

Genesis 20 - Steadfast

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Preacher: Pastor Jared Bromka

[0 : 0 0] Father, we thank you for the text this morning. We thank you, Lord, for not just passing over the faults, the failures, the ugly parts of people's lives, Lord. The people that, when we look in the New Testament, they're held up before us in Hebrews as these amazing men and women of faith. But then we come and we read about their lives and we look and we say, well, I don't know if I can see that right here. But Lord, you see so different than we do. You see through the cross. You see us in Jesus. You see us washed and made white. And so Lord, help us this morning to see your grace and your mercy and your love for us through this text. In Jesus' name, amen. Turn to Hebrews chapter 11.

We want to get the idea, the heart of what's going on here. Abraham's going to have a mighty lapse of faith. Again, the same one he just had a few chapters ago with when he went down to Egypt. But he's so much further along now. He's so much further along in God's faithfulness, his experience of that. And then here he is again, kind of lapsing. But in Hebrews 11, we kind of have a picture of how God views Abraham in his journey of faith. In verse 8 of Hebrews 11, it says, by faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for inheritance, obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith, he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country. In the beginning of that chapter, we know it says, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. So it's the substance of things hoped for. Something you hope for, you don't have it, you want it. Well, faith is that substance in our lives. Our trust in God and his faithfulness to us is the substance of what we're hoping for, the evidence of things not seen. So if you close your eyes, you don't see the world around you, there's evidence of it. How do you find that evidence? Well, for us, it'd be by touch, sound, taste. You know, you can have evidence of a meal in front of you without seeing it.

You smell it, you taste it, you feel it. And so faith, our trust in God, that is the evidence for us of the thing that, well, I can't see with my natural eyes. But I trust God to be faithful to his promise, and then I see it play out. I see evidence of that happening. And so where it says here in verse 8, by faith, Abraham, he did three things. Called to go out into a place, afterward receive, and went not knowing. Well, we live the same experience. We've been called to go out. We've been called and by faith responded when God says, come out of the world. Come into a relationship with me. Come into the kingdom of God through salvation. We say, yes, we've done that.

That we will, after we receive, have we received it yet? Not really. We're still in the in-between country. We've gone out, but we're not yet in the full experience of that new land that the kingdom of heaven, the land promised to us. We're like Abraham. We're kind of sojourning in between.

[3 : 1 0] And then it says, not knowing. That he would, after receive, he went out not knowing. It's the same with us. We don't know yet, experience yet. We have not yet experienced the fullness of the country we go to, but we also don't know where we're going to go in the meantime, in the in-between time. I mean, think back one year, two years, five years, 10 years. Would you have pictured yourself here? Would you have chosen the path that God took you on? I wouldn't have, you know? If you go back to 2012, 13, 14, the idea of moving out of New York, no way. I mean, that's where my roots are. And God said, nope, we're going to move. You fast forward and, okay, 2017, 18, 19, what I've ever thought of being here and planting a church. Not a chance. Not a chance. So we do the same thing as Abraham by faith. We trust God that he's called us out, that there is a city whose builder and maker is

God. We're not yet there, but we're in the in-between time. And how did God look at that? He said, oh, by faith, Abraham did this. He did it. Good job, Abraham. And we're going to see today, he didn't always look pretty. It's the same for us. As we journey in the in-between world, between God calling us out of this world and into the next, it's not always pretty. There's lapses of faith.

There's failure. There's our own sin nature that's in the way. In Hebrews 11, he says this one word down in verse 16, speaking, he goes through his whole section with Abraham and Isaac and the patriarchs.

He said, but now they desire a better country, that is, in heavenly, where God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he's prepared for them a city. And that one word there, desire, I think encapsulates very well how God looks at us and Abraham as we see ups and downs. We're like, God, I'm doing bad. God, I'm doing good. I'm doing really bad. I'm doing really well. God just looks at our heart. He looks at it through Christ. And he says, yes, but I see that you desire this better country and I'm going to get you there. So our theme today, if we turn back to Genesis 20, is steadfast.

And I have the scripture there, it's Lamentations 3.22, the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. Or another way of translating that is, it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. Same idea, though. His mercies do not come to an end. His love is steadfast. That is what supports and sustains us. So as we read in the text here, in verse 1, Abraham is leaving. He's leaving Hebron, where he currently is.

Remember, he could look down and he could see down into, in the distance, the Dead Sea, the valley there, where he could see the smoke coming up. He sees Sodom and Gomorrah. And for whatever reason, now he leaves in verse 1 and he goes to Gerar. Well, where's Gerar? So if we look on this map, if you remember when he went down into Egypt, that was through the wilderness of Shur, and it was somewhere way over there in Egypt. Nobody's quite sure. Sorry. But if you see Hebron up there, and then you can see the Dead Sea, and then there's Gerar.

[6 : 29] It's not that far away. And it says here that Abraham journeyed from then, so from Hebron, toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and so journeyed in Gerar.

Well, that's not far. That's not very far. It's just a little ways away. Well, no matter how far we move from the Lord, it's never good, whether far or little. Why did Abraham leave? What's the reason that he left? I'm not 100% sure. Let me keep saying that. I don't know the reason for sure, but I think he kind of got rocked a little by what happened there with Sodom and Gomorrah. Also, if you think there's a lot of other tribes and peoples in that region, what do you think it did to them? Seeing this entire nation just dissolved in the heat, the fire and brimstone from heaven.

