



KIAMA ANGLICAN
CHURCHES

Lies in Egypt and Again

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Genesis 12:10-20, 20:1-18

Hebrews 12:1-6, John 14:1-4

The Setting within lies:

Abraham lived out many faithful moments, as we heard about last week from verses 1-9 of (Genesis 12). Abram left his home *to take hold of the great land, people, and blessings* God promised.

We can also read about moments of great faith in (chapter 15) and (chapter 22).

Today we focus on two failures of Abraham; Abraham's failures are in his lies. There is much for us to learn as we explore these two passages.

The Story lies reveals:

We begin today with Abraham leaving Canaan because of famine and travelling to Egypt.

Gen 12:10

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

This is a surprising turn in the story after the faithful response from Abraham to go; when he gets to the promised land, there is famine! There is not reward for faithfulness, or a chance to rest.

Maybe there is a message here - that faith is often followed by famine, even severe testing. *Has your faith ever been tested? Perhaps when the answers you may have sought or desired were not what was hope for or expected? Could you lean into God and trust him anyway?*

James 1:2-4 says:

"² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you

know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

Going to Egypt is a logical move if there is a famine. Egypt gets water from the Nile. Canaan is a dry climate. The problem seems to be that Abraham does not ask God what he should do.

Abraham did not deny God; he forgot God! Just like us! We can be serving God, loving God...and then we are hit with some kind of trial. We automatically look at our circumstances, instead of looking to God. *Looking to God means to listen to God. To seek prayerful direction. To be still and wait on God.*

Read 12:11-16

¹¹ As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. ¹³ Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”

¹⁴ When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. ¹⁵ And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

Abraham was willing to sacrifice his wife. He lets Sarai go into the harem of the Pharaoh to become a concubine! Abraham was willing to do this to save his own skin.

This comes immediately after Abraham left his land to be obedient to God. He moved from the heights of faithful obedience...to this low moment of lies and betrayal!

Abraham lied; he asked his wife to lie and he compromised his wife. He was willing to give up his wife in order to protect himself. It is hard to understand why Abraham did this...

He could ease his conscience because Jewish law meant that a brother had legal rights over a sister. So it was buying them time to escape. Maybe he even thought he was helping God? Because 'what would happen to God's plan if something happened to him?'

This lie was not of faith. Lies and faith do not go together. Abraham was living as if the God who spoke to him in Ur and guided him to the promised land...did not exist!

God was not in the driving seat, Abraham was.

Has there been a time when gain was greater in your heart than God's truth? An investment seeks a return. Lies and repeated sin create a propensity to grow our lies so as to cover each one before it. We lose sight of truth. The eventual increasing scale of lies leads to a catastrophic end.

Pharaoh made Abraham a rich man; his faithless act made him rich with 'things'. So God, sovereignly, acted.

Read 12:17:

17 But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai.

These plagues are just like the Exodus. Everyone in the household was afflicted but Sarai was not afflicted. This leads to Abraham being questioned.

Read 12:18-20:

18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?"

19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!"

20 Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

Abraham leaves with his 'things' but these riches are not a blessing...as we read on in chapters 13-15.

Abraham didn't reject God. He forgot about God and followed his own instincts.

Let's move on to our next passage. To get us there let's read (17:5)

"No longer will you be called Abram, your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations."

And (17:15):

"God also said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah'"

This was to commemorate that Sarah bore a son.

Like the title of 'Christian'. Are you worthy of your name being written in the book of the lamb, a true follower of Christ?

How sordid Abram becoming Abraham looks amongst these lies!

Read 20:1-2:

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.

Abraham makes the same mistake choosing to lie once more. Abraham's clinging sin is to trust himself instead of God. I wonder what your clinging sin is?

...

God is working in Abraham to teach him to trust him alone. God is working in you too.

...

Out of fear for his own safety, Abraham lies again. The exact same sin!

This sinful situation of repetition is something we all must face...a time when we had to learn something the hard way. The twicer!

It is not a light matter; the next time does not soften the impact. It may even harden the resolve. If only it stopped at a twicer!

Back to Abraham, this lie occurs after God has promised Abraham a son in the following year, which we can read about in chapter 18. Despite God's faithfulness to his

promises, Abraham is willing to put his wife at risk once again. He is willing to allow her to go into the harem of Abimelech and be a concubine.

