

Genesis: From Creation to New Creation

Genesis 20:1-18

"The Fear of Man is a Snare"—February 26, 2023



Introduction

In the dark, looks can be deceiving. Sometimes fear is an appropriate response. Many times our fear is not based on facts, reality, or reason. Our sinful fear results from looking at reality in the dark. Every day, we have a choice to live in fear or live by faith. If you could hear fear whispering to us, we would hear fear tell us that God is not enough and that we can't trust Him. When fear takes over, it leads to disaster every time.

The readers of this text - the Israelites - often experienced fear. They thought that going back to Egypt would be better. They made sinful choices due to fear. If you are a Christian, and you have given into fear, do you think that your sinful failure will derail God's plan for you? No - God will get us home.

Big Idea: God is going to get us home, not by our righteousness, but by His sovereign grace.

Sermon Outline

Scene One: The Crisis Vs. 1-2

Scene Two: God's Sovereignty Vs. 3-7

Scene Three: Abraham's Sin Vs. 8-13

Scene Four: God's Sovereign Grace Vs. 14-18

Read & Discuss

1. Read vs. 1-2

As you are reading this, you may think that we have been here before. In Genesis 12, Sarah was taken into Pharaoh's harem because he believed her to be Abraham's sister.

Even after seeing God work in the years in between chapter 12 and now, Abraham makes the same mistake as before. ([Proverbs 26:11](#)) We see what he does and can be upset. He should have trusted God. Yet Bible characters are presented warts and all. Can you relate to Abraham? Are there sins that you thought you had put to death? Have you fallen into that sin again and again? This is a warning to not rely on yesterday's victory and grace. We need fresh mercy and grace every day. We must do battle with sin. ([1 Cor. 10:12](#))

Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. That desire leads to sin, and sin leads to death. ([James 1:14-15](#)) In the moment, sin and temptation seem ok. Sin offers us a momentary solution. Then it pulls us to death. We will always regret our decision to sin.

This crisis reminds us that Abraham is not the ultimate hero. God is the hero.

2. Read vs. 3-7

As you read this text, you must keep the context in mind. If we look back to [18:10](#), we see that God promised that Sarah would have a son in a year. He repeated the promise in [18:14](#). God promised that despite being past their childbearing years, they would have a son. Through this child, ALL the families of the earth will be blessed. ([Genesis 12:3](#)) The world's future hope of salvation depends on them having this child. It seems that Abraham's sinful failure will derail God's plan, but God intervened in a dramatic fashion.

Even though Abimelech took Sarah into his harem, Moses makes it clear that he never touched Sarah. God made sure of that. Abimelech was used to being the one in charge, taking whatever he wanted when, where and how he wanted it. But God is in charge. ([Proverbs. 21:1](#); [Psalm 2](#)) God knows all things.

Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to do what was right, but you didn't know what that looked like? Have you ever been desperate for wisdom? The weight of the decision in difficult situations can cause discouragement and confusion. God knows what to do. He is never confused. He will lead us. He is directing the story - it is His.

Even in the darkest of situations when you feel like life is out of control, God is in control. God kept Abimelech from sinning. What seems like a curse, God could be using to protect you. Do you see how God is in control of your life? He was sovereign then, and He is sovereign now. Do you believe that?

Additional Reading: *Genesis 12, 15, and 18*

3. Read vs. 8-13

As you read chapter 20, you should realize that Abraham had nothing to be afraid of. He assumed that the people of Gerar didn't fear God, but they had more fear of God than Abraham.

Abraham, who was known as the man of faith, was rebuked by a pagan king again. His response was a defensive one. He gave three pathetic excuses. First, he blamed Abimelech and the people of Gerar. (vs. 11) Then he told Abimelech that Sarah was "technically" his sister. Abraham's intent from the beginning was to deceive. He was hiding his sin with a technicality. Have you ever told a half truth to stay out of trouble? Then, Abraham blamed God who caused him to wander? Do you hear the echo of Genesis 3 here?

Abraham's pride got in his way. ([Proverbs 29:25a](#)) No one sins out of a sense of duty. We sin because we want to. We think that, in the moment we sin, we will be happy. When we sin, we are saying that God isn't enough. Deep down, we believe that obedience will leave us less happy than sinning. What are the lies you are believing about sin? Abraham may have thought that keeping his life would make him happy. ([Luke 9:24](#))

How can we break free from habitual sin? It begins with taking responsibility for our sin, confessing it, and agreeing with God about it. We must renounce the lie and repent. Then we must go to God's Word for His promises that refute the lies that we believed that led us into sin. What are some verses that you need to remember to help you fight sin in our life? Obedience leads to greater joy. This is a hard battle because sin often has deep roots. With God's help, we can break free. ([Proverbs 29:25b](#))

Additional Reading: Genesis 3

4. Read vs. 14-18

Abraham's sinful deceit led Abimelech to the brink of death. After Abimelech rebuked Abraham in vs. 9-10, he blessed Abraham with gifts. In vs. 16, he gave Abraham money to prove that he hadn't touched Sarah. Moses is making it abundantly clear that God's plan would not be derailed by Abraham's sinful failure.

As you get to the end of chapter 18, you might think that there is a mistake here – shouldn't Abraham be punished. Abraham didn't deserve the blessing of God. God doesn't owe any of us His grace. It is undeserved, unmerited, and freely given by God. Abraham received God's grace, and so did Abimelech. Sin brings death, but in the end, Abimelech received life. Abimelech and his people were healed after Abraham prayed. Abraham was God's man to stand as a go-between to bring life.

We all sin like Abraham and Abimelech. ([Romans 6:23](#)) What God owes us is death. Abraham's ministry as a prophet pointed forward to Jesus who is The Prophet who came to bring life. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He was qualified to bring life by dying on the cross to pay for our sins. ([Romans 5:8](#)) Today, Jesus gives life to all who call on Him to be saved.

We must turn from our sin and trust in Christ. Then, we are turned from death to life. God will get us home - not by our righteousness, but by His sovereign grace.

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand, believe, desire, or do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to com. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at <https://fbcum.org/sermons-new/>

Next week's sermon text: we turn to [Genesis 21:1-34](#) "Promise, Provision, & Peace"