So we said this in Genesis, when we looked at Genesis 12, we said this, when you know you are where God wants you, stay there no matter the opposition. No matter the opposition, we are to stay there. I think this verse kind of encapsulates where Abraham kind of could have been, but didn't stay there. Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 7. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil. In other words, to fear the Lord and depart from evil, to not be wise in your own eyes, is to do what? Trust God with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding, and in all your ways, expect God to be the one to direct your path. Abraham, we're going to find out, you know, over in verse 13, he says that he told Sarah that when God first called him to wander from his house, he says, this is your kindness to me in every place we go. So every place they've gone,

Sarah said, this is my brother, this is my brother, this is my brother. And Abraham's like, this is my sister, this is my sister. We have two accounts specifically of Egypt, and now here with Abimelech, which is Philistine country, is the first mention of the Philistines, where it actually turned out pretty badly, and Sarah was taken. But Abraham's telling us that in every place they've gone, he's asked of her, would you say that you're my sister? And she's done that. And so it seems like here, God has to work this idea of self-reliance out of Abraham, is what he's doing. The breakdown of the chapter, you kind of have verses 1 and 2, Abraham moves. Verses 3 to 7, you have Abimelech's dream.

Whether it's one dream or two dreams, he's dreaming and God is communicating with him in his dream. Verses 8 through 13, you have the discussion between Abraham and Abimelech. And then verses 14 through 18, you have a restoration, where his wife is restored, and a reproof. And you also have the restoration where God restores to Abimelech the ability to have children. But before Abraham could receive the child of promise, he needed to be freed from this self-reliance, this ingrained habit in him from the very beginning of God's call till now, it's still there. Despite how far Abraham has come, it's still there. And you know, sometimes we could apply that with our walk in Christ. Before we can receive the child of promise, we have to be freed from self-reliance. You

cannot come to the cross relying on yourself for salvation, right? You have to come as a sinner. It's like, I can't, I have no self-reliance. I come as a sinner. I come to receive grace. And it's no different as we continue our walk with the Lord. Self-reliance gets in the way. And many times God has to then kind of take us through our own Abimelech to do that. Some habits and tendencies that seem so normal and right are actually in direct opposition to a life of faith. For Abraham, this was very normal. This was how he's always acted. This is what he expected. I think for Abraham, he had got to the point now where it was almost like, well, since he was right with God, he expected everything he did was right. And God is going to work that out of him. Self-reliance. What does self-reliance do? It runs from a crisis it cannot control because self-reliance cannot handle anything bigger than itself. What does that mean?

[10:57] So look, think of Abraham. Abraham's here in Hebron. He sees Sodom and Gomorrah go up and he's like, I cannot, I can't quite process this. Is Lot dead? Is he alive? The nations around him and tribes around him must be freaking out. And instead of staying there, that uncomfortable place, he's like, I'm just going to move a little further away from here. I'm just going to go to Gerar. It's not that far. I'm just going to remove from here. It'll be more comfortable. But that's because he's relying on himself. And self can only handle things that are not even bigger than itself, right? Because if something comes into my world I can't handle, but I'm relying on myself to handle it and process it, I have to get away from it. I have to remove myself from it. How do I cope?

So Abraham removed himself to an area that was more manageable for him. But what does faith do? Faith always allows us to not only believe things that are bigger than ourselves, right? We believe in Jesus. We believe in God. He's bigger than us. But it also allows us to bear things that are bigger than ourselves. Turn to Mark chapter 5. Jesus is passing through the area of the Galilee. And the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, he comes to him and he says, hey, my daughter is sick. She lies at the point of death. Come and heal her. And Jesus says, sure, I'm coming. I will come and do that for you. And in the meantime, the lady comes with the issue of blood and she reaches out and she grabs the hem of his garment. And Jesus stops. So if you're Jairus, your daughter's at the point of death, you're believing Jesus to come and heal her. So you're believing that God is bigger than your problem. Faith believes things that are bigger. So Jesus, you're going to come and heal her. But now Jesus stops. And he turns and he says, who touched me? And the disciples say, well, there's so many people pressing upon you. Why would you say that? He says, hey, someone touched me because virtue has gone out of me.

Something happened. And then he turns, he begins to talk with this lady. And Jairus is like, what is going on? And then some guy comes and says to Jairus, hey, trouble the master no more. Your daughter's dead. She's dead. Right? What does Jesus do? Right? Jesus turns as soon as he heard it there in verse 36.

He said to the ruler of the synagogue, be not afraid, only believe. He didn't say, she's alive. She's healed. So faith allows us to bear things. He's like, only believe. If you believe me, if you trust in me, your faith will allow you to bear something that's way bigger than you. Something you couldn't handle.

Your daughter's dead, but only believe in me. And faith will carry you through this. And then they go down and she's healed. And so then faith believes things that are bigger, but causes us to bear things that are bigger. If we do what? Lean not on our own understanding. We have to trust the Lord.

