
SG020111

The Whole Counsel of God – Genesis 20-21

Got questions? Email Pastor Jason at jasonduff7@gmail.com

(You can download this message as a pod cast by searching Jason Duff on I-Tunes)

Introduction & Overview of the Section

Introduction

We are working our way through the life of Abraham and tonight we learn lessons as we follow Abraham down on a journey to Gerar, on the southern tip of Israel on the road to Egypt.

Three Events in Gerar – Genesis 20-21

#1 – Abraham’s Failure – Genesis 20

Abraham makes a journey to the south to Gerar and just like with his journey to Egypt in Genesis 13, Abraham falls, telling the king of the land Sarah is his sister. There is much to learn here.

#2 – Abraham’s Faith – Genesis 21:1-21

In chapter 21 we see the fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham in that he receives a son from Sarah. However this causes it own unique problems in their mixed family.

#3 – Abraham’s Triumph – Genesis 21:22-34

Abraham has another dealing with King Abimelech, but this time instead of depending on schemes of the flesh, Abraham trusts the Lord. The result is Abraham’s heart is full of worship.

Key Issues or Words

“Abimelech” (20:2, 21:22) – Abimelech is a title for the King of Gerar or the Philistines, not a proper name like Jim or Harry. This is important to know for Abraham’s son Isaac will have a run in with “Abimelech” in Genesis 26, but that Abimelech is a son or grandson of the ruler here in Genesis 20.

By the way...

Genesis 20:16 – “1,000 pieces of silver”– This was a hefty sum to pay Abraham. The price in that day for the finest of brides was 50 pieces of silver. Abimelech pays Abraham 20 times that amount, an amount in today’s money worth millions of dollars.

Going Deeper

(think it over yourself or discuss with the family)

Questions for the all of us...

#1 - Sometimes we lie to try to get out of trouble. Did Abraham get out of trouble or into more trouble when he lied about his wife? What can you learn from that?

#2 – In Genesis 21:33 Abraham found a creative way to worship the Lord by planting a tree for God. What creative ways can you think of to tell God you love Him?

Further study...

Compare Galatians 4:21-31 in which Paul refers to the Genesis 21 account to teach us about living under the power of the flesh verses the Spirit. What lessons can you learn?

Homework 4 Next Week – Genesis 22-23

Read Genesis 22-23 as we see the height of faith and despair in the Life of Abraham

W020110 – 11/14/12
Genesis 20-21
“Events in Gerar”

Introduction

- Tonight we are going to continue our study in the foundational book of the Old Testament and really all of the Bible
 - Remember the content is not hard to remember, because the title says it all

The word Genesis means “beginnings”

- And truly so many things in scripture have their beginning in the book of Genesis
 - The universe
 - Life in general
 - Man, marriage
 - Sin and evil
 - Language, government, nations
 - Specifically we will see the nation of Israel
- In fact understanding that this book means and is about beginnings really is a good way to divide up our look at this book as you can see in your book intro sheet

Outline for the Book of Genesis

Chapters 1-11 – The Beginning of all nations

- **Chapters 1-2 – The Creation**
- **Chapter 3 - 5 – The Fall**
- **Chapter 6-9 – The Flood**
- **Chapters 10-11 – The Tables of Nations**

Chapters 12-50 – The Beginning of the Jewish nation

- **Chapters 12-23 – Abraham**
- **Chapters 24-27 – Isaac**
- **Chapters 28-36 – Jacob**
- **Chapters 37-50 – Joseph**

We pick up the life of Abraham as he enters another portion of his life. - review

- He started out in the Ur of the Chaldeans
- God called him into the land of Canaan
 - There he experienced blessings and trials
- But now for this next season of he ends up moving down to the land of the Philistines, to the land of Gerar – if you have Bible map you can look, some have it listed in world of Abraham sections – if it is not labeled – but you have a map it is between Gaza and Bersheba which makes it onto most maps – and if you anything to look at you can picture it on the road from modern heading in the direction of Egypt – so it is south

We will put up this picture, but I don't think unless you have like 15 year old eyes, it is going to help you

