

Compromise, Cowardice, & Yahweh's Clean Up

GENESIS 12:10-20 | JAKE LIEDKIE

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Well, it is good to be with you, church, this morning. My name is Jake. I'm one of the pastors here.

And if you're visiting, I just want to say a warm welcome to you. Each week we gather on the Lord's Day, and it's pretty simple. We gather to worship because we're called to worship.

And even as we sing, there's a progression to that. We start out with the greatness of God, and then we confess sin, and then we claim the promises that we have through Jesus Christ and through his cross. And that is our only hope truly in life and in death.

I invite you to take your Bibles with me this morning. Turn to Genesis chapter 12, Genesis chapter 12. And I entitled this morning's message, Compromise Cowardice and Yahweh's Cleanup.

Compromise Cowardice and Yahweh's Cleanup. I've been following the life of Abram here for some time. And it is this week here in the providence of God that the Lord is going to intervene in the circumstances of Abram and Sarai's life.

And he's going to do it in such a way as to expose Abram's frailty. Two weeks ago, we saw Abram, the father of our faith. He was a shining example of what it looks like to trust God.

And he went on this unbelievable mission as he left his home and he journeyed out. And he had nothing in his heart but the promise of God. And if that was all we had of Abram, I'd be tempted to kind of wonder, well, what do I do when I find my faith is not victorious but it's failing? What do I do when I falter? What do I do when I trip and stumble? And so this week, we find Abram encountering a scary situation.

And when he does, rather than face it with faith, he acts in cowardice and self-preservation rather than humbly trusting God. And it leads him to treachery and he's reckless and he's foolish and he's dishonest. And yet in this, the Lord is refining Abram's faith.

He's refining Abram's faith. There's weaknesses that still need to be shored up, thank you, brother, in his life. And this blunder is not going to be insignificant.

In fact, it's going to have lasting ramifications. And so here's I want you to profit from the word this morning, okay? How do you profit from this message? Okay, first of all, be sufficiently warned, okay? There's a lesson here to look at Abram and be warned. Avoid doing what Abram did.

Be warned of the strength of temptation. Be sobered by the weakness of your own flesh. Believe what the Bible says.

So don't let what happened to Abram happen to you. And even challenge any areas of compromise or cowardice that you find in your heart, lest you falter in the way he did. And then in the same breath, without using Abram's example as an opportunity for your own flesh to find an excuse for sin, in other words, to say, well, if good people like Abram sin, I can too.

And find an excuse for sin. Be comforted by the unrelenting faithfulness of God. Be comforted by the unrelenting faithfulness of God.

So you profit from the word by being warned by Abram's example this morning. And then by being comforted that human failure is not the end of the story. Because God's grace triumphs even over our failures.

And none of our sin, if we belong to Christ, could ever threaten God's good plan for us. If you're keeping an outline, it's this this morning. Four scenes as Yahweh cleans up Abram's crisis.

Four scenes as Yahweh cleans up Abram's crisis. And this was a self-made crisis. Okay, guys, this is not a crisis that he falls into.

But this is a crisis that he made for himself. This was as a result of his own foolish decision making. And so the Lord would have been just to say, all right, just you made the mess, you clean it up.

But the Lord, of course, in his grace and mercy comes and he cleans up what Abram is unable to clean up on his own. Let's read our passage this morning. We'll begin in chapter 12, verse 10.

Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there. For the famine was severe in the land.

And it happened as he drew near to entering Egypt that he said to Sarai, his wife, now behold, I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance. And it will be when the Egyptians see you that they will say, this is his wife and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please, please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you and that I may live on account of you.

Now it happened when Abram came into Egypt that the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful and Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Therefore he treated Abram well because of her.

And sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels came into his possession. But Yahweh struck Pharaoh and his house with plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, what is this you've done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say she is my sister so that I took her for myself as a wife? So now here's your wife, take her and go.

So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him and they sent him away with his wife and all that belonged to him. So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him and lot with him. Four scenes as Yahweh cleans up Abram's crisis.

Point number one, the first scene, this is the setup. This is the setup. Abram abandons the promise of God in unbelief.

Okay, this is really the compromise. It's the first step of compromise in Abram's heart. When we read verse 10 and we kind of pass over and it seems like just a run of the mill narrative, kind of typical setting detail.