[13:48] Lord. Abraham should have read Psalm 91, except it wasn't written yet. A thousand shall fall at thy side and 10,000 at thy right hand, but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes, Abraham, shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most high, your habitation. There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come now your dwelling. We look for a city whose builder and maker is God. Essentially, we look for a city who is God. If God is our dwelling place, what's it matter where we dwell? He's our protection. But Abraham moved from this place.

So that kind of gives us kind of, I think, like the heart of Abraham, where he could have been, where he should have been, and where he is. I mean, and we can find ourselves there too. But as we saw in Hebrews, God doesn't, God doesn't see things as we do. Thank the Lord he doesn't. So any distance we put between us and the Lord, no matter how small, will always result in compromising our faith.

So Abraham, last time he went all the way to Egypt, it was a big compromise. He comes out with Hagar and all this mess. Oh, he's only moving a little bit away. But any distance that we choose to put between us and the Lord results in a compromise. What did Abraham remove away from? If you remember, we looked at where he was when he met with God. Abraham moved away from the place of communion, the place where he met with the Lord, the place of revelation, where God was speaking new things to him, and the place of the Word of God. The Word of God came to Abraham. God specifically came to his tent to speak the Word to him. We see where he gets up in the morning to go and meet with the Lord in the place he had previously met with him. And this is all that Abraham's now moving away from, and thinking that this is a good idea. So in verse 1, Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. We put up a bunch of definitions.

I think we just kind of need to see them real quick. Dwelled. As Abraham dwelled, it means to sit down or remain. He dwelled between Kadesh and Shur. Between, that means a space between, right? It's like the gap. He's in the gap between. Shur means holy. I'm sorry, Kadesh means holy. Shur means a wall.

[16:11] Sojourned. Sojourned literally means to be turned aside. And then Gerar, a lodging place. When you put that all together, Abraham's back was against the wall, the wall of Shur, and he became lodged in the space. He sojourned in the space between a holy life and the life of the world. This is where he was stuck. He had wedged himself between this place of holiness and the world. He was lodged up against the wall. His back was against the wall. And so he thought the best thing to do is just to do what's always worked for me. Sarah, you know the drill. And honey, I know you're like 90 some years old, but man, did God do a work in you?

And Abraham said of Sarah, his wife, she's my sister. And Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. One verse, but a whole lot happens there, doesn't it? He says, she's my sister. And then the next thing that happened is like, like, what is this? Like the king takes the sister's week? How does this work? This is so strange. Well, this is kind of just that we don't live in this ancient history, this world of the ancient tribes. It's kind of normal. Actually, God gives in Deuteronomy 21, he actually gives Israel a law concerning this type of thing. He says, when you go forth to war against your enemies, and the Lord your God has delivered them into your hands, and you have taken them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and has a desire unto her, that thou would have her to wife. And thou shalt bring her home to your house. She'll shave her head, and cut her fingernails, and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and she'll remain in your house, and bewail her father and mother for a full month. And after that, thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, and you shall let her go, whether she will. But thou shalt not sell her at all for money.

Thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her. The idea is, you bring her into your house, you do this thing, she's there for a month, and then you take her to wife. In that month period, where you're like, you know, this isn't really gonna work. Now that I see you with a shaved head, I'm just not, no. But if you get to know her, you're like, this isn't gonna work. Then you let her go.

You don't treat her as captivity, you don't try and sell her as merchandise. But hey, if after that month, you're like, I think this is gonna work, you've taken up my God, you follow Yahweh, then you can marry her.

And so there's, this is kind of a, the way they did things back then, you know? It was, uh, online dating? Well, this was kind of the alternative. So it's not unheard of for someone to do this, and Abraham realizes this.

[18:58] But the king, the king goes and takes, what? Abraham's bride. And the king always has a right to the bride. Always. So we, we need to make sure that for us, the bride, what king's hands are we putting the bride into?

No. Because the king will always have a right to the bride. Who's the king in your life? Who's the king in my life? What are the things I let rule my life, make decisions in my life? That's what I'm putting that, the bride into the hands of the world, entertainment, my job, my pride.

What is it that I'm allowing the bride to go to that king? And so Abraham puts the bride in the hands of the king of the world. And any decision, we've said this before, back in chapter 12, any decision that delivers the bride into the hands of the world is the wrong decision.

But Abraham did not need to do this, did he? He didn't need to place himself under the hand of the king, nor Sarah, in this position. Abraham, he chose to dwell in a land that while not outside of God's control, we're going to see that.

God has complete control in this situation. It was outside of God's will. And that made all the difference for his experience of life. He was in God's control, but he was outside God's will at this point.

[20 : 16] So what can we take from that as we move through this? Just because I am right with God does not mean I'm always right. But it does mean I now have access to the source of all that is right.

The word of God. Abraham, and we're going to see as he goes through his relationship with Abimelech when he says, surely I thought there was no fear of God in this place. He kind of has this messed up view of the world around him.

He thinks he's right and everybody else is wrong. He's blessed. Nobody else is. He had access to the source of all right. But it didn't mean that every decision he made was right.

And so Abimelech takes this, or takes Sarah. Who now is also living with Abraham? Hagar and Ishmael.

Think of what this did in his home when all of a sudden, you know, bye Sarah. Have a good time storming the castle. Right? She's with the king of Gerar. She's gone and Hagar's like, all right.

