

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
10-2-19

Genesis 20

Abraham and Abimelek - Verses 1-5

¹ Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. 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. 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." ⁴ Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? 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."

20:2 Abraham had used this same trick before to protect himself (12:11-13). Although Abraham is one of our heroes of faith, he did not learn his lesson well enough the first time. In fact, by giving in to the temptation again, he risked turning a sinful act into a sinful pattern of lying whenever he suspected his life was in danger.

No matter how much we love God, certain temptations are especially difficult to resist. These are the vulnerable spots in our spiritual armor. As we struggle with these weaknesses, we can be encouraged to know that God is watching out for us just as he did for Abraham.

Abraham and Abimelek - Verses 6-13

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." ⁷ Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die." ⁸ Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid. 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?" 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.' ¹² Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife." 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."'"

20:6 Abimelek had unknowingly taken a married woman to be his wife and was about to commit adultery. But God somehow prevented him from touching Sarah and held him back from sinning. What mercy on God's part! How many times has God done the same for us, holding us back from sin in ways we can't even detect? We have no way of knowing—we just know from this story that he can. God works just as often in ways we can't see as in ways we can.

20:11-13 Because Abraham mistakenly assumed that Abimelek was a wicked man, he made a quick decision to tell a half-truth. Abraham thought it would be more effective to deceive Abimelek than to trust God to work in the king's life. Don't assume that God will not work in a situation that has potential problems. You may not completely understand the situation, and God may intervene when you least expect it.

Abraham and Abimelek - Verses 14-18

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." ¹⁶ To Sarah he said, "I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated." ¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, ¹⁸ for the LORD had kept all the women in Abimelek's household from conceiving because of Abraham's wife Sarah.

20:17-18 Why did God punish Abimelek when he had no idea Sarah was married? (1) Even though Abimelek's intentions were good, as long as Sarah was living in his harem he was in danger of sinning. A person who eats a poisonous toadstool, thinking it's a harmless mushroom, no doubt has perfectly good intentions—but will still suffer. Sin is a poison that damages us and those around us, whatever our intentions. (2) The punishment, striking all the women of Abimelek's household with infertility, lasted only as long as Abimelek was in danger of sleeping with Sarah. It was meant to change the situation, not to harm Abimelek. (3) The punishment clearly showed that Abraham was in league with almighty God. This incident may have made Abimelek respect and fear Abraham's God.