- Look at the three cities to the left of the slide

- **And then we will put up a second slide that blows up the image of those three cities - the water to the left is the Mediterranean Sea and the Water in the upper right hand corner is the dead sea**
- So you have some bit on an idea of where Abraham is going in our story tonight

Chapters 20-21 overview that period of his life and 3 major events that took place during this few year stay right on the edge of the promise land

3 Events in Gerar – Genesis 20-21

#1 – Abraham’s Failure – Genesis 20

- Now Gerar is in the land of the Philistines
 - some scholars believe that they were from the island of Crete, near Greece, and traveled down invading the land many years before the time of Abraham

Some hold to the idea that the Philistines and the Palestinians are the same people, but that is really not true, only the name of the land is taken from these ancient people

- However there is one thing we do know about them and that is that their leader, at least at this time was named Abimelech
 - Now that is probably a leaders name like Pharaoh or President, because we will see another Abimelech years later, but it is obviously not the same guy
 - It is the leader of Gerar’ name

Now if you have been with us for a while you will notice this story sounds very familiar

- But this is not the same story, yes this is Abraham the Father of the Faith, finding himself in sin again
 - Now before we go any further you need to understand something this communicates to me

The first one being just that believers do fall

- I wish this passage was not here, but it is, because believers do fall – we won’t be perfect until we get to heaven – some say they already are
 - **Charles Spurgeon met a man who said he was perfect, and I love Spurgeon, he dumped a cup of water on the man’s head, the man started swearing and Spurgeon said – aha, you still have a ways to grow – that Surgeon he is my hero**
- Abraham is a sinner, but more than that – He repeats a previous sin, but there are some differences here
 - In chapter 12 there was at least a famine, there was at least a reason
 - But not here
 - He just decides this is something he wants to do, something He is opening the door to sin in his heart

Listen to me precious church, a repeating sin is something many struggle with, I would venture to say all of us

- you have things you do – you think, man that was dumb, what in the world
 - you repent and you never go down that road again
 - but there are other sins in our lives that seem to be constantly a struggle

- Whether it is a struggle of bitterness, you say, Father forgive me and help me to forgive others, but it just stays there
 - And I think something to take away early on in tonight's study and we will revisit it before the study is over – but unlike Abraham we need to not keep walking down the same road

This same road was traveled before – and he ended up in Egypt, he ended up telling the Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister and God had to bail him out

- and God is so gracious, but he leaves with many possessions that lead to the break up on him and his beloved nephew Lot, Lot leaves Egypt with an infection in his heart that will drive him to Sodom and Gomorrah, and he leave with a servant girl by the name of Hagar that caused problem after problem
 - not a great trip -not great results
 - and yet – Abraham is heading down this path again

My point is – we already have a great struggle with sin, we don't want to make it easy to sin, we want the opposite – we don't want to keep heading down the same road - If you struggle with over spending, you don't have a credit card – but – we did life without for years, and it was okay

If you struggle with online porn, then get rid of the internet in your home, on your phone, but what will I do??? –

- my kids think I lived in the time of the dinosaurs and thought that is not true, that Pastor Rob that lived then (sorry I am getting you back for the “little bundle of energy” description of me on Sunday Morning.
 - I did not live in the time of the dinosaurs, but I did live in a time where life did exist before the internet, and before cell phones, and I got through High school just fine, I didn't have face book, I had real friends I ate lunch with –
 - we did it and again I am not saying Internet is evil – but if that is your struggle, – isn't it worth it to be free to not have that road to walk down

Abraham goes down the road, He once again has Sarah say – she is my wife

- And God has to bail him out again

God does this by giving Abimelech a dream, he says – you are dead man!