[21 : 18] About time. This is what it's supposed to be. Come on, Ishmael. You know, we don't need her. What's Abraham thinking? Well, at least I've got Ishmael as a backup. At least the flesh can back me up in this.

Right? It's not a pretty picture. It's just going to create a lot of problems and confusion. Right? And so then God steps in. Sarah's in the harem. The harem, we think of it in a way like the Western world paints it that it's just a man with a bunch of women.

But the harem was just the women's quarters. So that's where the women would be raising their children. It's where they lived. It was separate. It was to protect them and keep them from anyone who would try to take advantage of them.

Yes, these kings to make alliances and treaties with different nations would take in relatives from those nations. So you can see maybe Abimelech's like, wow, I've heard of this man Abraham.

A great man. And yeah, let me make an alliance with you. I'll bring your sister in. But God comes to him. But God came to Abimelech or literally to enter in.

[22 : 25] He entered into his dream, his world, and his situation. He entered into a dream by night and said to him, don't you want God to come speak to you in a dream at night? Don't you want the Lord to speak to you in the night?

I have some stupid dreams sometimes. And I wake up and I'm like, Lord, I sure hope you weren't speaking to me in that dream. That didn't make any sense. I don't know what that was. And then there's some dreams you wake up and you realize, huh, in my mind, in my dream, I sought the Lord.

You have those sometimes where it's like, you just kind of like speak to the Lord. Mine are usually just really bizarre mix of my current life, past life, and childhood and whatever I watched on TV or ate.

But the Lord comes and speaks to Abimelech. This is the one true living God. And he says, Abimelech, you're a dead man. Praise the Lord. For the woman which you have taken, she is a man's wife.

Don't need an interpretation for that dream, do you? You kind of know what it is. That wording there, she's a man's wife, is literally, she's a wife of a husband. I like that because of the world we live in today.

[23 : 33] She is a wife of a husband. Not a wife of a wife or a husband of a husband. She is a wife of a husband. They only go together. You can't have a wife without a husband. There's no other way.

You can call yourself whatever pronoun you want to. But she is a wife of a husband. It literally means she belongs and is ruled over. Really not popular in today's world, is it?

She belongs and is ruled over. The Lord looks at things different than we do because the Lord looks at things according to His will and His created order.

We must be careful never to assume that our sensibilities are God's sensibilities. God transcends our culture and our opinion. Sometimes we take upon us sensibilities that the culture has imposed upon us.

I can track it over my lifetime. Like the things that now if someone says you kind of react to a little. You know, if you say something like, well, women should be, wives should be submitted to their husbands.

[24 : 35] It's kind of like, oh, you probably should word that a little better. It might offend somebody. You know, that didn't used to be. I mean, when I was a kid growing up in the church, it was a very normal thing. Now, if you say that, it's kind of like, oh.

Of course, nobody then wants to qualify what that looks like. The wives should submit to your husband. Okay, what type of husband? Oh, a husband who loves them, their wife, as Christ loves the church, sacrificed and died and gave his life for them.

Okay, that's a little different. But here it says, she's the wife of a husband. She belongs to someone. She's being ruled over. She's not yours to take, Abimelech. You can't have her. But Abimelech had not come near her.

He said, Lord, will you slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, she's my sister. And she even said, he's my brother. In the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands, have I done this?

Wow. What a thing to speak back to the Lord. I am innocent in the integrity of my heart. Abimelech's viewpoint was not wrong. It was just not God's.

[25 : 41] Abimelech was completely right in his viewpoint as far as he knew. But God's going to give a different spin to this. So Abimelech says, hey, I've been righteous. I've had integrity.

She said she's his sister. He said, you know, he's her brother. And God says in verse 6, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I have also withheld you from sinning against me.

Therefore suffered I you not to touch her. Wow. So Abimelech, what it is to be an Abimelech.

Abimelech lived by the morality of his time. Abimelech, he's like, I didn't do anything wrong.

This is what we do. We take men's sisters and bring them in to be my wife. I've got like 40 more over here. He lived by the morality of his time. He said, God, I'm innocent. I have integrity according to God's view of things.

No, according to his own morality. He assumed his decisions were his own. Well, I chose this. And the Lord said, no, you didn't. I kept you from that. He felt justified by someone else's actions.

[26 : 41] Well, my actions were because they said this. This. And though, and he thought his lack of the knowledge of sin relieved him of his accountability to God.

Well, I didn't know about that, God. What does the Lord say? The Lord says, that is sin. And I've kept you from sinning against me. What you thought was just your integrity, what you thought was just the normal thing to do, if you had done that, Abimelech, it would have been sin, even though you didn't know it was sin.

In Romans chapter 2, we're told that God has no respect of persons. For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law. And as many have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.

It's not whether you know what sin is. It's the fact that you have it. We have the condition. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having no law are a law unto themselves.

They just prove the law is true and that God has written it on every man's heart. which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile excusing, I'm sorry, accusing, or else excusing one another.

[27 : 51] That's Abimelech. His conscience is excusing him. But the point is, he has a conscience that says right or wrong. So he knows there's a law. And that means then he is a man who has sinned.

