**The Life of Abraham: A Journey of Faith – Part 10**

**Relapse and Redemption – Genesis 20:1-18**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – March 13th, 2022

**Intro:**

* Today we will deal with the topic of what to do when you find yourself giving in to a repeated pattern of sin. Even those people who deeply love God, are called by Him, and desire to follow the way of the Lord fully can fall for temptation and get trapped and entangled in sin. From our text for today, we will see Abraham and Sarah do just that again; they repeat a pattern in their lives of deception and lying, and from their experiences, we can learn what to do so we can avoid and escape the relapse of sin. There are three things you need to do, which are the three main points to this message: examine your thinking, consider the consequences, believe what is true.
* I want to remind you, **"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (Rom 15:4-5, ESV)**
* I believe the best approach to our text today is to read this whole account through, so you understand the big picture of this story, and then to come back to the text and pull from it our three main points.

**Genesis 20 NIV**

**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, (show the map slide) 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."**

**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."'"**

**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.**

* Now we are going to circle back to the verse where Abraham gives the reasons why he did what he did, and by examining his thinking, we will examine our own thoughts that lead us into a repeated pattern of sin.

**Examine your thinking**

* Here is the response that Abraham gave as to why he did what he did:

**Genesis 20:11 (NIV)**

**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.'"**

* *False assumptions* – Abraham falsely assumed that "there is surely no fear of God in this place." He was wrong, incredibly wrong. Abimelek, when God spoke to him in a dream, responded with respect for God, calling Him "Lord" (v. 4), and appealing to His sovereignty, power, and character in saying, "will you destroy an innocent nation?" (v. 4). After waking, Abimelek immediately called all his officials, told them what had happened, and they were "very much afraid."
* Often, when we fall into repeated patterns of sin, we have false assumptions about people and circumstances. Everyone is not out to get you, and the people you are judging may have a fear of God greater than your own. Don't make faulty assumptions based on what you think is true versus what is actually true. People may be closer to God than you think, and the situation and the hearts of people may be different than what you think. Don't assume that you know what is in the hearts of people, especially in a negative way, assuming the worst. Ask God to help you see people how they truly are and give them the benefit of the doubt. Look first to build bridges before you build walls. False assumptions about people can get us in trouble.
* *Foolish fears* – Abraham, because of his false assumptions, then supercharged his fear to draw the darkest and most drastic conclusion, "they will kill me." Even if they had no fear of God, it does not mean that they would then automatically kill him. When we make untrue assumptions about people, we draw a straight line to the darkest result. We feed our fears and then look for ways of escape from monsters that don't exist. This drives up our anxiety issues, steals our peace, courage, and joy, then drives us into self-protection and self-preservation so that we return to our old sinful places of "protection."
* *Forgetting God's promises* – these things happened because Abraham forgot about God's promises for him. God specifically and repeatedly told Abraham that he and Sarah would have a child from their bodies. This would not happen if either of them were killed or separated from each other. If they had remembered God's promises to them, they would be confident of God's protection. They would live in that truth and choose to tell the truth, trusting God to provide and protect them instead of taking matters into their own hands. This is a lack of faith in God's sovereignty, power, and character.
* When we continue to return to a repeated pattern of sin, our thoughts run along the same tracks as Abraham's. We have to examine our thinking, asking, "is what I am assuming true? Am I drawing rational and probable conclusions? And am I holding onto the promises of God, walking in His pathways keeping the way of the Lord? "
* The next thing we need to do to avoid repeated patterns of sin is to consider the consequences of having a relapse.

**Consider the consequences**

* *Hurting those you love* – Abraham, by manipulating Sarah to lie for him in the name of love (v. 13), damaged her character and moral development by encouraging her to live according to her sinful nature (lying). He and we have a calling to "spur each other to love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24). He put her in harm's way by removing his protection and by making her vulnerable for bad things to happen to her. I am sure it was traumatizing for her to be in this position again, being separated from Abraham and at the whim of another man. It caused physical and relational separation, and created problems in managing the home front.
* So often, our sin affects those we love, either intentionally and directly by sinning against them, or unintentionally and indirectly by removing our covering and protection from them. This happens all the time in families and in close relationships. There are considerable consequences for our repeated sinfulness, and we must not minimize or ignore the costs.
* *Hindering the lives of others* – in Abraham and Sarah's case, it cost those to whom they were connected, in this case, King Abimelek. It cost him time, energy, effort, and money. His schedule was interrupted, the lives of all of his officials were interrupted, he had to confront Abraham, his ability to produce was stopped, his life was cursed and threatened, and he had to pay for the damage that he had unknowingly done (v. 4-18).
* Abraham was called to be a blessing to all nations, but because of his repeated sin, he became a curse to Abimelek (What have you done to us? You did to us things that should never be done v.9). You and I are called to be blessings as well, and when we are living in sin, we compromise our calling and become a curse, not a blessing. This is a high cost that we must consider.
* We can also harm others by negatively affecting their view and understanding of God from our actions, which is the highest price of all.
* *Harming your reputation* – Abraham's reputation took a severe hit. God, in His goodness, exposed Abraham because He loved him. Abraham gave Abimelek and his officials reason not to trust his word. This caused problems for Abraham later onin his interactions with them. We do "reap what we sow," and loss of reputation is a serious blow. You will lose "face" and lose favor with people which could cost you dearly.
* An example of all these things from my failure at Verizon.
* The last thing that will be helpful to us if we are caught in the cycle of a repeated pattern of sin and don't know how to get up or get out is to believe what is true.

**Believe what is true**

* *God will be faithful to His principles, promises, and plans* – we see God’s faithfulness in this passage, where God intervenes to make sure that no one will stop His plans (even Abraham and Sarah). He confronts Abimelek, causing him not to "approach Sarah" and "shutting down" everyone's ability to reproduce. Abimelek could either comply with the command of the Lord, or he and his household would be removed by the command of the Lord (v. 3-7). God assured that His plan and promises would be fulfilled based on His character of righteousness and justice (v. 4).
* *Your gifts and calling are irrevocable* – Rom 11:29 (ESV) states that "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." In our passage, God calls Abraham a "prophet" (even in his sin) and instructs Abimelek to have Abraham pray for him so that he and his household would be healed and restored (v. 7, 17-8). If you are continually falling into a sin trap, this does not mean that God's calling on your life is over, and somehow you irrevocably messed up His plans for you and your life. You will be marked by this, but there is still good for you to do, and there is a plan for you to fulfill your calling.
* *You have a hope and a future* – this is God's plan for you. God is the God of "second chances" (think of Jonah, the prodigal son, Paul, and Peter). He is "slow to anger and abounding in love" (Ex. 34:6) and delights in restoration and resurrections. And it is through Christ that we can **"approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb 4:16 NIV).** The difference between the righteous and the wicked is the wicked don't get back up and are crushed by calamity. (Ill. of Nightbird tattoo) **"For the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity."** (Prov 24:16 ESV) The question is not if you will fall down. The question is, when you fall, will you get back up? So get up and move forward through the power, mercy, and promises of God.

**Conclusion**

* In conclusion, I have asked Jenny Fishe to share part of her testimony with us. Jen will come up and share, and then Dave will come back, conclude and pray.
* In order to avoid and escape the trap of sin, remember this passage from the life of Abraham and examine your thinking, consider the consequences, and believe what is true.
* Prayer people and pray