

The Lord Heard the Prayer of Abraham

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn and understand that sin is both against God and against the people involved. We saw that Abraham had sinned against God, against Abimelech, and against his entire kingdom. In this topic, we will see Abraham admitted that he had sinned because of fear. Only after he had confessed his sin was Abraham then able to pray for Abimelech and his kingdom.

As we concluded our last topic, we saw that Abimelech asked Abraham two questions. In this topic, we see that he asked one more question of Abraham. Genesis 20:10-13 says, “Then Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?’ 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. 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. 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.’”” Here, we see that Abraham had to humble himself before Abimelech and confess his sin to Abimelech. He had to explain why he had lied.

Abraham said that he thought the fear of God was not in that place. The “fear of God” speaks of *reverence and respect for God*. In contrast, the “fear of man” speaks of *fear and terror because of what a person or group of people might say or do to you*. When we have the fear of God, we will not fear what people might do to us. However, when we have the fear of men, we are afraid of what people might say or do to us. Instead of having a trust in God because of reverence and respect for God, Abraham had a fear of what the people of Gerar might do to him. In 1 John 4:18-19, we read, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” We want to show others, by our example, this difference as we learn to trust God and depend on Him. The fear of men will also hinder us from telling others how to have peace with God through repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Abraham had that fear when he did not even know whether the people of Gerar feared God or not. We will see that the king of Gerar did have a reverence and respect for God by the way he treated Abraham with respect even after Abraham had lied to him. Luke 6:37-38 says, “‘Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.’” Even though Abraham did judge the people of Gerar by his attitude, we will see that the king of Gerar chose to show kindness to Abraham when Abraham spoke the truth.

The third question that Abimelech asked was, “What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?” The phrase “what did you have in view” means *to see with the eyes*. God told Abraham after Lot chose the well-watered plain in Genesis 13:14-15, “And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.’” In verse 14, the word is translated “look;” in verse 15, it is translated “see.” Abraham was on the top of a mountain range where he could see in all four directions. First, Abraham had just seen the destruction of Sodom and the surrounding cities and may have thought that Gerar was just as sinful, and that the people might kill him in order

to take Sarah.

Second, Abraham may have thought that he could say something that was half-true and so he would not be telling a lie. However, Satan is the deceiver and he was the first to tell a half-truth that was a lie. Genesis 3:5 Satan said, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” It was true that their eyes were opened and it was true that Adam and Eve knew good and evil after they ate the fruit. However, the phrase in the middle, “you will be like God,” was a lie and made the whole statement a lie. That was exactly what Abraham had done. Abraham and Sarah did have the same father, so that was true. However, by saying she was his sister and not saying she was also his wife, he twisted the truth in order to deceive Abimelech and made the whole statement a lie. In telling that lie, Abraham put his wife in danger, as well as Abimelech and his entire kingdom.

Third, Abraham had placed Sarah in the position where she felt forced to lie in order to protect Abraham. We see that Abraham had told Sarah, “This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, ‘He is my brother.’” Abraham had deceived himself to think that if Sarah told a lie, it would be a kindness to him. Many years later, the Lord said through Paul, in Ephesians 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Instead of loving his wife and protecting his wife, by this lie, Abraham had put Sarah in great danger.

Instead of rebuking Abraham any more, we see that Abimelech chose to return good for the evil that Abraham had done to him by his lie. Genesis 20:14-16 says, “Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave *them* to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, ‘See, my land *is* before you; dwell where it pleases you.’ 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.” Abimelech chose to give a gift that would both justify and rebuke.

Here, we see that Abimelech gave a large gift to Abraham because he had taken Sarah into his household. This gift included sheep and oxen, as well as male and female servants. The number of animals and servants is not given, but the fact that these things are mentioned shows that it was a sizable gift. In addition, Abimelech said, “See, my land is before you, dwell where it pleases you.” This meant that Abraham was free to choose to live any place where there was sufficient food for his flocks of sheep and cattle. We do not know how much, if any, Abimelech knew about God. However, he certainly showed great kindness to Abraham and all who were with him. God had told Abimelech that Abraham would pray for him and the people of his kingdom. We will read the reason for that prayer in the next group of verses. God was also showing kindness to Abimelech.

Abimelech also realized that the actions of Abraham may have caused a loss of respect of Sarah by the servants of Abraham. As a result, he told Sarah that he had given Abraham a thousand pieces of silver. Abimelech said that this money was to vindicate Sarah in the sight of all who were with her, as well as before all of the people. Here, we see that some of the servants of Abraham may have looked at Sarah with a lack of respect because she had been taken into the house of Abimelech. This payment may have been to help restore their respect of Sarah. The word translated “rebuked” means *to rebuke, to reprove, to correct, or to show to be right*. This rebuke of Sarah was for her lie of saying that Abraham was her brother instead of her husband. Abraham later used this same word to rebuke Abimelech in Genesis 21:25, where we read,

“Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech’s servants had seized.” We will see that Abraham did the same thing in that situation and gave sheep and oxen to Abimelech to make a covenant and show respect to Abimelech while also rebuking him.

We go on to read, in Genesis 20:17, that Abraham prayed to God for Abimelech and the people of his kingdom. Even though Abimelech had taken Sarah in the integrity of his heart, God had allowed judgment on the entire extended household of Abimelech to make Abimelech aware that Sarah was the wife of Abraham and not just the sister. God had closed up all of the wombs of Abimelech’s wife and female servants. That meant that during the period of time that Sarah had been taken into the house of Abimelech, none of the women related to Abimelech in any way had been able to become pregnant. That was a cause of great sorrow to the women of that time and for many years after that time when they were unable to become pregnant. This is demonstrated by the prayer of Hannah, in 1 Samuel 1:11, where we read, “Then she made a vow and said, ‘O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.’” Here, we see that she had great sorrow because she did not have a child.

We saw that Sarah had also experienced this same sorrow because she did not have a son. In Genesis 16:2-3, we read, “So Sarai said to Abram, ‘See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing *children*. Please, go into my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.” However, the Lord had promised Sarah just a short time before this lie that she would have a son. Genesis 18:14 says, “‘Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’” Now, Sarah and Abraham could also have this promised son. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that the Lord is the One who gives children and that they are a blessing from the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.