Without the law, there's no sin. But at the same time, without sin, there's no need for a law. So as soon as we recognize a law, we recognize then that we're under sin. And then Abimelech, he rightly recognizes that he represents not only himself, but his whole nation.

Remember where Abraham says back in verse, I mean, chapter 19, where he says, if there's 10 righteous, if there's 20, I mean, if there's 40, 30, 10 righteous, is will you slay the righteous with the wicked?

It ought not to be. And here Abimelech says the same thing, kind of repeats that back to the Lord in verse 4. He says, will you also slay a righteous nation? He recognized that as goes the king, so goes the nation.

That's true. That's true. This makes me think of our modern day conservative movement. The modern day conservative movement is not wrong in thinking that a better leader would be better for the nation.

[28 : 57] It's not wrong. A better leader would be much better for our nation. The problem is that God's people, they get caught up in attempting to change this world through means that, well, not wrong are just not gods.

Kind of like Abimelech. I didn't do anything wrong. The Lord's like, no, you didn't. But it's just not how I view things. You know, God, I've given years to try and get this man in office so that we could change the culture and change the nation.

Is that wrong? No, it's not wrong. But it's not how I view things. I change the heart, which then changes people, which then changes the culture. Right?

Yes, it's true. A better leader would be better for the nation. But in no way does God then say, that's how I want to change the world. That's how I want to change men. I want to reach them through a better nation.

He wants to reach us through our hearts. Proverbs 21.1, in speaking of a king, says, the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. As the rivers of water, he turns it whithersoever he will.

[30 : 00] So what Abimelech had assumed were his own decisions or actually direct intervention by God. God stepped in and withheld Abimelech from sin, not for the sake of Abimelech either, but for the sake of God's people.

He said, Abimelech, I've stopped you from this for the sake of my people. How many times has God restrained me from sin for the sake of someone else? Thessalonians talks about a restrainer in the New Testament.

2 Thessalonians 2, verse 7, says, For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. It means that as the Antichrist will go out into the world and he will be the perpetuator of all lawlessness across the whole globe, that it is currently already at work.

But we do not experience the fullness of that. Why? Because only he who now restrains will do so until he's taken out of the way. So there is a restrainer. The Holy Spirit is restraining and his restraint does what?

It keeps back the full extent of sin and wickedness. So in our own lives, the Holy Spirit does the same thing. He restrains us however many times he keeps us back from sin and restrains us so that we do not sin.

[31 : 14] We may think it's our own decision. We may think that, you know, it was just, this is how I've been brought up. Well, it's the Holy Spirit restraining. And he's doing it not just for our sake but for the sake of others.

You know, you think of your life and you think of, well, what if I fell into some really bad sin? And then you start to realize all the people that are connected to you and how that would affect them and what that would mean.

We've all seen prominent people in ministries go down and it's just sad. You don't see them come back very often. You don't see them pop back up. God, God loves to redeem.

He loves to forgive. And the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. So if a man falls, God can take care of him. God can clean him up and God can use him somewhere else. But you never seem to hear of that.

It seems like these people that fall, that, you know, Scripture says pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. And it almost seems like when they fall, they're so entrenched in the image of themselves, they just never get over it.

[32 : 17] But what would it cost? What would be the cost? What would be the effect, the result of us falling into sin? Thank the Lord he restrains us.

So Abimelech, he was responsible to live up to the truth he was given. God says that in verse 6. He says, Hey, I know this is according to the integrity of your heart, but now I'm telling you something further, Abimelech. I'm telling you now my viewpoint and this is sin.

Therefore, I suffered you not to touch her. Now, therefore, restore the man his wife, for he's a prophet and he shall pray for you and you shall live. If you restore her not, know thou that thou shalt

surely die, thou and all thy house.

Abimelech is responsible now to live up to the truth, to live up to the light that has been shown him. You could say, well, that's not my understanding of it. Well, then God's gonna, he's gonna die. He needs to live up to this.

Abraham, his lapse of faith did not alleviate him from his responsibility. As a representative for God. God comes and says, Abimelech, Abraham is my prophet. Ouch.

[33 : 22] It did not alleviate him as a spokesman for God, his lapse of faith, but it did make it a lot harder, a lot harder to be a witness. We saw that with Lot, didn't we?

When he went to his sons-in-laws and his daughters and they're just like, you've compromised so much and you've walked according to your own thoughts and desires. This doesn't even make any sense.

It doesn't even compute any more, Lot. But what do we see? That those who live under blessing and promise of God are never out of reach of its effects. So Abraham, he has moved from the Lord. He's put his wife in compromise. He has jeopardized the entire plan of God. Sarah is in Abimelech's house. God has said, hey, next year at this time, I'm gonna come and you're gonna give birth to Isaac.

And what does he do? He lets her go and essentially be the wife of some other guy. He has just jeopardized God's entire plan of redemption for the ages. And yet God still has mercy upon him.

[34 : 26] Therefore, Abimelech rose early in the morning. You bet he did. He woke up from that dream. He wasn't going back to sleep. He rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their ears and the men were sore afraid.

Like it or not, they were answerable to the word of God. And like it or not, all men are answerable to the word of God. But here you see the response to God's word. Even, even in Abraham's compromise, look what God's doing through his life.