Okay, there's a famine in the land, yada, yada. Abram went down to Egypt. Okay, okay, the famine was severe.

We get it. Now we move on to the story. You got to understand the context.

Abram is experiencing a famine and the text says it was severe. So that's a severe food crisis. Okay, severe food shortage.

There's a lack of rain, which means a lack of crops and lack of crops means the animals aren't eating, the people aren't eating. I mean, I've never experienced a famine. The closest thing, which is not very close, but the closest thing I've ever experienced to this would be first major hurricane that I went through 20 years ago in South Florida.

And I remember the feeling of insecurity, felt like I was in another world of going to the grocery store and all of the shelves that contained edible food were empty. So you could buy like toothpaste or something, but you can't really eat that, right? There was nothing

available to buy for food. Now, granted, it was like 48 hours before power was restored and trucks were able to come, but it was a recognition of if all I have is the food in the cupboard, I'm going to be in big trouble if this thing lasts.

So Abram would have been experiencing that. We have food supplies, they're running short. There's probably people that are on the verge of starvation or even starving.

A severe famine, people start dying. The weak die first, the elderly die first, the children die first. It's kind of survival of the fittest on who gets food, but there's a problem.

Verse 10, so Abram went down to Egypt. This is not a step of faith on Abram's part. This is a step of self-reliance.

I mean, do you just remember what Abram had been told? Genesis 12, one, go forth from your land to what? To the land, which I will show you. Genesis 12, seven, to your seed, I will give this land. Abram, whether it is rain or shine, regardless of circumstances, come what may, this land is your land.

I'm giving it to you. Go possess it. And so for Abram to leave the land is an act of unbelief.

It's unsanctioned departure. It's an unauthorized trip. And so he was faced with the dilemma, which was this, will God provide for me in the land of promise in the midst of this drought? Or do I need to modify the plan? And I use the word compromise very specifically here.

I want you to look at the details of the text because it gives us a little clue into how Abram worked this out in his heart. It says, so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there. Okay, so number one, he's not going down just to buy food and come back.

He's planning to stay a while. And yet he's also not planning to go become a permanent resident. So he's not changing his citizenship to become an Egyptian.

Rather, he's told himself, I'm going to go down there and do it just for a while. Why is that significant? Well, he's not utterly rejecting the promise of God. He's not saying, Lord, have your land.

I don't want it. Rather, he's saying, not really going to trust you, Lord, but I have a kind of a little carve out here. I'm going to go do something else, but it's temporary in nature.

That was the rationalization. Let me tell you, when the word of God stands in the way of our desires, we either turn away from those desires or we try to find loopholes in God's instructions. Do we not do that sometimes? Try to kind of find a little way to just soften the blunt edge a little bit.

Maybe a little escape clause that kind of allows us a workaround. It's not full disobedience. It's not full rejection.

It's just a little compromise for Abram to go to Egypt and just sojourn temporarily was one such compromise. And I see this morning when you hear that word, just as you hear me say it, compromise with respect to the law of God. Is there anything that stirs up in your heart right now? Maybe an area in your conscience where you know you're not right before the Lord.

I think the word compromise is helpful because it speaks to our subtler and softer ways of being unfaithful. It's not areas of full blown rebellion or rejection, but it's just something is wrong, but we've kind of worked it out to feel okay with it. For Abram, he's able to say, well, I know I'm going down to Egypt and I know I'm not supposed to, but it's just temporary.

I know I'm supposed to meditate on God's word day and night, but I'm in a busy season right now. I just ask, are you too busy for screen time? It's interesting. Sometimes we tend to find a way to be devoted to our screens and yet at the same time, not have time for putting truth in our hearts and minds.

Or maybe I know I'm not supposed to be anxious about tomorrow, but it's really hard right now. I'm going through a very difficult season. Or I know I'm supposed to forgive, but you don't know this person like I do.

You don't know what they did. Or I know I'm supposed to confess my sin, but it's going to be embarrassing and I have it under control and I'm promising that whatever I just did, it's the last time I'll ever do it. I know I'm not supposed to look at that or watch that, but I know other Christians who do.

