

Introduction

In our journey through the book of Genesis, we have seen Abraham called out of his homeland by grace, stepping out in faith, and witnessing the glorious promises of God. Yet, as we step into Genesis chapter twenty, Scripture pulls back the curtain once again to show us a man of flesh and blood. Here is Abraham, the "Father of Faith," journeying south toward Gerar as a pilgrim and a sojourner—a reminder that this world is not our home, but that we are passing through as we wait for the city whose builder and maker is God.

Yet, even after all he has seen God do, Abraham falls right back into an old trap of fear and compromise. Faced with potential danger, he relies on a half-truth to protect his own skin, leaving the pagan king Abimelech to rebuke the very prophet of God.

As we open this chapter together, three vital lessons stand out from the text:

First, we see The Sojourner's Heart and the Pilgrim's Walk, recognizing that while we are called to live as strangers in this world, looking to an eternal foundation, we must guard our hearts against letting the fears of this life dictate our decisions.

Second, we encounter A Lapse in Faith and the Grace That Holds Us, observing how Abraham fell into the exact same lie he resorted to years earlier in Egypt—a sobering reminder that even the greatest heroes of faith have feet of clay, but that God in His sovereign grace works behind the scenes to protect His covenant promises even when we stumble.

Finally, we examine The Reasoning of Fear and the Faithfulness of God, looking at how human fear causes us to construct worldly "safety nets" and pre-packaged compromises, and seeing how God uses even the hard lessons of our failures to draw us back into simple, wholehearted reliance upon Him.

What a comfort to know that God does not demand perfection before He uses us; He simply asks us to trust His unfailing character and grace.

Bible Study

Genesis, chapter 20. As we read this chapter verse by verse, we are going to let the Spirit of God speak to our hearts through the text.

The Sojourner's Heart

In Genesis 20:1, we find Abraham journeying toward the south country, settling between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourning in Gerar. Now, Abraham had been up in the area of Hebron, but remember, he was a nomad. Even today in the Middle East, you'll see the Bedouins in their tents—here today, gone tomorrow.

There is a powerful spiritual lesson right there. You see, Lot tried to settle down in the city, but Abraham always realized he was just passing through. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham "waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10, NKJV). We need that same perspective. This world is not our home; we are just pilgrims passing through.

A Lapse in Faith

But then we hit a snag in Genesis 20:2. Abraham says of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech, the king of Gerar, takes her into his harem.

Now, wait a minute. This is the second time Abraham has done this! He did it in Egypt years before and got rebuked by Pharaoh. Here he is, the "Father of Faith," falling into the same old trap of fear. And can we just talk about Sarah for a second? She's ninety years old here, and she's still so beautiful that kings are trying to take her into their harems! Whatever her secret was, she was clearly a stunning woman.

Abraham was afraid they would kill him to get to her. So, he resorts to a half-truth—which is really a whole lie—to protect his own skin. It shows us that even the giants of the faith have feet of clay.

"You're a Dead Man"

God steps in during Genesis 20:3. He comes to Abimelech in a dream and says, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." I love the directness of God here. The Hebrew literally conveys that Abimelech's life was forfeit. But Abimelech protests in Genesis 20:4-5, saying, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation? Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this."

God responds in Genesis 20:6, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her."

Think about that. God was working in the background to prevent a disaster, even when His servant Abraham was failing the test. God's grace is so much bigger than our blunders.

The Integrity of the Word

In Genesis 20:7-10, God tells Abimelech to restore Sarah to Abraham because Abraham is a prophet and will pray for him. Abimelech gets up early, tells his servants—who are terrified—and then confronts Abraham. He asks, "What have you done to us? ... You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done."

Isn't it a heavy thing when the world has to rebuke the man of God? Abraham is the classic example of faith. We read in James 2:23 (NKJV) that "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." But the Bible is honest. It doesn't airbrush the heroes.

I find such comfort in that. If Abraham had to be perfect for God to use him, there would be no hope for me or for you. It means God can honor our "little faith." He can bless us even when we are imperfect, because His blessing isn't based on our performance, but on His faithfulness.

The Reasoning of Fear

When Abimelech asks why he did it, Abraham explains in Genesis 20:11-13: "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place... and indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother."

Abraham had a "pre-packaged" plan for deception. He and Sarah had agreed to this lie years ago when they first left home. He looked at his circumstances, felt the fear, and relied on his own wit instead of God's power.

Practical Application

How often do we do the same? We have these "safety nets" of half-truths or worldly strategies because we don't think God can handle the situation. We think, "The fear of God isn't in this workplace" or "God isn't in this trial," so we take matters into our own hands.

The challenge for us today is this: Will you trust God with the "small" things as much as the "big" things? Abraham had the faith to leave his country, but he struggled to trust God with his safety. Let's stop trying to "help" God with our deceptions and start resting in His protection.

An Invitation

Maybe you're reading this today and you realize you've been running on your own strength, and frankly, you're exhausted. You've realized that, like Abimelech, you are "dead" in your sins apart from God's intervention.

The good news is that God provided a way back. Jesus Christ came to this earth, lived a perfect life, and shed His precious blood on the cross to pay the price for every lie, every fear, and every sin you've ever committed. When He rose from the dead, He proved once and for all that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

He isn't asking you to be perfect before you come to Him. He's asking you to trust Him. If you will turn from your way and give your life to Jesus today, He will forgive you, fill you with His Spirit, and begin leading you toward that "city with foundations."