These, this pagan king has now met with the Lord, has heard God's word, is responding to God's word in obedience. And he's told the men of his house and they've responded in fear.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. God is able to supersede every situation and bring redemption out of it. Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?

God forbid. No, we should not. But thank the Lord our lapses don't prevent God from working. And Abimelech, then he rises and he says to everybody, this is what's going on.

[35 : 33] God came to me in a dream. Somebody call Abraham. Then Abimelech, in verse 9, called Abraham and said unto him, what have you done unto us? What have I offended you?

That you have brought on me in my kingdom a great sin. He's recognizing, I sinned and it's your fault because you didn't tell me I was in sin.

You didn't tell me living with my boyfriend was wrong. You didn't tell me that this language didn't glorify the Lord. You didn't tell me that following after and desiring the status of the world was a sin. You didn't tell me these things. You've brought a sin upon me. You've done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, what did you see?

You have done this thing. It is never a pretty scene when the world has to reprove God's people, is it? What was Abraham thinking? I don't know. Did he think it didn't matter what he did because God would rescue him?

[36 : 40] Well, God's got me out of every other situation. I got God's blessing on my life, so I'm just going to skate through life and not worry about it. Did he assume that all nations were as expendable as Sodom?

I kind of think so because we're going to see his response here. He has this really low view of the world around him. Was Abraham resentful of God's timing and care of him?

And there's a little of that as well, I think, that the way God has led him, he is not as happy with at this moment as he could be. Remember, God has taken Lot from him.

I'm the last member of my family and now God, you smoked him. He doesn't know if Lot's alive.

What did Abraham see? Abraham saw only himself, not his wife, not Abimelech, and not the Lord.

All he saw was just himself. Sarah, tell him you're my sister so I don't die. And he had a very low opinion of the world around him. And Abraham said, because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place and they will kill me for my wife's sake.

[37 : 42] He had a very low opinion. Maybe he thought everybody outside of Ur the Chaldees is just barbarians. And so when God is calling him out, he's like, Sarah, we're going out into the great

wide world and it's scary.

It's like the Wild West out there. Maybe this will buy us some time. They won't just kill me and take you. Say you're my sister. Because you really are. You know, we have the same dad.

You're my sister. And maybe it'll buy us some time. If they take you, well, I can figure out a way to get you back. But don't, if you say you're my wife, I mean, you're amazing and they'll just kill me.

What am I going to do? I won't be able to defend myself. Maybe he thought he was buying himself some time. But he was not trusting the Lord with all his heart. He was leaning on his own understanding, wasn't he?

Either way, this was an issue of the heart that God had to deal with before he could receive the fulfillment of the promise. And the unfortunate thing is he's going to pass this mindset onto Isaac. And Genesis 26 tells us about Isaac, that Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

[38 : 46] And the men of the place asked him of his wife and he said, she's my sister. He feared to say she's my wife. So, a partial truth and a partial lie that dad was okay telling, by the time the son comes along, it's just a straight lie.

He feared to say she's my wife. Les said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebecca because she was fair to look upon. Same thing. And so, Abraham, unfortunately, passed this mindset onto his children, but God is taking him through this before he's able to receive the fulfillment of the promise.

And it came to pass, I'm sorry, we didn't read verse 12, we alluded to it, and yet indeed she's my sister, she's the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. And so he passes this compromising mindset onto Isaac.

And it came to pass when God caused me to wander from my father's house that I said unto her, this is the kindness which you shall show unto me. Every place where we shall come, say of me, he is my brother.

One bad excuse after another. Never try to make yourself look better by making others look worse. Such excuses will eventually find you blaming even God for your poor choices.

[40 : 07] Abraham, he was trying to make himself look good by others looking worse. You know, well, I didn't think there was fear of God in this place. I just, I mean, have you seen the people around here?

They're not like me. You know, he can't even own it and say, I'm sorry. I've been like, I was wrong. Now he's kind of like bringing his wife into this as well. Then eventually he blames God.

How does he blame God? Well, the word there in verse 13, it says, it came to pass when God caused me to wander. There's like 50 different words you could use for wander.

A bunch of different words for wander. He uses the word for wander, the only one that has, in every other place in scripture, it's negative. It means to go astray, to stagger like you're drunk, to err, as in like a false prophet has deceived you.

He is using the worst word for wander. That God has caused me to go staggering from my father's house. You know, I don't really know what he's doing here.

[41 : 07] It's like, Abraham, is this your view of things? Did God cause him to wander around aimlessly? No, not at all. God told him specifically, here's the land, here's Canaan, here's Hebron.

I think what Abraham is saying, he's either kind of got a really poor attitude right here, or he's kind of expressing, this is where I was at. When God caused me to wander, I looked at it like, God, you are causing me to go out into Nowhereville.

This is ridiculous. So I told my wife that she should be my sister. This seems like a confession. Like, this is how I viewed this. And I asked her, and that would be a kindness unto me.

A kindness. You know the word kindness there means goodness and faithfulness. Do you know kindness? It's so strange. You look like the definition is you go down through Strong's Concordance and the definitions, you get to the bottom, and there's places, there's two places in scripture that's used for reproach and shame.

It's so strange that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. That's the word kindness. Same word there.