For Abram, it's, I know I'm not supposed to leave the promised land, but I'm going to go and just for a little while. Beloved, compromise leads to greater compromise. It's going to happen to Abram here.

That initial step of compromise, he can't keep it under control. Starts out small and it picks up speed. And so as believers, we can be remarkably gullible and naive when it comes to moral issues.

Our hearts are deceptive. And so we think, oh, let's have a little compromise and then I'll get it back under control. Abram is about to discover that compromise inevitably leads to greater compromise if we persist in it and we don't repent.

What should Abram have done when there was a famine in the land? Man, it's a scary situation. He should have called upon his God. He should have said, Lord, I don't know how this is going to work.

There's not a lot of food left in the pantry. There's nothing in the grocery stores. I don't know how this is going to work out, but I trust you.

And Lord, I'm scared and I need your help. My faith is weak. I need you to come to my aid and strengthen my faith.

This is the setup. It's the first compromise. Brings us to our second scene as Yahweh cleans up Abram's crisis.

And this is the scheme. The scheme. Abram concocts a plan to preserve himself.

Point number one, the setup. Abram abandons the land of promise and unbelief. Now we come to the scheme where Abram concocts a plan to preserve himself.

This is where the compromise takes him. Verse two, and it happened as he drew near to entering Egypt that he said to Sarai, his wife. Now, I just, I bet you always picture these scenarios.

They're too relatable. I mean, the narratives of scripture are so relatable for us. But I'm thinking, was this on Abram's heart for a long time? And he's just, I just want to bring it up.

Just want to bring it up. Just want to bring it up. And finally, the last possible second.

I mean, it says, as they drew near to entering Egypt. Or is this something where he wasn't even thinking about the danger? And then right as they're about to get into the city, he's like, oh man, I did not plan this out very well. It's kind of popped right into my head.

It goes into my head and out of my mouth, whatever the cause, he brings it up. And he has a specific instruction that he gives to his wife. Here's the plan.

Now behold, he says, I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance. Maybe he was just looking over at his wife and he was admiring her beauty. And then as he was admiring her beauty, he started to think, you know what? This is, this is going to be a problem.

And so this initial compromise of going to Egypt is now compounding in his life. It's starting to get out of control. It's creating more difficulty.

And in this, he's starting to think about what's going to happen. The text says that she's beautiful in appearance. That is, you look good.

You're pleasant aesthetically. You have a pleasant appearance. And his concern is when the Egyptians see you, they're going to think the same thing.

Verse 12, it will be when the Egyptians see you that they will say this is his wife and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Now, what's interesting about this is Abram is not entirely wrong. And he's not entirely irrational.

I mean, pagan Kings would take beautiful women into their harem. It's not, it's not, I mean, it's going to happen in this text. So in one sense, he's kind of able to predict in a sense, this is a likely foreseeable outcome.

And his concern is the Egyptians will gladly go through him to get to her. Now it's interesting though, look at his concern. His concern is not for them, but for him.

They will kill me, but they will let you live. And so he's already concocted the plan. Here's what's going to happen.

They're going to kill me. Then you're going to be taken into the harem. I already know that's going to happen.

I mean, it's interesting at that point, right? Why not turn around and go back to the promised land, right? Not repent at that moment. But here he has a perspective where he's become pessimistic and faithless. He's not thinking anymore about what the Lord might do.

Rather, there's this subtle pride where he's begun to think that he can predict what is going to happen. James 4 has not been written yet, but it would be a good message for Abram to take to heart. Come now, you who say today or tomorrow, we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.

Yeah, you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will do this or do that.

James ends that section by saying this, but as it is, you boast in your arrogance and all such boasting is evil. I put that in the category of respectable sins, thinking that you know what's going to happen and having a high degree of certainty as to how things are going to work out. Isn't that amazing? Sometimes we get so caught in our own perspectives.

We think we know here's what's going to happen. Here's how life's going to go. I can already see it coming.

It doesn't matter that we get it wrong. We still remain assured. So Abram is predicting the future with a measure of certainty.

He has a faithless perspective. He's pessimistic. He's not thinking about how the Lord might care for them.

He's not leading his wife to think in that way. Rather, he's afraid and now he's stoking her fears as well. What would faith have looked like here? Even if he didn't turn away from the compromise of going down to Egypt.