- literally it is just “You... Dead Man
 - **I picture God as an Italian Mafia member in this dream this guy is having**
 - Hey, what's a matter with you – you are a Dead!!!
- Why – Why am I a dead man?
 - Because you have taken another man's wife

And I find it so interesting the exchange that takes place between Abimelech and God

- Abimelech says – wait a second, I took that girl into my harem because Abraham said she is my sister and she agreed – they didn't have any kids, it made sense
 - I did it in the integrity of my heart he says, the integrity of my heart

I mention this to you, because then God says, I know you did, I know you didn't mean any harm

- so I have kept you from sin with that man's wife
 - but now, you need to do that right thing

- this exchange really encourages me because I don't know about you, but I know folks that can be petrified to make a wrong decision
- you know as a pastor I get the question all the time, how do I know God's will for my life
 - and we actually did a whole study on that when you did the series 20 questions you can get to on our website
- But basically I believe when we want to know God's will that very rarely will He write His Will in the sky or you will have a vision
 - Instead God gave you a brain – He promises in James 1:5 to give you wisdom
 - So I run decisions through a grid of what does the Word says, what does Godly counsel say, what is my heart telling me, what do circumstances dictate
 - And one of those four might be off, but I take it to the Lord, I lean on his promise to give wisdom and then I act if I need to
- And some say – what if your wrong, what if you make the wrong call
 - Then – Genesis 20 – I believe God sees the integrity of my heart and even if I am that dense that I mishear Him – I think He is big enough to keep me from devastation
 - As long as I operating in the integrity of my heart

You see if you are just making decisions because you want to do something and you are not asking the Lord for wisdom, you are not running things through a grid – then you are going to flop

- But If I am trying to hear God, I think I have His heart, I am really trying to seek His face
 - I am not afraid to step out with uncertainty
 - I am not afraid to make a decision
 - Because I believe God can keep me from devastation – if I am doing thing in the integrity of my heart

So that is Abimelech's case

- and God says – you are right, you did have integrity your heart
 - so I kept you from sin
 - but, but, but – now that I have your attention, there is something you need to do....

Restore that woman back to her husband and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet

- know that you know the truth Abimelech, you need to obey as God might say to us
 - but then God says, he is my prophet
 - I wonder if that was hard for God – it's the first mention of the word prophet in the Bible
- God's is like – yes, he is one of mine – you know as Paul later write one of the foolish things of this that I will use so I get the glory

Now what amazes me about this is – if there is any time not to bring this up about Abraham, this would be the time

- You know – you love to brag on your kids when they are teaching the Bible study, sharing with others, reading a book - But when you hear the screams of terror from another room – maybe its just me – but I feel like I want to pretend I don't know who that is

But God does not say, “Oh Abraham the black sheep of my family, don't mind him”

- No instead God declares this is my prophet

You see here is the truth – “For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance.” – Romans 11:29

Now don't misunderstand what that is saying

- It is not saying that God doesn't require his gifted ones to repent
 - It means that God doesn't take away your gift and calling
 - Will get to what does happen when we sin in just a moment

But I need us to consider this because the of the huge warfare those of us who decide we are going to serve the Lord with our lives face

- You fall and the enemy says, “You can't serve the Lord you're a sinner”
 - Well you remember this section of scripture – Abraham, the father of the faith, sinned, in fact the Bible says, “all have sinned”
- Ah yeah it does – but okay, but now God can't use you, God won't use you, God has taken away your gift, your calling
 - And that is usually the second wave of attacks

But this is the reality, God looked at Abimelech and said, “This is my prophet” – because that is how God saw Abraham

- And that teaches me God gives you and me gifts and callings, and they are not based on your deserving of it
 - God has given them to you apart from anything you deserve

He won't take away your gifting because you suddenly don't deserve it – because you see, you never did

- Now this is wonderful in one sense, because Christian, God is not through with you. He has made you for a purpose, and He wants to clean you up and use you again.

But it is also a warning – because if you are not following what the Lord has for you, you will be miserable. God created you for the purpose.

- you see one might ask – if the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable then why not sin
 - Here is why – understand the truth
- If you sin – will God take away your gift, your calling??? – no

But there will be pain with sin

- you want to be miserable – live after the flesh
 - you have been created for a purpose – not just me, not just Rob or Steve or Eddie– but you – and your sin doesn't take away your gift
- repent or you be continue to be miserable, like a fish out of water
 - you will be miserable and sometimes....
 - Sometimes – you walk down the path enough or even sometime just one time is enough and you disqualify yourself from using the gifts and walking in the calling God has given you