[42 : 17] I find that interesting that there was this idea of reproach and shame. Why? Because I think that apart from the Lord's kindness, we can think we're doing a kindness and it can cause reproach and shame.

Here, Abraham's saying to Sarah, Sarah, be kind to me, and it's just, it turns into a reproach and a shame. I want to look at this scripture real quick. Sarah is never reproached for her faithfulness and obedience to Abraham.

Never. They're a part in this. It's never a kindness to compromise. It will only lead to reproach and shame. But, Peter tells us this, for after this manner in the old time, the holy woman also who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters you are, so long as you do well, they're not afraid with amazement.

What does that mean? I think it's referring to this, this section of scripture, these times, that she obeyed her husband. Peter's holding this up as an example of godly living for a godly woman. He said, Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him Lord, essentially allowed herself to be led by him. And she wasn't afraid. She wasn't afraid of the choices he was going to make.

[43 : 36] Sarah is never reproached for her faithfulness and obedience to Abraham. In Abraham's lapses of faith, Sarah remained faithful and supportive. She trusted that God would work through her husband and through the problems.

She was not afraid with any amazement, Peter said. In other words, she did not let the fear of her husband's failure move her from her trust in God.

Instead of attempting to take matters into her own hands, she left them in the Lord's. It's a hard thing because what does God, do we see in Genesis in the beginning? God said to Eve, it's going to be hard for you.

You're going to want to step in and take control of a situation that you see your husband isn't doing well in. And here Peter holds up to us Sarah and says, ladies, I know, there's times where you just want to be like, is that really what you want to do?

There's a better way to phrase that. There's a better way that you can encourage your husband in his role. You want him to be in his role. You want him to lead you. You know, I say that to my girls all the time.

[44 : 37] You know, when this world that says, you know, women power, you don't need men. And I said, really? Do you want your dad who's, do you wish your dad wasn't a leader? Do you wish your dad was just kind of a weakling and could be, you know, led around by anybody?

Do you wish that? No. Do you want your husband to be a wimp? Do you want your husband to be strong in the Lord? Or do you just want him to always need you to take care of him? No. Okay, well that's the lie the world gives you.

The world says, you don't need men, women, go out there. You know, and if you get one, well make sure he's not going to tell you what to do. Well, okay, the scripture never tells us that husbands are to tell their wives what to do.

But, do we really want to be in a situation where, where our daughters have men like that? No way. Do we want to be dad to our daughters like that? No way.

No way. And so the Lord, his perspective is very different. And Sarah, instead of taking matters into her own hands, she left them in the Lord's. And the Lord took care of her. Not just, whatever you want to do, honey, I think this is crazy.

[45 : 38] I don't care. No, it's, I'm, she's trusting the Lord. She's seeking the Lord and trusting him at this point. Let's wrap this up. And so then, now we have Abimelech's response in this back and forth conversation.

Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and men's servants and women's servants and gave them to Abraham and restored him, Sarah, his wife. And Abimelech said, and I wish, I bet Abraham's going, I wish she'd stopped talking.

Oh, it just hurts so bad. Okay. Okay. Okay. And Abimelech said, behold, my land's before you. Well, wherever it pleases you. Abimelech was not about to upset this prophet whom he still needed to pray for him.

Right? God told Abimelech, he's got to pray for you or you're a dead man if you want to be healed. We're told at the end of verse 18 that the Lord had closed up the wounds of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah.

Sarah. The wording there means that the men were impotent. What it means. Sarah wasn't there long enough to be like a whole year going by or something and like none of the women got pregnant.

[46 : 44] What it was is none of the women could get pregnant because God has put his hand on all the men. So, and that also could mean where God's saying to Abimelech, you're a dead man. Like, I'm going to cut off your line if you don't go and receive prayer from this man.

So here he's like, go wherever you want, take all this stuff and Abraham could go, well, everything turned out really well. I got a bunch of new sheep and oxen and I got all, no. We can never, ever view our relationship with the Lord through material blessing.

We can't view the relationship we have with God based on how well we're doing materially. It doesn't work that way. And so he goes and he says to Abraham, here's Sarah, your wife.

Take her, my land is before you. And then he turns to Sarah and says, behold, I've given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. Behold, he is to you a covering of the eyes unto all that are with you and with all others.

Thus, she was reproved. Literally, the word reproved means cleared. She was cleared. I don't think he was necessarily coming down hard on Sarah.

[47 : 52] I think what he was kind of doing was saying, hey, I'm doing what Abraham should have done. This price I'm paying, I'm going to do for you what Abraham should have done.

I'm providing covering and protection. This is what your brother should have done because he says there, behold, I've given to your brother a thousand pieces of silver.

Fine, you want him to be your brother? Whatever. Okay. And he steps in then and does what Abraham should have done in this situation. So Abraham prayed unto God and God healed Abimelech and his wife, his maidservants, and they bear children.

Man, how quick Abraham was just to be like, all right, time to pray, let's pray. What's going on here? He seems like through this whole thing, like his heart is so turned from the Lord and then he's right back there. Abraham at least appears to be one who quickly returns to God once the error of his way has been shown to him.

