TITLE: Rationalization

TEXT: Gen. 12:10-20; & 20:1-13; 2nd Tim. 3:16-17;

Gen. 3:6-13, 2-3; Ro. 12:2; 2 Co.10:5

INTRODUCTION: Today I want to talk about something that I believe every human being has done a lot in our lifetime and that is rationalization.

So just what does it mean to Rationalize?

Rationalize=

**To attribute (one's actions) to rational and creditable motives without analysis of true and especially unconscious motives i.e.\*rationalized his dislike of his brother\***

Be honest, have you ever found yourself rationalizing? **To attribute (one's actions) to rational and creditable motives without analysis of true motives.**

Rationalization is something that often plagues us as Christians, at least the temptation to rationalize our behaviors that may not line up with Gods Word or Gods will.

I want to use as an example this morning of one of the great rationalizers of Scripture. And that would be Abraham.

**Genesis 12:10-20(NIV)**   
**10Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.    
11As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are.    
12When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live.**

**13Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”**

**14When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman.**  **15And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace.**  **16He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels.**  **17But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram’s wife Sarai.**  **18So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?**  **19Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!”**  **20Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.**

What did Abraham do here? He rationalized that it was ok to tell a lie in order to avoid a danger that he thought he may have been in.

In the end it didn’t work out too well for him as he was sent packing by the Egyptians.

Do you think Abraham learned his lesson not to rationalize away sinful or wrong behavior?

**Genesis 20:1-13(NIV)**  **1Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar,**  **2and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.**  **3But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”**

**4Now Abimelech had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?**

**5Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.”**  **6Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me.**

**That is why I did not let you touch her.**  **7Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die.”**  **8Early the next morning Abimelech summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid.**  **9Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said, “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should not be done.”**  **10And Abimelech asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”**  **11Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’**  **12Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife.**  **13And when God had me wander from my father’s household, I said to her, ‘This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”**

What an excellent lesson Abraham provides on rationalization and how we often do it!

A Scripture that comes to mind here is:  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17(NIV)   
16All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,    
17so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

**16All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness—**

Whether good or bad examples--- we can learn from all of Scripture and the men and women’s lives that we find lived out there.

Do you find it interesting that Abraham—the ultimate icon of having a trusting faith in God, a man whose faith was accredited to him as righteousness by God, has a specific moral weakness that keeps resurfacing?

And that he gives into this weakness after he has previously gotten into trouble because of it?

Possibly the most fascinating aspect of Abraham’s moral lapse is how easily he seems to rationalize his sin away, even as he continues to put his wife Sarah at great risk.

We don’t know for sure but it seems to me that Sarah might have been violated the first time Abraham rationalized away his sin when Pharaoh took her as his wife.

**17But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram’s wife Sarai.    
18So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?    
19Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife?**

If Pharaoh took her as his wife that probably meant her had sexual relations with her.

God punished Pharaoh where he didn’t punish Abimelech because Abimelech had not yet had a sexual relationship with her.

If Abraham loved Sarah as much as Scripture indicates that he does, how could he put her at such great risk---not just once but at least twice that we know of?

The answer is Rationalization!

We see the Perfect picture of the process of rationalization in Abrahams response to Abimelech..

**10And Abimelech asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”   
11Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’    
12Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife.**

Rationalization doesn’t always involve out right lying, but more often the use of ½ truths, or ¼ or 1/10th truths.

Yet given what Abraham perceived to be a real threat, that he could be killed because of the beauty of his wife and his telling the whole truth, we might also have been tempted to do the same thing to save our skins.

Not many of us will ever be forced to make moral decisions in the face of potential death, especially in this nation. But it is the second part of Abrahams rationalization that we can probably most identify with---that Sarah was in fact his half sister!

Didn’t Abraham then tell the truth? Yes, but not the whole truth!

The truth that he told and the way that he told it had the same effect as telling an outright lie!

But here is the thing----before Abraham lied to others he had to first deceive himself into believing that a half-truth was just as honest as telling the whole truth.

And what is more, it was undoubtedly a whole lot easier for Abraham to deceive himself the second time around.

Abraham was certainly not the first to try to rationalize away his sin.

In fact the very first man did it when the very first sin was committed.

**Genesis 3:6-13(NIV)   
6When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.    
7Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.   
8Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.    
9But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”   
10He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”   
11And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”   
12The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”   
13Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”**

How did Adam try to rationalize away his sin?

**The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”**

So God this is really both Eve’s fault and yours!

