

GENESIS: Where Grace Begins

Not Again, Abraham! Genesis 20

²⁰ From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. ² And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."

⁴ Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent people? ⁵ Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this."

⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.

⁷ Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

⁸ So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. ⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done." ¹⁰ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see, that you did this thing?"

¹¹ Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, 'There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' ¹² Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. ¹³ And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, 'He is my brother.'"

¹⁴ Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵ And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you." ¹⁶ To Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated."

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. ¹⁸ For the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Some initial considerations from the text:

This is another proof of the _____ of scripture ...

You can only measure _____ in the 'crucible' of _____ or _____.

Don't be too quick to _____ Abraham ... What's my "recidivism rate"?

If we don't address the underlying _____ of our sin and honestly recognize our own _____ to certain sins, we are dooming ourselves to _____.

God is _____ over all our circumstances and decisions and _____ all of them for His purposes.

Be incredibly _____ that you – if you are in Christ – enjoy the security of an _____, _____ covenant.

Some questions from the text:

Why did Abraham commit *the exact same sin* again?

What did he see?

What was his *besetting* sin?

How does sin work?*

- _____ is at the root of all action (“We only ever do what we want.”)
- _____ doesn't exist where desires/affections don't exist *first*. (“Temptation is the opportunity to fulfill existing desires.”)
- _____ can only exist when something is _____. (What is the underlying issue?)
- _____ creates the “lacking”. This is our biggest sin. (“Every sin is a clarion call from your soul that you do not think God is powerful enough to provide.”)
 - Unbelief does not mean “_____”. It means there are parts of our heart still lacking faith.
 - The only remedy is releasing those parts over to God and beginning to _____ Him. (Trust shows up as _____).

Big question: “What is it that my heart does not trust God to provide that I thought this sin would take care of?”

*Adapted from David Bowden's *Rewire Your Heart* (pps. 58-60).

“Once the reliability of something is tested and proved true, that thing becomes all the more reliable. You may be wary of crossing a rickety bridge over a deep chasm. But once you see someone three times your size galumph across it without so much as a board creaking, you will be all the more willing to cross it yourself. You may be suspicious of a new, untasted, and visually off-putting food. But when the pickiest eater you know starts scarfing it down, you will be all the more willing to take a bite.”

Manufacturers do this all the time. It's called stress testing. They put their goods through the most strenuous circumstances. They'll drop a three-hundred-pound punching bag on a seat ten thousand times. They'll put a car in severe heat while continually running its air conditioner. They'll run over a Tupperware container with a steamroller. These tests ensure the product's safety, durability, and functionality under the most extreme conditions. All of this is done, and advertised, to increase the consumer's trust in their product.

The gospel is the ultimate stress test of God's provision. In the work of re-evangelism, the gospel asks our hearts a redemptive rhetorical question: If God went to the cross for us to amply provide for our salvation, are there any conceivable lengths to which he won't also go to give us everything else in Christ? Romans 8:31–32 makes this promise clear: "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

Is God's love enough to satisfy me when my spouse cheats and leaves? His love was so great it drove him to sacrifice himself for us. Is God's power able to provide when I lose a child in the womb? His power resurrected Jesus from the grave. Is God's law really for my joy when I am violently shaking from substance detox? Jesus perfectly obeyed the law and even suffered under its curse for "the joy that was set before him" (Heb. 12:2).

God provided for the most severe problem we have—the sure punishment of our sin in death. And he provided for it through the most costly means imaginable—the incarnation, humiliation, and mutilation of the eternal Son of God. Therefore, there is no problem, deficiency, or want too deep, nor length, measure, or cost too great, that God will not go to provide for his people—we of formerly little faith. If you don't believe him, he set out to prove it to you through the stress test of the gospel."

Wait – God can keep people from sinning?

How especially convicting is it when the world/a pagan calls out a Christian?

Do I see the grace in this passage?

God to Abimelech ...

Abimelech to Abraham ...

Abimelech to Sarah ...

God to Abraham to Abimelech ...