Is the gift, the ability gone – no

- But the ability to use it is – and that is miserable

I think of Jimmy Swaggart – I loved to listen to him preach when I was a kid. Passion, knew the Word. Obviously you understand he sinned, and He might be back in ministry now, but I know it wasn't like it was. I go away for a week, and I miss teaching the Word so bad – its not a hobby for me, its not a job to me – It's a calling – I can't imagine the opportunity being gone forever – huge

The gifts and calling of God are without repentance

- God does not take away your gifts

But sin does cost

- **“The way of the transgressor is hard” – Proverbs 13:15**
 - you want a hard life – live in sin
- Sin will cost you
 - It cost Abraham his testimony before this king
 - Talk about a open door that Abraham couldn't go through
- Remember Paul as he entered the city of Athens – let me tell about this unknown God
 - Abraham could have said, this God you fear, let me tell you about Him
- But no – the testimony was gone
 - The ministry was gone – instead of being a blessing, Abraham brings about a curse on Abimelech

Why – Why did Abraham sin – Abimelech asks the same question? – Why, we need to learn so we don't fall into the same trap – these things that were written down for our learn, so learn - why

- We notice 3 things

Why did Abraham fall?

#1 – He thought, He didn't pray

- He did not say “I prayed” and God told me to lie

He said I thought – the fear of God was not in this place

- And when he went from praying to thinking, he went from trusting the Lord to fearing man and leaning on his own understand

Prayerlessness in our lives suggests a pride in own judgment and ability

- Abraham totally counted God out of the situation and then figured out a way to handle it himself.

We can get into so much trouble when we think without praying

- When I was in high school I was president of the Christian club and we planed “party in the park” – I thought it was such a good idea – we didn't pray – it flopped

That is why the Bible commands us, “Lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths” – Proverbs 3:5

There are two categories of people

- thinkers and prayers
 - and we really need to check our hearts of where we are tonight, because to think and not pray, doesn't just led to blunders, as with Abraham it leads to sin

Why did Abraham fall?

#1 – He thought, He didn't pray

#2 - He tries to make excuses for his sin

- first he tells Abimelech that it wasn't a lie, it was a half truth
 - Now it was a half truth – Abraham and Sarah has the same Father, not just the same mothers
 - But does this really make it better – no she really is my sister, and my wife, ewww! – but it was a half truth
 - But Listen – a half truth is a total lie
- In fact consider this – the Bible says we are not to bare false witness – now the only example of this in the bible is when Jesus is on trial –

They bring in false witness and they say, “This man said, tear down the temple and I will raise it up in 3 days” –

- now the reality is Jesus did say that – He just didn't mean it like they were implying –

But the information was basically true – however the Bible calls it what it is – a false witness

Abraham tires to make excuses and then also seems to blame God for his sin – notice verse 13

- This is so how we can be
 - We behave that way – Lord you made me like this guy, why, I wanted to follow you. – right.
- That reality is it is just excuses
 - We need to make excuses but instead to make confession when we sin
 - The Bible says, “If we confess our sin, not excuse our sin....”

Why did Abraham fall?

#1 – He thought, He didn't pray

#2 - He tries to make excuses for his sin

#3 – He had been planning this all along

- And before we think Abraham just fell into this sin again, understand it was something He was planning to do
 - **notice verse 13**
- When Abraham was first going out from the land God had called him out of, he came to Egypt
 - There He lied about Sarah being his sister.
 - He we see him years later making the same mistake

And this brings me to the point that we normally don't fall into sin

- Whether it is a man leaving his family, Or a woman stealing from her job
 - Normally it is something that creeps into our minds as a thought, and idea
 - And instead of repenting of it, we let it sit and build

That is why the Bible says we are to take every thought captive

- This was not a rash decision on Abraham's part
 - It was something he was planning to do

“Let no say he tempted by God. Each man is tempted as he is drawn away by his own desires, and then when desire is conceived and becomes full grown, it gives birth to sin” – James 1:13-15

- There is a process, a process that must get cut off
 - Abraham did not
- He did not pray, He thought

- He did not bring confession, He brought excuses
- He did not take every thought captive, He let this idea, sit and grow and become a reality – we must learn
- We need to learn – to pray about everything, to make confession, not excuses when we sin, and to take every thought captive and under the obedience of Christ before it becomes sin
 - So what are we to do about sin, we see in this next event of stay in Gerar - Chapter 21

