

## 30. The same old song, the second verse

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Have you ever made the same mistake more than once? The first time, people might say, "It's OK. It was a mistake," and they let you slide. But when you make the same mistake again, they look at you with that look "What's-wrong-with-you!?!?"

It is one thing to make the same silly mistake twice or more, but it is a completely different story to commit the same sin that disgraces the name of God twice.

This morning we are going to look at another dark side of Abraham's life. The Bible is so honest that it shows not only the great things done by the great men and women of God, but it also shows their sins and faults without any cover-up. The only thing I can say is that I am so glad that the Bible is no longer being recorded. However, to the unbelievers, we are the only Bible they would ever read. That is why the right representation of God to them by us is extremely important.

Let's learn from Abraham's sin, so that we may not commit the same kind of sin again and again.

### A. THE SAME OLD SONG, THE SECOND VERSE

*Genesis 20:1-7 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. 2 Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." 4 But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? 5 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." 6 And God said to him in a dream, "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. 7 Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."*

On the tail of the great intercessory prayer to God on behalf of the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham again committed the sin that he did previously.

Yes, it is the same old song, the second verse. This is the same lie Abraham told back in Genesis 12:10-13. He didn't even bother to come up with a new line of lies. Abraham shows to us that it is all too easy to slip back into sinful habits. Instead of trusting God to keep his family together and safe, he devised his own plan to do it.

Listen, age does not automatically sanctify us or mature us spiritually. Unless yielded to the Spirit of God, we will repeat the sinful patterns of our youth in our old age.

Though Sarah was 90 years old at this time, she must have been a hot chic for Abraham to lie through his teeth like this. I don't think that they even had Botox back then.

To get to Gerar, Abraham had to go quite far south in the land of Israel. We don't find any words from God to Abraham to move out of Mamre. There was no inquiry

to God, no altar to build, no prayer to seek God's will. It is no wonder that Abraham went south, literally.

When God showed up in Abimelech's dream and told him, "You are so dead," he might as well hang it up. He was finished. Who can stand against Almighty God? No one. But this pagan king had more integrity than Abraham.

This threat may seem drastic, but the stakes were high. Despite Abraham's failure to really trust God in the situation, God was not going to abandon him. He would not let Abimelech touch Sarah. Her womb was going to bring forth the son of promise Isaac, who would eventually bring forth God's Messiah Jesus. God wasn't leaving this matter up to mankind.

God kept Abimelech from worse sin. God's protecting power can guide even a pagan king.

## **B. SHAME, SHAME, SHAME**

*Genesis 20:8-10* So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. 9 And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done." 10 Then Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?"

It is a sad day when a believer of God gets rebuked by a heathen. Unfortunately, it happens often. God always holds His followers to a higher standard than unbelievers.

Jesus told us that as the believers of God we ought to be salt and light of this dark and vile world. If we lower our standards, how are we different than them?

*Matthew 5:13-16* "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

## **C. ONE LOUSY EXCUSE COMING UP**

*Genesis 20:11-13* And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. 12 But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"

The people of Gerar may not have the fear of God in their hearts, but Abraham didn't have trust in God in his heart.

A lighthearted admission of sin is not the same as a brokenhearted confession of sin: *Psalms 51:17* The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart- These, O God, You will not despise.

If our attitude is right, we will hate our own sins, hate ourselves for having sinned and even despise the very memory of our sins. People who remember their sins with pleasure, calling 'good ole' days' and "enjoy them again" in their minds have never judged their sins properly or considered how terrible their sins really are in the eyes of God.

Abraham and Sarah had convinced themselves that they were not telling a lie at all. In their thought, it was only a "half-truth", and half-truths are not supposed to be as wicked as outright lies. Actually, they are worse! A half-truth has just enough facts in it to make it convincing and just enough deception to make it dangerous to everyone.

The majority of people would stay away from the satanic temples because they can tell it is purely satanic. But the same people would watch Joel Osteen's TV programs because he quotes Bible verses once in a while out of context and mixes them with his smooth-talking deceptions.

When Abraham said, "when God caused me to wander from my father's house", this is an indirect way of blaming God for the problem. Abraham claims that God sent him out on this dangerous journey upon which Abraham had to protect himself with his half-truth lie.

