but it might not be far off from what actually happened. And this wasn't the first time they had made this claim, evidenced by the fact that Abraham said, "at every place to which we come" they would tell this story.

Amazingly, this was the same thing Abraham had told Pharaoh back in Genesis, chapter twelve, verse thirteen, and Pharaoh had soundly rebuked him for it. So, it's absolutely inexcusable to try the same trick a second time. Here in Gerar, Abraham seems to have told everyone he came in contact with there--including Abimelech himself--that she was his sister. This was only a little better than an outright lie, but was certainly an equivocation and a deception that was by no means justifiable given the plan that God had clearly laid out for him.

Not so very long ago, Abraham had believed God, and God counted his faith as righteousness--Genesis, chapter fifteen, verse six. He didn't need to fear Abimelech, and he didn't need to lie to him to keep from getting killed. Immediately after Abraham's confession of faith, God had told him--Genesis, chapter fifteen, verse seven: "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." When Abraham then asked, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" the Lord told him--verse thirteen: "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there,...." Verse fifteen: "As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age."

Abraham had God's personal promise of offspring that he had not seen yet and a long life, but he still didn't trust God enough in this moment to be honest with Abimelech. But who of us hasn't followed the same path Abraham did? In spite of the manifold promises of God and the indwelling and power of the Holy Spirit, haven't we also flunked the simplest tests of our faith and chosen an easy way out instead of standing firm on the eternal promises of God? Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth in the last chapter of his second letter to them, verse thirteen: "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." And to the followers of Christ in Ephesus, he told them--chapter six, verse thirteen: "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm."

Fortunately, Abimelech feared God so much that he didn't seek any revenge against Abraham. Instead, the king validated his innocence and demonstrated his fear of God by blessing Abraham--verse fourteen: "Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, 'Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you.' To Sarah he said, 'Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated.'" He gives Abraham a valuable present, restores his wife, and invites him to make his home in any part of his domain.

In response, Abraham interceded for Abimelech, asking God to heal him and his family--verse seventeen: "Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife."

Just as the Lord had told Abimelech that He would restore them to health in verse seven, Abraham prays for them and the disease that either made them unable to conceive children or made it impossible for them to engage in

marital relations was removed--a judgment inflicted upon them “because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife” who had been taken into the court of Abimelech, to convince them of the evil of what they had done, and to keep them from sinning against God.

Vines writes, “While Abraham was surely wrong in his decision to lie about Sarah, he nonetheless received good news from His Creator-God. There also exists good news for us. When we sin, we can be forgiven and restored. Regardless of our sin, God remains faithful (Second Timothy, chapter two, verse thirteen). The text says, ‘Abraham prayed.’ Even when his witness was compromised, Abraham could still pray. Prayer is the means God gives to the believer to restore his [or her] relationship to Himself. John writes, ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (First John, chapter one, verse nine). James similarly concludes, “Confess your faults to one another, and pray for one another, that [you] may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man [accomplishes] much” (James, chapter five, verse sixteen). From Abraham’s experience with God and in light of New Testament texts, we may discover a three-fold path to follow when the old man [of our sin nature] returns.”

Before explaining that three-fold path, he asks in another “reflective connection”: “How often do you have a time of confession before the Lord? Do you spend time making excuses for sin? Explain.”

Then here’s the threefold path he offers that allows us to deal with recurring sin in our lives. “First, we must confess our sin (1 John 1:9). The term translated in the English Bible as ‘confess’ is a Greek word which means ‘to agree.’ Therefore, when we confess our sin, it means to agree with God about our sin. We call it what God calls it. Confession means we offer neither excuses for our sin nor a rationale about our sin. Biblical confession means we say the same thing God says about it.”

“Second, when we sin, we not only confess our sin, we also condemn our sin. Note what Proverbs says, ‘[The one who covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy]’ (28:13). Forsaking our sin carries the idea of sending our sin away. (Compare First Corinthians, chapter eleven, verses 28-32; Romans, chapter eight, verse thirteen). Our goal is to die to sin in our life.”

“Third, when we sin, we are finally to commit our life totally to the Lord. There must be a total surrender to the Lord every day of our lives. Believers begin the day confessing and judging any sin which may have crept into their life. Jesus is confessed to be Savior and Lord every moment. Only then is our life yielded completely to God. God makes us a promise that, whatever temptation we face, He will enable a way to escape its deadly snare (First Corinthians, chapter ten, verse thirteen).” What we have to do is take advantage of the way out of sin that He’s provided for us and not give in to it.

In spite of the fact that Abraham was the man God used to establish faith as the foundational principle for a new people of God, he failed, and we will fail as well. Even Paul struggled with recurring sin in his life as he shared with the followers of Christ in Rome in the seventh chapter of his letter to them. But he also celebrated the fact that we have victory over sin through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we abide in Him and allow Him to live His life through us, we will be changed, just as Paul explained to the believers in Philippi--Philippians, chapter three, verse twelve: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

To the followers of Christ in Rome, Paul had explained that believers have died to sin--chapter six, verse six: "We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin." But we still face temptation. Even though we're blood-bought, Holy Spirit-endowed, children of God, we're still less than perfect in our behavior. We are saints who still struggle with sin. What that bumper sticker says is so true--"Lead me not into temptation, ... I can find it on my own." So, what about those things that we do that we wish we didn't do? Is sin truly unavoidable? Can we never escape the temptations that rise up and strike at us day by day, sometimes even moment by moment?