You know what, sir? I've been thinking about this. I think we've got some potential danger on the horizon as we go into a foreign land. They do not fear God.

You're a beautiful woman. Either number one, we could go back to the land we ought to have never left. Or two, we can entrust ourselves to Yahweh to protect us.

Let's devote this matter to prayer. But instead, he's predicting the future. He's high on his own perspective.

And he begins to worry, obviously, and scheme about the future. He's sinning. Matthew 6, 27.

And which of you by worrying can add a single cubit to his lifespan? In other words, if the plan in the sovereignty of God was Abram go to Egypt and die, then it's going to happen anyway. But does not Abram have a promise from God that says he's going to have a seed? I mean, he already knows he's not going to die. God told him, you're going to have an offspring.

And yet, what does he think? Oh man, I'm going to get killed in Egypt. Abram needed to take the words of Jesus to heart. Matthew 6, 33.

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. His mind was not set on righteousness. Right now, we're doing righteously.

And so Abram begins to resort to scheming. And this is what we do when we're anxious. We're trying to predict the future.

When we're freaked out about what's going to happen, when we become self-reliant, we start to scheme. Do we not? Verse 13. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you.

And that I may live on account of you. I mean, here's the scheme. Abram lets the cat out of the bag.

Sarai, I need to rehearse the plan with you. And I don't think it's likely that the entourage of the king would have come and met them and talked first to Sarai. So really, it would seem Abram is putting her on notice.

Hey, sweetheart, here's the plan. When we get there, I'm going to say, this is my sister. And then I want you to play along too.

I'll lead, you follow. Abram right now is afraid of what man can do to him. And fear of man leads to all kinds of sin in our lives.

Proverbs 29, 25. Trembling before man brings a snare. But he who trusts in Yahweh will be set securely on high.

See, Abram's about to find out the hard way that the fear of man brings a snare. He's about to understand that when fear of man gets wrapped up in your ankles, you get entangled and you're going to trip and fall into new areas of sin that you weren't even preparing for. Rather, what he ought to have been saying was the fear of God, because those are exclusive.

There's fear of man, fear of God. They're opposed to one another. You can't fear both at the same time.

The preacher in Hebrews, Hebrews 13, 6 says, we ought to say the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? It's not that man can't do anything to hurt you, but man can only hurt your body, Jesus would say.

And so you're not to fear those who kill the body, Matthew 10, 28. But rather, fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Psalmist in Psalm 118 says, it is better to take refuge in Yahweh than to trust in man.

See, Abraham's forsaking the blessed life right now. He's forsaking the protection of trusting in the Lord and the confidence that comes from trusting in the Lord. He started to fear man.

Man has become big. God has become small. And he resorts now in his scheme and manipulation.

I mean, look at this, please, sweetheart. Verse 13, please say that you're my sister so that it may go well with me because of you and that I may live on account of you. And this is a tactic to leverage a response from Sarai.

And we do this. I mean, husbands manipulate wives, wives manipulate husbands, people manipulate each other outside of the marriage context. Children try to manipulate parents, parents manipulate children.

What is manipulation? Well, it's playing on someone else's desires to get them to do what you want them to do. And so Abraham here puts his wellbeing, namely his very life on Sarah's shoulders as though she's the one responsible. And so now he pressures her to join him in sin rather than leading her in faith and righteousness.

Honey, we're gonna go to Egypt. And if I don't live, it's gonna be all your fault. You see the manipulation in that? I mean, he is here the father of our faith stooping to some incredible lows.

And so what he concocts here in his scheme is a plan that involves telling a half-truth and representing it as the full truth, which as you know, is by definition an untruth. A half-truth masquerading as a whole truth is a lie. And it's true that Sarai is his half-sister, but as we will see, he's leaving out the part that really matters.

He had a friend who was a serial half-truth teller and he had seared his conscience. He'd retrained it to think that that if I have a shred of truth, even if I'm entirely misdirecting someone, I can still appease my conscience that I have integrity. Could have been a gymnast with all the moves he pulled to try to get himself to believe that he was forthright and to get other people to believe it.

And yet his conscience was defiled. See the heart of the issue here is misdirection. To gain an advantage, we might call it shading the truth.

