

Not Again

- ¹ Now 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.

Genesis 20:1-18

Baby-Talk

I've probably said this before in our study of Genesis, but Calvin once said, "For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to 'lisp' in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity."¹ Calvin was fond of saying that God condescended to us in a language that we could understand, and since compared to him we are infants, his talk is very much like baby-talk.

This is not to say that there is nothing difficult in God's word, nothing advanced, nothing worth searching out, thinking hard about, or inquiring diligently into. It is to say that God's word is basically and properly **easy to understand**. The two most basic ways that God speaks to us is through the two words of Scripture: **law** and **gospel**. Law is that which we are to do. The gospel is that which God does. The law is that which shows God's holiness. The gospel is that which shows God's grace. The law is that which shows us our sin. The gospel is that which shows us the way out from under its bonds and shackles. The law gives us examples of how we are to live. The gospel gives types of how Jesus would one day live (die, be raised, ascend, send the Spirit, etc). The law condemns. The gospel comforts. The law takes. The gospel gives. The law is bad news. The gospel is good news that when accepted, ironically turns the law into something we desire to keep. You can see from these things that the law and gospel are opposites, even though they are both God's word to man and both reflect his glory. The problem lies in us.

When you understand these two basic ideas, ideas that a child can understand, then you can begin reading the Scripture properly. And yet, God does not stop here. He has other ways of speaking to us like children, so that we can understand him even better. One of these is through **repetition**. Mothers and fathers have to continually say the same things over and over to their children. Usually it is, "**Stop that! Stop that! Quit it! Cut that out! No! No! Stop that!**" God's repetition isn't always so harsh. He knows that we need both the law and the gospel in repetition, but he often presents it to us in forms that differ from us as parents.

We have seen a lot of repetition in Genesis. Many stories build on those that have come before. The present story is no exception. It has great affinities to a story very on in the Abraham cycle—when Abram and Sarai go down to **Egypt**. It also has many conceptual links to the **Sodom** story of Genesis 18-19. The latter are more

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 121.

difficult to discover. Here, the repetition is in words and phrases: There are “many verbal connections with preceding material, especially chaps. 18–19: in v 4, for “**Lord**” (), cf. 15:2, 8; 18:3, 27, 30, 31, 32; 19:18; for “**nation**” (), cf. 12:2; 17:4, 6, 16, 20; 18:18; for “**righteous**,” see 6:9; 7:1; 18:23, 24, 25, 26, 28. In v 7, for “**live**,” see 19:20; for “**you ... will certainly die**,” see 2:17; 3:3, 4. In v 8, for “**early in the morning**,” see 19:27; for “**afraid**,” see 3:10; 15:1; 18:15; 19:30. In v 9, for “**What have you done?**” see 3:13, 14; 4:10; 12:18; for “**sin**,” see 18:20. In v 11, for “**surely**” (), see 6:5; 19:8; for “**place**” “**wherever**” (), see 18:24, 26, 33; 19:12, 14, 27. In v 13, for “**favor**,” see 19:19. In v 15, for “**wherever you like**” = “**good in your eyes**,” see 19:8.² And Abraham as a **prophet** (vs. 7) sums up God’s letting Abraham in on the plans of the divine council (18:17). We will look at some of these later on.

On a more basic level, and much easier to spot, are the connections between the Abram in Egypt story and Abraham in Gerar (and, curiously, there is still one more story like it in **Gen 26:6-16**). In both stories (**12:9**; **20:1**), Abraham goes down to the **Negeb**—the dessert of southern Canaan/Israel. In the first story, he continues on towards **Egypt**, out of the Promised Land. In the second story, he stays in the desert and goes to a place called **Gerar**. In the former, Abraham goes because of a **famine**. In the later, he goes because **he feels like it**. Where the stories most obviously converge is when Abraham says of Sarah his wife, “**She is my sister**” (**20:2**). Recall how, when he was about to enter Egypt, Abram told Sarai to say “**you are my sister**” (**12:13**). This is the point at which our story screams out “**goo-goo**.” It is where the cooing of God to his little children begins. Why?

The Law and Learning from the Past

A typical way to proceed here is to **look at what Abraham does and to learn some kind of lesson from it**. As I’ve repeated many times, this is not necessarily a bad thing, though it can be if that’s all we think a story like this is here to teach us. That is where our understanding of the law and gospel must step in. Let us look at the story through **the eyes of the law**, what the characters did, what they should not have done, etc. As we do this, we will compare the actions of two men with one another, as well as with those of the previous story.