Paul's answer is found in chapter six, verse twelve: "Don't let sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."

What prescription does God offer in His instruction book for life--these Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth? There are three instructions in verses thirteen and fourteen. First, Paul tells us to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ. To reckon means to count or to consider. Paul is saying, "Recognize that the truth of the gospel means that you are in fact dead to sin and alive to Christ. And if you are indeed alive to Christ and dead to sin, then you have the freedom to choose, you have the responsibility to choose, and because sin ought not rule over you, you ought to choose not to let sin rule over you."

Second, he tells us to make a conscious decision to exercise our wills not to let sin rule over us. Yes, we have grown up in sin. Yes, many of us have lived long in sin. Yes, we have learned the habits of sin. Yes, all that we ever knew before we came to Christ was sin. But that's where sin's authority ends for the follower of Jesus Christ. Sin's power over you has now been broken--

that's an irrevocable, unchangeable, absolute fact. But just because something is a fact doesn't mean that you enjoy the benefits of those facts. You only enjoy the benefits of a fact when you act on that fact, and you won't enjoy the fact of your freedom from sin's rule over you until you exercise your freedom from sin's rule over you.

Later on, in the pivotal verses in this letter--chapter twelve and the first two verses--Paul says: "Based on everything I've told you so far--present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God because that is our only reasonable act of worship. And stop being conformed to the things of this world"--you do that by allowing your mind to be transformed. Let the Holy Spirit give you a new way of thinking about yourself, about God, and about the world. Let your mind be transformed. When your mind is transformed by the inner working of God's Holy Spirit then you won't be fooled into thinking that sin isn't really so bad, or that if it doesn't immediately and outrightly affect someone else it's okay to live as you please. Exercise your will to choose not to let sin rule over you.

Third, he tells us not to offer the parts of our bodies to sin, but to offer them to God as instruments of righteousness. When the temptation to sin enters your heart or your mind, send a prayer up to God and give God specific control over that part of your body that would be involved in the temptation. When an impure thought crosses your mind and tries to distract you to focus on that, replace it with an honorable thought, and send up a prayer to God asking that your thought-life would be pleasing to Him. When your eyes begin to wander, recognize that you have a choice not to let the window into your soul be used as a pathway of something that dishonors God, something that dishonors you. At any point in dealing with temptation, you can stop and, in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, say, "I don't have to, because I don't want to."

What temptation seems to dominate you today? A temptation of the eye?-You can choose not to look at it. A temptation of the heart?--You can choose

not to be unfaithful in your thoughts or in your behavior. A temptation of the mind? You can choose not to dwell on harmful or ungodly thoughts about yourself or others. When you're tempted by envy in your heart for what someone else has, commit your desires to Christ. When you feel a temptation to look at or listen to things that would generate unhealthy and ungodly emotions or ideas, give your eyes, your ears, your heart, and your mind to Christ. When you feel a temptation to speak evil of someone, commit your speech to Christ. Whenever you face any kind of temptation to do wrong or fail to do what's right, it's then that you need to say to yourself, "I don't have to do that. Sin's rule over me is broken. I don't have to if I don't want to, and I don't want to because I'm a child of God, and I want to do what's pleasing to Him."

Then lift a prayer to God: "God, I give you my eyes, my hands, my heart, my mind, and my will, and I ask that they all be brought under your complete control. Lord, I give you my hands that they would be pure and holy. I give you my mind that I would only think on those things that would be acceptable in your sight. Lord, I give you my heart that I would be true to you above all else."

With each and every temptation that arises in your heart or mind, meet it in the authority of the Word of God and say, "God declares that since I am in Christ, I don't have to do this if I don't want to, and I don't want to because I am a child of God, and children of God don't do things like that. Because Jesus loved me enough to become like me, I want to love Him so much that I might become like Him."

Reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to Christ. Exercise your will to choose not to let sin rule over you. Refuse to offer your body or any part of your body to sin. Sin must not be your master, for you are under God's grace and you have the privilege and freedom to live for Jesus.

So, if you're a believer, do you live like the person you truly are? Do you fully understand who you are in Christ--you're not just a sinner who just happens to be saved by grace, you are a brand new creature, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, made alive in Christ--someone who no longer has to sin? The choice is up to you. God won't make you walk in the Spirit, and the devil can't make you walk in the flesh. The choice is yours. You don't have to sin if you don't want to. "Don't let sin reign in your mortal body, for you are under God's loving hand of grace."

Abraham chose poorly, but because of his relationship with the Lord, he was delivered from what could have been a disastrous situation. Since this story from Genesis, chapter twenty has been preserved for us in order to instruct us, may we learn from his mistakes and God's provision to avoid sin that's freely offered to us in Christ in this new year.

Next week, we lay the foundation for our first set of lessons from the gospel of Matthew with an overview of the entire book before we delve into Matthew's record of the life and ministry of our Lord.

As always, as it's still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! Happy New Year, and may God bless us--every one! help