And for us, faith is quick to look away from personal failure and back to the face of God. We're going to have personal failure. We're going to have lapses. We're going to have moments where we say, like Abraham, we're going to give a half-truth and the Lord's going to bring our Abimelech and it's going to be painful and it's going to be awkward and then he's going to say, are you going to look away from that failure or are you going to dwell on that failure?

[49 : 13] Are you going to hold on to that or are you going to turn back to me? And so Abraham prays for Abimelech and what happens? Abimelech is healed. Prayer did for Abimelech and his family what no amount of medical intervention would ever do.

This was God's hand on Abimelech and his family. They were not going to have children at this point. Sorry, are you still writing? They could have gone to specialists.

They could have gone to doctors. They could have gone to whatever they wanted to do but this was God's direct intervention and prayer was able to do for his family what no amount of medical intervention could ever do.

What does that mean? Does that mean, well, I don't need to go to the doctor. It's just God's hand. I'm just going to pray. No. But it means God has the ability to step into every situation if we would ask him to and if we do and we lean not on our own understanding many times he may want to do for us what we think we need to go find someone else to do.

He wants our faith to be strengthened. He wants to make us an example to others. So the chapter ends with what? It ends with a reminder that God is always working on behalf of those who are connected to his promise and blessing.

[50 : 24] God is always working on behalf of those who are connected to his promise and his blessing. And the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah who was Abraham's wife.

Just, you can follow the path right back down to promise and blessing that God's always working on behalf of those that are connected to his promise and blessing. God will always work on our behalf when my faith lapses, God's promise and blessing never do.

They remain steadfast. The steadfast love of the Lord never fails. In the lowest moments of Abraham's life, he could never separate himself from God's faithfulness.

He could never separate himself from God's blessing. God was with him. We said, when we first started to look at the life of Abraham, we said there's two things to remember as we go through it. God's promise and Abraham's faith or his response to God's promise that in every section of his life,

those two things need to be examined.

Here we see Abraham's faith. It lapsed. He failed. But God's faithfulness, God's promise, God's blessing never do. God remains faithful. And Matthew, he says, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

[51 : 42] I am always with you. Timothy tells us, if we believe not, yet he abides faithful. He cannot deny himself. God remains faithful.

Joshua, there's a section in Joshua 21, verse 45 says, there failed not one word of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel. All came to pass.

But that whole section is Joshua 21, verses 43 to 45. It says, And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers, and they possessed it and dwelt there.

And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers. And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them. The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.

There failed not out of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel. All came to pass. God has taken Abraham through this.

[52 : 46] When he gets to the point where he has to sacrifice Isaac, he's going to see, he's going to remember all the things that God has taken him through. He's going to remember not one thing has failed of all that God said to me.

On all of my failures and lapses, God's word stood fast. And when God comes and says, you take Isaac up the mountain, we're told in Hebrews that he accounted God able to raise him up.

And so Abraham will receive Isaac twice, once in birth and once in resurrection in a type. But when he tells him, you take Isaac to the mountain, Abraham can go, yeah, everything God's told me has come to pass.

Despite my failures and my lapses, God's word did not fail all came to pass. So as we close, you know, God's word is not going to fail us.

We fail God's word. We have our own morality. We take on us the integrity of the culture. We think we know better. We remove ourselves from uncomfortable situations.

[53 : 50] And all this time, we think, well, I'm right with God. So everything I do will turn out okay. I have these scriptures that faithful is he who calls me who also will do it.

And all things work together for good. They do. They do. But let's not forget these moments where Abraham, he took his family and himself through a lot of heartache he didn't need to.

Now, Lot ended up in a pretty sad place. We've looked at both Lot and Abraham at low points of their lives, yet God never left them. He was always faithful.

Their lives were under promise and blessing. But they did not always experience the fullness of those promises and blessings. You and I can miss out on experiencing the fullness of God's promise and blessing.

We can be like Lot. You got to heaven smelling like sulfur. Let's be like Abraham and quickly turn back to the face of God.

[54 : 50] Father, thank you. This was a long, it was a short chapter, but there's so much there, so much that just spoke to us of your faithfulness, so much that shows us the tendency of my heart to lapse, to think I got it all together and I know what to do, to lean on my own understanding.

Lord, thank you. Thank you that we can go to Hebrews and see that your perspective is they didn't fail because I don't fail.

Thank you, Lord. You will never fail us, so we will never fail. We will never fail heaven. We will make it. But Lord, we want to, while we're here, in this in-between world, between, the world and the kingdom, between the old life and holiness, Lord, in this in-between space, Lord, we want to experience the fullness of your promise and blessing because we recognize our lives are not unto ourselves.

They affect so many people. So Lord, as we sit with you now and just close in song, we love you and we thank you for your unmerited, unending faithfulness.

And Lord, I would ask for myself and for my brothers and sisters here, Lord. Lord, would you please keep us from leaning on our own understanding? If you have to come in a dream like a Bimelech and say, hey, that's not the way.

[56 : 10] Okay. Lord, I want to be able to walk with you in a way that would edify not only my life, but all those around me.

We love you and thank you and in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[60 : 29] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[65 : 29] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

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[70 : 29] Amen. Amen.

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Amen. Amen. Amen.

[75 : 00] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[78 : 59] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.