It's dishonest. And I would say in my own life, I've had to repent of a longstanding pattern of this. We want to try to represent things either in the best light possible, the worst light possible, whatever gains an advantage.

So why does he say sister? And why don't you say, meet Sarai, my friend, my cousin, my acquaintance. Why say sister? There's two reasons. Number one, by saying that she is his sister, he's able to pacify his nagging conscience.

He's able to convince himself there's enough truth in what he's saying that he's not really being dishonest. And secondly, he can gain an advantage by her being his sister. And we'll see that in a minute.

Can I just encourage you to walk in integrity, to not be concerned about what the cost of the truth is in your life. I mean, that's really all that it is. Here, Abram thinks that the truth is going to cost him too much.

And so he'd rather live cloaked in deception. Proverbs 12, 22 says, lying lips are an abomination to Yahweh, but doers of faithfulness are his delight. Do you want the favor of God in your life? Put off half truths and shading the truth and deception.

And I remind you that there is a blessing associated with integrity, and it far surpasses whatever you hope to gain through deception, far surpasses. Children in the room, if I could encourage you, tell your parents the truth. Tell them the whole truth, be honest.

Confess and walk in the light. Wives and husbands and church members and employees and employers that we'd be people of the truth. In fact, Psalm 15, David writes, commend it to you, can jot it down as a side note that the Lord dwells with those who walk blamelessly and speak truth in their hearts, who honor the Lord.

Well, Abram concocts a plan to preserve himself. And it brings us to our third scene, the sellout, the sellout. First, we've seen the setup in the scheme.

Now we see the sellout. And here Abram profits while jeopardizing his wife and his promise. Abram profits while jeopardizing his wife and his promise.

Abram's already demonstrated compromise by going to Egypt. He's already demonstrated cowardice. He's concocting this entire plan.

He's manipulating his wife to make sure that he gets the outcome that he wants. But now that moves to another position of callousness. See, it's one thing to kind of have the evil thought and the idea and to start to work the plan, but to carry it out is a whole nother deal.

And so Abram goes through with what he's already purposed in his heart. I mean, it's just a vivid way of thinking about it. What Abram is about to do is something that he'd already purposed in his heart.

I remember years ago when I was just in the early stages of sanctification and battling with sin and some of those battles that were so difficult. And there was a man who was mentoring me and in particular was in the area of purity. And I remember him saying, you already know in your heart what you're gonna do.

Just be honest with yourself. And I was so appalled that he would say such a thing. And I realized, no, he's right.

There's something already purposed in the heart. Abram already had failed before he got to that moment with Pharaoh. He'd already planned it out.

He purposed, he knew what he wanted and what he wanted to do. And so verse 14 comes this test of faith. Now it happened when Abram came into Egypt that the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

As expected, Sarai gets immediately noticed. We say things like beauty is in the eye of the beholder. There's truth to that.

Certainly Bible talks about women paying attention to the inner beauty, the inner person of the heart. So we understand that the beauty is more than just that which is external. But there was obviously an objective component to this as well that Sarai and her features and her form and figure was universally recognized as beautiful.

And the text says she was very beautiful. And just remember, Sarai was 65 when she left Haran. It's been at least a couple of years.

Probably she's around 70 at this point. Verse 15, Pharaoh's officials saw her. She's a bit of an eye catch.

And they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. What a dark moment.

I mean, what a dark moment. You know, godless cultures use and abuse and dishonor women. Pharaoh here is an example of the fleshly impulses without restraint.

And kings can have whatever they want. And so oftentimes they multiply women. If you remember Solomon did the same thing.

And so Sarai is an eye catcher. She catches Pharaoh's eye. He wants to add her essentially to the collection, which does two things.

It displays his power and prominence. And it fulfills his cravings. The text is light on the details here.

Just states it. But why don't you just pause for a minute here? There had to have been some moment here of decision for Abram. I mean, think about that.

Some point of no return. Some moment in that interaction when he decided he was actually gonna go through with it, where he had the opportunity to say, you know what? This is so wrong. And I'm not willing to sit against the Lord or my wife.

I'm the husband. Take me. You know, whatever he needed to say.