Read 20: 3-7:

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.”

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.”

This time it is clear nothing happened between Sarah and the king because God intervened. He did this so that there would be no question as to whom the father of Isaac was! Even in the faithless act of Abraham, God guarded the integrity of the line of his people. The resolution of God’s plan is often best seen retrospectively!

Read 20: 8-10:

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?”

The irony of this passage is that the pagan Abimelech acts more righteously than Abraham. This is clear in the speech Abimelech makes to his people. There is a moral earnestness to his questions. *“What was your reason to do this?” asks Abimelech.*

Abraham’s faith has sunk to a low and his response is poor.

Read 20:11-13:

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.”’”

Abimelech and his people have a fear of God. Abraham lacks this reverent fear of God at this moment. Abraham’s deceit extends to asking Sarah to lie as well. This is a very low moment for Abraham.

The steps of doom can take us to the bottom of the pit. Such an experience was faced by Joseph in Genesis 37.

What has really been won in this? God can turn matters around beyond our understandings or expectations.

Read 20:14-18:

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^[a] 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.

These verses are full of grace. Abraham's folly is met with amazing grace. Abimelech shows grace toward Abraham and Sarah. In (verse 17) grace goes out to Abimelech.

This is also a message for Sarah. God can open any womb. He can open yours, Sarah. Genuine healing!

Abraham was fearful. He lacked faith at this moment. Faith believes that the promise of God is as real as the circumstances you are in. Abraham was in circumstance where there seemed to be conflict between the promise of God and his situation. Abraham chose not to believe in the reality of the promise of God.

It is not our job to know the process by which God will keep his promise. We are to trust...no matter what! Often times you will find yourselves in circumstances that seem

to contradict the faithfulness and the love of God. Satan can whisper in your ear... “If God really loved you, he wouldn’t allow this to happen to you”.

From time to time we find ourselves in difficult circumstances and we tend to question the faithfulness and promises of God. In difficult times we are called to believe that the promise of God is real.

Hebrews 13:5 says:

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”.

If you find yourself in a situation that feels like God has forsaken you, or forgotten you...hold onto this promise of God!

Two observations:

First: Abraham’s sins are never referred to again in the Bible. Why do you think this is? Another promise of God is that “He will remember our sins no more”. God does not keep a record of our sins. For all who believe by faith...listen to this...

Psalms 130 says:

Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

² Lord, hear my voice.

*Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.*

*³ If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?*

*⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*

When God forgives, he cleans our slate. He chooses not to remember. God has judged our sin in the person of Jesus

Christ. When we trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, our sins are wiped clean.

Come clean today! You do not have to carry those burdens any longer!

Isaiah 1:18 says:

*“Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;”*

God doesn't bring up Abraham's lies and failures again.

But his faith is celebrated in Hebrews 11, Galatians and Romans 4. This is such an encouragement for us!

Because we can all look back on our lives at shameful moments... At things we wish we had not said or done?

God remembers those sins no more! When we trust in the blood of Jesus!

The second observation:

What is the difference between Abraham's faith and his failings?

The grace of God.

It is the grace of God that made a difference in Abraham's life.

Why can we have faith and believe in the promises of God?

Because of the grace of God!

Our failings are our fault because we didn't believe or trust God.

We see the contrast between human nature in the raw vs human nature that experiences the grace of God.

Just a thought here... Our failings, or human nature in the raw, do result in consequences. I wonder what the lies did

to Abraham and Sarah's relationship? What did these circumstances do to Sarah's dignity and faith? I trust the grace of God ministered to her!

Today we can actively see the movement towards understanding the disrespect of women... As people who have experienced the grace of God, we should be a voice in this; particularly men speaking to men to show respect and dignity regardless of gender.

The Christian life is a life of grace. Usually we think of grace as God's unmerited favour, and that is true. We think of being saved by grace and that is true.

But I think the word grace also stands for the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. Nothing is impossible for God. God is gracious and is working in our hearts.

Trust that his promises are true.

Trust that he forgives your sins.

Trust in the One who gave his only Son!

Let us always understand and remember...that our lies have consequences but are also eternally forgiven!

Listen to these final words from the scriptures!

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24:

²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it."

Grace and peace, Amen!