3 Events in Gerar – Genesis 20-21

#1 – Abraham’s Failure – Genesis 20

#2 – Abraham’s Faith – Genesis 21:1-21

- God brings about the fulfillment of His promises
 - The long awaited son is born
 - But even this brings new challenges
- Ishmael is now around 16, and is mocking Isaac.
 - Put yourself in his sandals – you were the heir, until this little baby comes along – that is replacing me
 - Of course you can’t excuse Ishmael either, anytime a 16 year old is beating up a three year old – that is just not okay ever

Sarah seeing this, tells Abraham to cast the son away. - Now very important, key, I want you to see this

- Before Abraham thought he had a problem
 - He was old, Sarah was barren – not having kids
 - Sarah gave her opinion, Abraham listened, and the result was sin
- Now Abraham has a real problem
 - Sarah again gives her opinion
 - Abraham listens and does what is right.

What is the difference?

- The second time, he also heard from the Lord.
 - He is praying

You see you will face many problems in your life

- And like we learned before from the last event, you can either think, take matters into your own hand, or you can pray.
 - Many people will want to give you advice. Many opinions. – But have you sought the voice of the Lord?
 - Abraham listened because God told him to listen and he did the right thing

But in sending Ishmael away we see something interesting too about Abraham

- This story is both an indication of Abraham’s faith, and an Illustration of how we are to handle sin

Abraham is growing in his faith

- We will see the culmination of that the week after Thanksgiving, I hope you can be with us, one of my favorite chapters in all of the Bible
- But Abraham had the promise that God would take care of Ishmael, so he send him away
 - He has seen God keep his word with Isaac

- He is growing and now God is going to bless Ishmael. – and he does, the well, they settle near Mecca today

But all that aside I also see in this, a great illustration of the way we need to deal with the works of our flesh

- Isaac was God's work
 - Ishmael was Abraham's – we have two natures warring inside us – so how do we deal – consider the picture...
 - Though Abraham loved Ishmael, when God told him to let him go, he gave him only bread and water

Now this seems harsh

- Abraham was rich, he could have sent them out with great provision
 - But you see in Romans Paul is using this story as an illustration of the flesh, verses the spirit.

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” – Romans 13:14

Ishmael was a work of the flesh, and God told him to get ride of it, so he made no provision for the flesh.

- Such a lesson for us.

So many people tell me about their struggles with sin

- You are not alone, God doesn't hate you
 - But here is a key to victory – make no provision for the flesh.

We care for our flesh, we feed it, while neglecting bible study, and prayer. And we can't figure out why we are living in sin – don't feed it. Feed your spirit.

- the story is told of the man with two dogs – a white dog and a black dog. And they were fighting and man said watching, how do you know which one is going to win – the one I feed
 - so too – like I was saying before - choices
 - We are constantly feeding something – our flesh or our spirit
- And the one we are feeding will win – feed the Spirit
 - So we are to make no provision for the flesh

One last thing and we will be done this Evening

- [Read with me to the end of the chapter.](#)

3 Events in Gerar – Genesis 20-21

#1 – Abraham's Failure – Genesis 20

#2 – Abraham's Faith – Genesis 21:1-21

#3 – Abraham's Triumph – Genesis 21:22-34

- Remember this guy from the first event, same guy a few years later.

We have here and everyday event. Dispute over water, treaty over the land.

- But one thing is very different now.
- Abraham is not running the show in the flesh.
 - Abimelech comes to him
 - Abraham is not afraid and lying
 - He deals with the well issues

So after it is all done, we find Abraham worshipping.

- Interesting He is finding a new way to worship
 - Planting God a tree.

- Fun to find a way to bless the Lord just you and him – not barking or rolling on the floor

But God I planted this plant for you, it's yours

- giving to the Lord in you own way
- Abraham plants a tree

But before we leave, why did Abraham worship

- He is learning to see how God works everything out.
 - Hagar and Ishmael – his work
 - Isaac – what God was doing
 - Abimelech the fist time – his work
 - This time – the Lord.

You see as you grow with Him, begin to see how much better it is when God does the Work.

- You follow him
- You trust Him
 - Then let him work and be blessed.