Let’s begin with **Abraham**. As we have seen, Abraham is presenting Sarah as his sister again. We know from **vs. 2** that this is a **half-truth**, but of course, a half-truth is often a whole-lie. She is also his **wife**. We also know that when Abraham did

² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, vol. 2, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 69.

this the first time, the Pharaoh became furious because he believed he was deceived, which he was. And, if you remember from our look at that story, I suggested that Abraham is presented as anything but the model hero to emulate in that story.

What should be astonishing to us the moment we read this is how it appears that Abraham **does not seem to have learned his lesson**. This is striking because Abraham got into big trouble the first time. Now, many years have passed. He should have matured. Abraham has had the LORD come to him time and again, making and reconfirming his covenant promises to the man. He should have been more confident, less fearful. But maybe We're getting ahead of ourselves this time. Maybe things will go different in this story. In fact, nothing is said here about Abraham being afraid or worried as it was in the previous story. The beginning leaves us guessing.

Immediately, we learn that **Abimelech** king of Gerar sends and takes Sarah. This is nearly identical to what happens with Pharaoh (**Gen 12:15**). What is it about this 90 year old woman that makes kings leap frog over other all others in order to marry her! I'll talk more about Sarah later.

At this point, God (*elohim*) comes to Abimelech in a dream by night. "Abimelech" is probably a title rather than a name, sort of like Pharaoh. Often in the Bible, God will speak through **dreams**. In this case, it wasn't a vague dream that needed an interpretation from a prophet. It is very **direct**. God says, "**Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife**" (**20:3**). To take another man's wife was forbidden in almost every ancient culture. As we have seen with other moral sins, adultery did not start to become wrong on Mt. Sinai. Genesis is full of sins that come before Mt. Sinai. Adultery was called the "**great sin**" throughout the ancient world.³ Amazing, isn't it, how these horrible, backwards people were actually more morally conscience struck when it comes to this topic than our own present civilization is? King Abimelech calls it this in our passage (**vs. 9**).

Just here, we need to think about the **context** of the **last two chapters** we have been reading. Think about the sins mentioned in Sodom and Gomorrah. It was sexual sin. The men wanted to rape the angels. Lot wanted to give them his daughters instead. Then think about the incest that takes place in the Lot story

³ Moran, W. L. "The Scandal of the 'Great Sin' at Ugarit." *JNES* 18 (1959) 280–81; Rabinowitz, J. J. "The 'Great Sin' in Ancient Egyptian Marriage Contracts." *JNES* 18 (1959) 73. **GOING DEEPER:** Some say that a "great sin" is any serious offense. The examples cited refer to idolatry (Ex 32:21; 30, 31; 2 Kgs 17;21. Cf. Loren R. Fisher, Duane E. Smith, and Stan Rummel, eds., *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible*, vol. 2, *Analecta Orientalia*, 50 [Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1975], 410). But it must be kept in mind that in a biblical worldview, idolatry IS adultery (Hos 3:1; Ezek 6:9; 23:7, 37). One example of a "great sin" is forging royal tablets. So the point is true, but most of the time, it does refer to adultery, be it physical or spiritual.

afterwards. More sexual sin. So God coming in a dream saying he will kill Abimelech fits the pattern of the peoples of Canaan. Maybe they weren't so moral after all!

In this regard, notice Abraham's comment to the king in vs. 11, "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.'" He was under the general impression that every town in Canaan was as wicked as the cities God destroyed. By the way, this is the same kind of reason he gives for the same half-truth in Egypt: "When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live" (12:12).

What we are seeing from Abraham, then, is in fact a virtual repeat of his actions and motives from Egypt. This is not good behavior from our hero. In the next verse, Abraham tries to justify himself, "Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife" (Gen 20:12). This information was not given to the Pharaoh, and it is the first time we read about it in the book. Perhaps this makes you think that Abraham is worse now than before, because he is trying to get himself off the hook, as if he were not responsible for his actions. But this revelation should have the impact of lessening Abraham's sin in our minds. In Egypt, we did not know that Abraham was telling a half-truth. We were lead to believe that it was a whole lie. I do not believe this gets him off the hook, of course. She is still his wife, and he lies about it by withholding that information. Lies do not always need to be tales that we tell. They can also be the silence that we keep. We can sin not only in what we do, but in what we leave undone.