But he doesn't. And I can't imagine what that goodbye looked like. What would you do? Like kind of this, like a side hug, a little kiss on the cheek.

See you later, sis. I mean, was it a tearful goodbye? Was he just looking at the ground? I cannot imagine. And what I want you to understand that Abram's exemplifying here is that the longer you and I persist in a deception, the harder it is to get out.

So you could have avoided it in the first place. Abram is thinking only of himself. And what's amazing here is how deep his self-interest goes.

According to verse 16, Abram gets rich off the whole deal. Therefore he treated Abram well. That's Pharaoh because of her.

And sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels came into his possession. See that whole brother thing now versus just my friend or my acquaintance. By being the brother, it meant that there'd be a dowry involved.

So now you take my sister and I get back from you, Pharaoh, the bride price. I profit off the whole deal. This is not an accident.

It's not an accident that he says, this is not merely my friend. He's able to appease his conscience with half truth. Plus he's able to profit from it.

And so Abram here supposedly gives away his sister in marriage to Pharaoh. This is today what we would call human trafficking. He trades his wife for a bunch of stuff and he gets a lot of stuff.

Look at this sheep, oxen, donkeys, donkeys, servants, male servants and female servants and camels. I heard one commentator say the camels are like, like the high-end sports cars. It's like Ferraris in the ancient Near East.

They were hardly even domesticated. So he is profiting right now big time at his wife's expense. You think, well, maybe he didn't know what was happening.

I just don't think that was the case. If you look back up at the initial plan that he concocted, do you remember what he said? Verse 13, please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you and that I may live on your account. Benefit number one, I'm not gonna die.

Okay, that's a good benefit in Abram's mind. Benefit number two, it will go well with me. And you say, well, maybe he didn't have that in his heart.

Maybe that's reading a little bit too much into the text. I would just ask you this. What about when they came to take Sarai away and said, here's what we're gonna give you in exchange? You're saying, you know what? I'm good, keep your stuff.

So he's either motivated by greed or he's motivated by a concern to not appear like something's up, something's shifty. And I just tell you that if we were to go all the way back to this scheme and how it started, Abram thought about this sin longer than he should have. Okay, that was how he got here.

See, the first moment that the thought entered into his mind, he should have fled from it. I mean, sometimes, beloved, sometimes, you know this. There is a wicked thought, a faithless thought, an unbelieving evil thought that comes into your mind.

And sometimes even you're thinking, where did that come from? I don't feel like I was doing anything to stir it up. It's just there. For all we know, Abram could have just been enjoying a trip to Egypt, not really thinking of much.

He's enjoying his beautiful wife. And then he's starting to think someone else will think the same thing. And then at some point, the first time thought entered his head, what if when we go, I say that she's my sister.

And then they take her without killing me. And maybe even we could work out a dowry. Because then this is post-conversion Abram here.

This is Abram, the father of faith. This is Abram, the believer, had that thought. And then when he had that thought, rather than flee from it and plead with the Lord, God, help me.

Help me trust you. Help me run away from that. He kept imagining.

He let the thought linger. It's like James would say in James 1, 13, let no one say when he is tempted, I'm being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself cannot tempt anyone. But each one is tempted, what? When he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

Then when lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin. And when sin is fully matured, it brings forth death. See the Abram of a few years ago who left Haran.

If you'd said, hey, give me your wife or I'll kill you. I think he probably would have said, go for it, kill me. I'm gonna lay down my wife, my life for my wife.

But when fear enters the picture and that faithless thought, and then it's not dealt with, it continues to grow and next thing you know, you have Abram acting reckless and foolishly. I'm gonna just sit back as I was pondering this and I thought for a little bit, what was the

end of the plan here? And you're like, how far did you really think this thing through? Okay, the famine ends. Famines end at some point.

And now Sarai is in the harem. What do we do next? Are you going back to Canaan without her? You're gonna have the promised seed without her? Or is the plan to wait out in Egypt until she ages out of the harem? Like how is this thing gonna work? And so Abram in the midst of this folly has a complete disregard for God's promise and God's plan. It is like out of sight, out of mind.

Earlier it was in his heart. It was at the forefront. He's relying upon it.

Now it's way back somewhere. And you realize that Abram puts the whole plan of God from a human standpoint in jeopardy. I mean, God said that you will have this promised seed that's gonna be a blessing to the earth.