There is a terrible meaning in this verb 'wander' which Abraham uses. The Hebrew word "taah" occurs exactly 50 times in Scripture and never in a good sense. It is used of animals going astray, of a drunken man reeling, or staggering, of sinful seduction, of a prophet's lies causing the people to err, of the path of a lying heart. 6 other words are translated 'wander', any one of which Abraham might have used, but he intentionally used the worst word available.

Abraham should have said: "Forgive me, Abimelech, for dishonoring both you and my God." He should have been man enough to take full responsibility.

The consequence of this deception didn't stop here. Think with me about the deceptions that ran in his family:

- Abraham deceived the Pharaoh and Abimelech with his half-truth in Genesis 12 and 20 respectively.
- Abraham's son Isaac obviously learned what his father did and he also lied to another Abimelech in the kingdom of Gerar in Genesis 26. Abimelech was not the name of the king of Gerar, rather it was the king's title.
- Isaac's son Jacob was a cunning fellow from the beginning and his mother Rebekah helped him to deceive his own father to take away the family blessing from his brother Esau in Genesis 27. He even used the name of God to convince his blind father.
- 10 of Jacob's kids envied Joseph and wanted to kill him when they saw him in the wilderness. Instead of killing him, they sold their own brother into slavery in Genesis 37. Then they told their father Jacob that the wild animals killed Joseph.

See the progression of their deceptions from Abraham to the sons of Jacob? It was getting worse and worse as each generation passed by.

Why did Abraham sin? For one thing, though Abraham had a sinful nature, he had been justified by faith. God gave him a new name from "Abram" to "Abraham", but that did not change his old sinful nature. Because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ on the cross, believers can have victory over the old

nature, if we choose to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance. But this is not automatic. We must walk in the Spirit if we hope to overcome temptation.

In light of Abraham's compromise, we should never underestimate the power of Satan's temptations. Because he has been doing this for the last 6,000 years. He really knows what he is doing when it comes to tempting the believers of Jesus Christ and he is very good at it.

Satan continues his efforts to make sin less offensive, heaven less appealing, hell less horrific, and the Gospel less urgent. And unfortunately, there are many pastors and Bible teachers who are helping him to succeed by teaching the watered-down gospels instead of the truth from the Bible.

At the same time, we should not overestimate our own spiritual power to resist the devil's temptations. Without God, we are pathetically weak and vulnerable.

But if we depend on God and use the full armor of God which are the Belt of Truth, the Breastplate of Righteousness, having shod our feet with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, the Shield of Faith, the Helmet of Salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, we can stand against the devil's schemes.

#### **D. A REBUKE TO ABRAHAM BY A PAGAN KING**

*Genesis 20:14-18 Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. 15 And Abimelech said, "See, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you." 16 Then to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who are with you and before everybody." Thus she was rebuked. 17 So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; 18 for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.*

Abraham lost his testimony of God and a ministry to show these pagan people about his God. How could he talk to his pagan neighbors about the God of truth when he himself had told a lie?

Listen, a bad man's bad example has little influence over good men, but the bad example of a good man has enormous power for evil and brings occasions for unbelievers to blaspheme our God.

*2 Samuel 12:14a However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*

God does not reject His children when they sin, but He disciplines them because of His unending love. Abraham was justified by faith and had a righteous standing before God. Justification does not change. We are accepted in Jesus Christ no matter what we are in ourselves. Of course, the fact that we are justified before God means there should be changes in our lives. Because faith without works is dead.

We all know a famous verse from 1 John chapter 1:9:

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Yes, our God would forgive us if we confess our sins. But on the flip side of that is if we don't confess our sins, He cannot and will not forgive our sins. It means that it

becomes our choice not to have intimate fellowship with Him. We cannot blame Him for that.

Do you identify yourself with this unfaithful and backslidden Abraham? Do you have a tendency to slipping back to the old carnal habit again and again? Then, make it right with Him by asking God for His forgiveness and make a commitment to stay away from temptations and stay close to Jesus through His Word daily.

### ***E. APPLICATION***

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