Let me summarize what we have seen from Abraham up to this point in our story. He heads down the Negeb, as he does when he goes to Egypt. He lies to Abimelech, like he did to Pharaoh. Finally, he tries to justify his actions to the king, because he thought everyone in the city was wicked like Sodom. He kept up the ruse by not telling them he was married to Sarah. The portrait painted of Abraham here is therefore not much different from that painted when he went to Egypt. It is slightly better, but when we consider how bold he was in the Sodom story, how justice seemed important to him (Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked), doing right and all that, and how we should have grown spiritually by now after all these years, perhaps this is an even sadder story of Abraham's continual sin than what we find in Egypt. We might expect better of him.

In that vein, it seems to me that that we ought to expect better of ourselves. This story ought to cause you to look at yourselves as Christians, and

rather than become prideful because you live in the NT, it ought to cause you to look within to see what remaining sin lies therein. For God is growing Abraham. It isn't like OT saints weren't being sanctified, and yet he is still prone to the same errors and sins of his earlier life at the same time.

He should have been horrified that he was committing the same sins as before, yet he seems oblivious, at least while doing them. Are we not similarly blind to that which continues to ensnare each of us in our own particular ways? He is the father of our faith, and for us to think that we are more righteous than Abraham would, I think, be a serious mistake, and indeed probably a great sin. The Christian life is not about having all of our sinful inclinations taken away, but in about recognizing our sin, repenting of it (rather than justifying it), seeing it in ourselves, desiring to obey God out of gratitude, but then repenting again and again and again when we fail. This is what it means to live by grace.

The Image Still Reflected in All Men

At this point, I want to turn to [Abimelech](#). Comparing and contrasting Abimelech to Pharaoh is fascinating. Both are kings. Both are pagans (though it is possible that as God of Canaan, Abimelech is familiar with the Angel of the LORD. The same is almost certainly not true of Pharaoh). Both take Sarah to be their wife, after both are deceived in the same way by Abraham. Both see God do something quite terrible to them because of what they have done.

Just here, things begin to diverge a bit. With Pharaoh, “The LORD” (Yahweh) [afflicts him](#) and his house with great plagues ([Gen 12:17](#)). This anticipates the Exodus that will come hundreds of years later. God does something different with Abimelech. It says, “God” (Elohim) “[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’](#)” ([Gen 20:3](#)). In other words, at this point God merely [threatens](#) Abimelech.

Now, both Pharaoh and Abimelech call Abraham and say, “[What have you done](#)” ([12:18](#); [20:9](#)). But something happens between this God’s treat and Abimelech’s words with Abraham. Abimelech responds to the Lord (Adonai), “[Lord, will you kill an innocent people](#)” ([20:4](#)). Pharaoh did not do this. He said nothing to God. Abimelech said this because [he had not approached Sarah](#). This is a very curious thing, because two chapters earlier, it is Abraham who says, “[Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked](#)” ([18:23](#)). Suddenly, in saying this, Abimelech is being compared to Abraham rather than Pharaoh.

Abimelech then takes it a step farther. “[Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother’](#)” ([20:5](#)). This is a shocking

thing to consider. Abimelech says, “In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this” (5). Suddenly, Abimelech is seen as more righteous than Abraham! We see none of this kind of special pleading in Pharaoh’s case. Pharaoh is not presented as particularly righteous at all.

But just in case we are tempted to think that this comparison between Abraham and Abimelech is not being made, consider what God says next. In the dream God said to him, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart” (20:6). God confirms that Abimelech is innocent. I want you to notice here that as a pagan, king Abimelech still knows the difference between right and wrong. In fact, he even has a very strong conscience, so strong that he is willing to argue with God about his actions.

No, the difference between believers and unbelievers is not that we know the law and they don’t, or even that we keep the law and they don’t. Just look at king Abimelech here, look at what he does, and how God confirms that he did it. As such, while we do preach the law in our churches, we must never make the mistake of thinking that doing right and wrong is what makes us Christians, though this is exactly the mistake far too many people today make—Christian and non-Christian alike in their thinking of what makes this religion what it is.

At any rate, I’m going to just glance over what God says next, for now, because I want to deal with it in the last part of this sermon. He says, “It was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. 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” (20:7). Clearly, God wants Abimelech to understand the Abraham is special to him, and that it will only be through Abraham praying for him that he will live. He also wants Abimelech to know that if he doesn’t do what God says, he will still die.