And Abram ends up dropping his wife off in a foreign monarch's harem. You're saying Abram has made a total mess of his life at this point. I mean, the text doesn't tell us, but I'm sure he felt like garbage.

I'm sure that all those new camels and maidservants and manservants weren't all that fulfilling. He has a guilty conscience and he's gotten himself into a pickle for which there's no foreseeable solution. He's made a mess and he can't get out of it.

He can't just clean it up. And so he not only blew the plan, but he's incapable of fixing it. He's helpless.

And so it's right here in the midst of human failure, in midst of helplessness, that Abram is gonna learn a profound lesson, not only about the frailty of his own heart, but in this training program, he's gonna learn about God's grace and mercy and power. See, beloved, God does not accomplish salvation for those who deserve it. For those who even demonstrate that they'll be good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

He doesn't enlist your power and require that of you that he's kind of gonna meet you in the middle to resolve the sin problems that you face. He contributes something, you contribute something, you cooperate together and you solve the problem. Rather, God's salvation always comes to helpless people.

It's always sovereign grace. And this brings us to our fourth scene the salvation, the salvation. Abram experiences God's protection and deliverance.

Abram experiences this. He doesn't accomplish it on his own. This is sovereign grace.

And this is how salvation always works. Verse 17, but Yahweh, Sarah is in the harem Abram has no answers, but Yahweh, but God, but the Lord. Praise God for his interventions.

Praise God for his merciful intervention into our darkness. Sometimes whether we're looking for it or not. I mean, I don't know, maybe Abram was praying for a solution.

Maybe he was praying for deliverance. That's what he ought to have been done, but we don't even know that. Moses doesn't share Abram's spiritual state because the focus is not anymore on Abram, but it's on the divine action.

And the Lord acts here apart from human involvement and human merit. You're saying that this divine action is apart from human involvement and human merit. See the Lord acts here because it's consistent with his character.

He acts in mercy because he has a promise to keep. And he's allowed Abram to walk down a path of his own sinfulness for a period of time to show him both the depth of his sin and his need for God's mercy. So that then he can also show him his mercy and Abram will appreciate it.

So he doesn't leave Abram there, but Yahweh verse 17, struck Pharaoh in his house with great plagues because of Sarah Abram's wife. We don't know the exact nature of the plagues, but they were unpleasant. They impacted the whole royal household.

I mean, this is God delivering Sarai unharmed. And the Egyptians were superstitious people. So any plague would have been ominous to them.

We don't know exactly how it is that Pharaoh came to this knowledge, but somehow the Lord revealed to him, hey, the reason why y'all are getting throttled right now is because you have someone else's wife as part of your harem. And so verse 18, we see a royal rebuke. Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, what is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me she was your wife? Why did you say she is my sister so that I took her for myself as a wife? I mean, you just, I cringe whenever I read that.

I mean, you have an unbeliever rebuking the God fearing father of our faith for being a scoundrel. You can't exactly read the tonal inflections, but I think you could imagine anger, incredulity, exasperation. It starts to show you the depth of our self-orientation when we sin.

See, when Abram back in the beginning was thinking, here's what's gonna happen. We're gonna get there. They're gonna see you're beautiful.

Then they're gonna kill me. Then they're gonna take you. He's not thinking at all about how to protect and love and serve and care for his wife.

He's not thinking about the impact on other people like maybe Pharaoh's household. I mean, all of that is outside of his thoughts because he's concerned about numero uno, protecting himself. And so Pharaoh says, the end of verse 19.

So now here is your wife. It's your wife, Abram. I don't know if those words stung.

I think they would. The reminder of his treachery of forsaking the covenant relationship and his responsibility to protect and provide and serve. And so he gets sent away.

He gets evicted from Egypt. And this is the mercy of God that Abram gets to now go back home to the land of promise and do so with his wife. And I read this.

It seems somewhat polite. Here is your wife, take her and go. I think if I were Pharaoh, I'd be like, take your sister.

Just take your sister and go back with you. He was saying, this is divine protection. And it's incredible that now a pagan monarch tells Abram the very same thing that the Lord has told him.