So how does the king of Gerar respond? He rises early in the morning and calls all his servants and tells them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. Now, “early in the morning” was a phrase used for Abraham the day Sodom was destroyed (19:27). No time to delay. God has spoken. Also, in 18:15, Sarah was afraid of God knowing she had laughed, and in 19:30, Lot was afraid too. Abimelech clearly believes God, and his men clearly believe him.

So Abimelech calls Abraham and says, “What have you done to us?” (20:9). Pharaoh was concerned about himself (“me”), but Abimelech is concerned about his whole city. This shows more contrast to Pharaoh. He is not like that Pharaoh. “How have I sinned again you, that you have brought on me and my

kingdom a great sin [adultery]? You have done to me things that ought not to be done” (9). Abimelech is contrasted with Abraham, and he is even more righteous than Abraham here. Again, this is rather shocking.

Then look at Abraham’s response. “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’” (11). Abraham has become so cynical in his travels, that he no longer has hope for even the most basic acts of kindness and goodness in humanity. But he is wrong. There is a fear of God in this place, and that is very shocking, considering all we have learned about the people of Canaan in these last several chapters.

Well, in response to Abraham, Abimelech takes sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gives them to Abraham (20:14). Pharaoh gave these things to Abraham when he took Sarah. This king gives Abraham these things as he gives Sarah back (14). He returns Sarah his wife to him. Abimelech is proving his fear of God by his actions. He is utterly different from Pharaoh and the people of Sodom. Maybe the image of God isn’t utterly destroyed after all.

Not only this, but he gives Abraham the pick of the land. “Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you” (15). Abraham is the one who offered the land to Lot (13:9). Now the king is acting generously like Abraham did. Not only this, but another kindness is performed. He says to Sarah, “Behold, I have given your brother (sarcasm?) 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” (15). To put this money into perspective, a typical Babylonian worker at that time earned about six pieces of silver ... a year. The king is doing this to prove to the world that he and Sarah have not been together. She is vindicated.

I would sum up the way Abimelech is acting as obedience. The is doing what he was told by God to do. He is acting in gratitude. Gratitude to God for protecting him in his relationship with Sarah. I would suggest that he is even acting in faith. Faith that God will do as he has promised—not destroy him. There is also hope here, hope that God will open the wombs of the women of his city, for the last verse says, “For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife” (20:18).

The Gospel and Learning from Grace

This verse leads me to consider the gospel in this story. We have looked a great deal now at the behavior of the men in our two stories. Abraham has not behaved well. Pharaoh behaved poorly too. Abimelech, shockingly, behaves like the man who we expect Abraham would have become by now. It should be obvious

that Abraham is not being held up as a model to emulate in this story, but Abimelech is. Though this, we have discovered that even pagans know right from wrong and know how to act upon it. Is Abimelech saved? We have no indication that he is or isn't, though since he knows the true God, it is possible that he was. But that ends up being speculation. In this law discussion, and in pointing out that law is not what makes us Christians, it leads to the question of what does. The answer to that is the gospel. Where is the gospel in this story?

I believe it begins in **vs. 6** when God says, “**I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me.**” This displays God’s **omniscience** and his **omnipotence**. The attributes of God—especially these two things—are the foundation of any good news in the Bible. The fact that God knows all things, that nothing is hidden from his eye, means that if he has a plan to do something, nothing will catch him by surprise. Nothing will be able to get past his attention. The fact that God is omnipotent means that he is able to make all the ideas and plans of men, however sinful or non-sinful their intentions, fit into his plan. In other words, nothing we do is able to overpower God, to defeat his purposes, to put an end to his plans, however deliberately or unintentionally they may be. And the reason why God’s omniscience and omnipotence is brought up here is indeed because God has a plan. God’s plan is central to this entire episode.

What is this plan? We see it in the rest of this verse. “**Therefore I did not let you touch her**” (**20:6**). God did not let Abimelech lay with Sarah. God’s plan involves Sarah, and Abimelech, in acting like Pharaoh, stands as a threat to God’s plan. So God preserves the king from sinning ... for the sake of his plan. What am I talking about?

Again we go back to earlier stories in Genesis. In **Genesis 3:15**, Eve will have a seed, a son who will crush the head of the serpent. In **Genesis 9:26-27**, that seed will come through the line of Shem. The one whom God chooses from the line of Shem to be the father of this seed is Abram. “To *your* offspring I will give this land” (**Gen 12:7**). Earlier on, the threat was that this seed would be someone adopted into Abram’s house—Eliezer of Damascus (**Gen 15:2**). But God said no, “This man shall not be your heir; *your very own son shall be your heir*” (**Gen 15:4**).