Genesis 12, one, the Lord said, Abram, go forth from your land to the land of tribe, we'll show you. He's not able to stay there. He leaves in a lack of faith.

And now he has a pagan king saying, go, go back to the land. And in this, we're seeing parallels, of course, between what God is doing with Abram and what he will one day do with Egypt. I mean, the motifs are remarkably similar.

There's gonna be a famine later in the land of Israel. And Jacob and his sons will travel down. There will be a descent to Egypt to sojourn in an attempt to kill the males, but leave the females alive and plagues on Egypt and then deliverance.

And so what God is doing here is giving Israel something that they'll be able to look back on to see his deliverance out of situations that are otherwise hopeless from a human standpoint. Shows of God's grace in delivering people who don't deserve it. Well, there's tremendous encouragement here to understand that even our sinfulness, even our rebellion at times as believers, even post conversion, cannot ultimately stop the plan of God.

I mean, if it was left up to Abram, Abram, solve the problem on your own, get yourself out of this mess. There's no Messiah. The wife that's supposed to bring forth the seed is no longer a part of the marriage.

And yet God's plan will not be stopped. And so Abram here is learning about God's sovereign grace. He's learning about God's salvation.

He's learning that God does not choose people because they are a man or a woman who is above failure. And so Abram is gonna leave Egypt learning a lesson. And it's gonna be on repeat as we often are.

He's gonna do the same thing here in a few years. But next week what we're gonna see is that Abram leaves changed. He goes back to the promised land and there is a work of repentance that God does in his heart.

And he will have learned the lessons of his own sinfulness and his own grace. And yet it's also true that right here in the text, there's some lasting consequences of sin that Abram is gonna have sticking with him a long time. On the one hand, God's plan is not thwarted by human failure.

On the one hand, God is merciful to pardon and forgive from sin. And yet there are some consequences that will last. I mean, first of all, just imagine, do you think this brother and sister had anything to work out on the trip back from Egypt to Canaan? I don't know whether she let him have it.

I don't know whether she was restrained and just let the spirit do the work. But I'd imagine even if it was hot outside, it was a little cold in the caravan on the way back to Canaan. And then we read in verse 20, so Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him and sent him away with his wife and all that belonged to him.

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him and a lot with him. Did you notice what was repeated in those two verses? Twice, Moses says, all that belong to him. There's an emphasis.

Why is he emphasizing him? Why is he emphasizing that? Well, all those belongings that he acquired in Egypt would include, according to the text, female servants as noted in verse 16. And although they're not explicit, this was the trip to Egypt. It's assumed that most likely among those female servants is a maiden by the name of Hagar, an Egyptian maid servant who will one day be a source of temptation for Abram and Sarah.

They're going to try in their battle for belief and the results of that act of disobedience will be felt around the world for all of history even today. Understand the shrapnel from Abram's sin here is going to cut deep. It's going to leave a lasting impact.

And yet there is mercy and grace in the midst of this as well. When you and I look at the life of this patriarch, it is so helpful in navigating our own Christian experience. Abram should

be a warning to you, a warning against compromise and cowardice and fear of man and deception and self-preservation and all of the sins that can accompany those sins.

It's a reminder of the lasting consequences of sin that sometimes we seek forgiveness. We're certainly forgiven by God, even forgiven by others. And yet it doesn't mean that God just immediately undoes or erases all of the impact of our sinful decisions.

It's part of the warning and the urging to avoid and ultimately to see the mercy of God. And in spite of all of the reckless abandon of Abram, God's still merciful. He's still gracious.

He's still accomplishing his plan in his life. And even in this, he's training Abram for greater usefulness. Well, next week, we're going to see Abram on a restorative journey and then I'll go down and up and down.

It's kind of giving me the same thing for a little while. Let's pray. Lord in heaven, what a riveting testimony of sins that we are all too familiar with in our own lives.

Lord, I thank you that you give us instructions to help us, Lord, not only avoid sin, but to know how to repent when we do. And thank you, Lord, that you are a God who loves to show compassion to sinners like us, that you get glory, that it makes you renowned and impressive to show mercy to people like us. Thank you so much that Abram's sin did not jeopardize the promise, but that Jesus came and he did exactly what you intended him to do.

We love you and we praise you. Amen.