Then the threat was that Ishmael would be the heir, but again God said no, “I will give you a son by her” (**Gen 17:16**), Sarai, and he changed their names to Abraham and Sarah to mark this momentous prophecy. It would not be the slave girl who would be the mother, but Abraham’s wife.

Now the threat is entirely different. The threat is that now Abraham will not be the father. You see, at two different times, God came to Abraham and then to

Sarah promising that this time next year, Sarah would have a son (17:21; 18:10, 14). Now God has opened her womb. Yet, Abraham has given away his wife to become the wife of someone else, after God has done this. This makes what Abraham does throughout our story today all the worse. What was he *thinking*? Obviously, he wasn't.

But God was. God knows that if he lets Abimelech go into Sarah, that the entire plan will be destroyed. She will have a child alright, but it won't be Abraham's son. "Enough," God says. I will not let you touch her. Give her back to Abraham or you will die. "But I didn't know she was married, Lord. I know that you took her in the integrity of your heart. Now, give her back." But I didn't do anything do her, Lord." "I know, but it is only by my grace that you didn't. Now, give her back or you and "all who are yours" will die (vs. 7).

Why is God so insistent here, so demanding, so harsh to a king that was essentially innocent? Because this is bigger than this king. This is about God. This is about a people whom he will create. This is about a Savior who will come to the world.

God's threats to Abimelech and his family, his ironic closing of the wombs of the women, his decision that Abimelech will die if he does not react are all part of the plan that frees Sarah and preserves the promise. There is more that we are supposed to get here than just seeing Abimelech as some kind of example to emulate. His generosity in giving him so much that he is greatly blessed, in offering him the land, and in giving a sign to all the world that Sarah cannot be pregnant by him falls straight down the line with the promises to Abraham that he would be greatly blessed ("I will make your name a great blessing;" 12:2), that he would inherit the land, and that he would be the father of a great son ("to your seed I will give this land;" 12:7).

And that is the gospel in this story. That is why this story is in the Bible. We have got to be looking, as his covenant people today, for the gospel in the OT, in passages like this, so that we might have more than what good pagans have—and outward obedience to the law written on everyone's heart. For here, in the gospel, we can see that nothing man does even by accident, is able to thwart the plans of God to send his Only Begotten Son through the promises that he has made.

Something as simple as an innocent king doing what was lawful in his day could have stopped Messiah from coming. But it did not and it would not because God was zealous for his name, for his people, and for his Son. But there is one more bit of good news here.

This has to do with Abraham being God’s prophet. If it were up to you and I, we would probably choose a prophet that was the most righteous man in all the world. Noah was called that (**Gen 6:9**). Abraham never was. He was just commanded to be like Noah (**17:1**). Apparently, it took him until at least after this story to get that all worked out!

My point is, if it were up to our choice, we would probably have thrown Abraham aside at this moment and taken Abimelech to be our prophet. He is a much better human being as far as that kind of thing goes. But God has made a promise to Abraham. God has saved Abraham, warts and all. God is with Abraham, and God has sworn that anyone who blesses Abraham will himself be blessed.

In this way, in his office as prophet (the only time he is called a prophet is in **20:7**, though it was implied in **18:17** when he let him in on the divine council’s plan to destroy Sodom) that Abraham is like Christ. All who bless him will be blessed, and all who curse him will find themselves accursed. And so see how Abraham becomes a type of Christ to Abimelech.

“Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children” (**20:17**). Notice how the curse and the blessing of the wombs matches the very gospel of a seed being born that we have been discussing. Such is the marvelous grace of God, even to a pagan king living in the midst of an utterly sick culture, and to a weak-willed man fearful that no one else around him fears God. The blessings came not because of what they had done or were doing, but because anyone who wishes to be blessed by God must have grace. It is by grace we are saved, through faith—and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

(Gen 12:9-20 ESV)	Genesis 20:1-18
⁹ And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb . 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.	¹ Now From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar .
¹¹ When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, ¹² and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³ Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." ¹⁴ When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh . And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.	² And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.
¹⁶ And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. ¹⁷ But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great	(see 20:14-16) ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to

plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.	him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."
"Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? (Gen 18:23 ESV)	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."
"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, (Gen 18:17 ESV) – i.e. destroy all of the cities of the plains.	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.
¹⁸ So Pharaoh called Abram and said, " What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?"	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."
¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? (see vs. 12 above)	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."'"
Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go."	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.
²⁰ And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.	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.