Adam’s implication was: If you would not have given me this woman this never would have happened!

So God I think this is really your own fault.

How does Eve try to rationalize away her sin?  
**“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”**

Were these both outright lies? No, Eve did give Adam the fruit! But what Adam didn’t mention was that he was sitting right there beside her and offered no objection at the time.

The serpent may have tempted Eve to do it but Eve knew what God had warned as she said to the serpent:   
**Genesis 3:2-3(NIV)**   
**2The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,    
3but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”**

What was Eve’s defense?

Do you remember the comedian Flip Wilsons character Geraldine Jones and what her famous line was whenever she was caught doing something that she wasn’t supposed to? “The Devil made me do it!”

Eve rationalized away her disobedience by blaming it on the devil!

Adam rationalized away his disobedience by blaming the woman and by blaming God.

Even King David was guilty of rationalization when it came to sin.

David, a godly man, a man described by God as a man after Gods own heart, committed adultery with Bathsheba.

How did it happen? David had to first rationalize his behavior!

It may have went something like this---

I know that she is married to one of my officers but after all I am the King of Israel! I have worked hard to get where I am! I have fought more than my share of battles to keep this people safe and free! I deserve this little indiscretion!

It would actually be an honor for any woman to sleep with me!

Besides, who will ever know? It will just be this one time!

Half truths, partial truths, are the engine that drives most of our rationalization to disobedience and sin.

A man steals from a store and when caught might say: well their prices are too high and I really paid for this when paying their high prices on other things I have purchased… They really owe it to me!

An employee embezzles from their employer and when caught says; but I was underpaid so they really owe it to me!

A man is caught cheating on his wife so he may say: well if she would have taken care of my needs better I wouldn’t have done it!

A woman has an affair and when caught says; if you would have paid more attention to me this wouldn’t have happened.

Your son has gone out with a friend and has taken out the car for the first time and is supposed to be home by 11:00. When he shows up at 12:15 he says well my friend said he didn’t have to be home until 12:00 so what could I do? It is really his fault!

I’m really too tired to get up and go to Church---I was up late last night! (watching movies) It is those darn movies fault! Blame Hollywood!

I know God wants me to go to Africa as a missionary but my brother has a boil and my sister has a boyfriend problem, and my dog doesn’t like the heat so I can’t go…It is really not my fault!

God I don’t have time to spend with You in Your Word—I work a 50 hour week, I have responsibilities when I get home---I just don’t have the time!

“I fail at everything, so why bother trying"

"Well Billy does it, so why can’t I"

Another place we see a lot of rationalization is in drugs, alcohol, pornography, ect.

I'm not hurting anyone else. I can quit any time I feel like it. It relaxes me. I had a hard day today. I deserve a drink. I only drink/use a little.

It is really pretty easy to rationalize away things we do not want to do or things we don’t want to give up isn’t it?

And the thing is, the more that we rationalize sin, the easier it becomes to rationalize that sin---rationalize it enough and we can even come to the place that we do not see it as sin any longer.

So what is the answer? Jesus is the answer!

Jesus is the answer for the non-believer and Jesus remains the answer for the believer!

**Romans 12:2(NIV)   
2Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

Rationalization is a pattern of this world and a tool of the enemy to neutralize a believer and hinder our effectiveness in kingdom work.

**2Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

Only Jesus can renew our minds! Only Jesus can give us the ability to test and approve what Gods will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will.

One way Christ has availed for us to do this when it comes to our temptation to rationalize away bad behavior or bad attitudes is revealed to us in:

**2 Corinthians 10:5(NIV)   
5We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

**We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ!**

When we are tempted to rationalize taking something that does not belong to us--- We need to take that thought captive, isolate it in our mind, grab a hold of it, and then make it obedient to Christ!

*But the Word of God says you shall not steal! You should not covet what someone else has.*

If you are tempted to rationalize sleeping with another persons spouse and cheating on yours--- We need to take that thought captive, isolate it in our mind, grab a hold of it, and then make it obedient to Christ!

God’s word says: *You shall not commit adultery and to honor your wife and love her just as Christ loved the Church.*

*God says that a wife is to love her husband and be submissive unto him as she is to the Lord!*

If we are tempted to rationalize the continued abusive of addictive behaviors such as drugs, alcohol or pornography--- We need to take those thoughts captive, isolate them in our minds, grab a hold of them, and then make them obedient to Christ!

But the Word of God says: Have no other God before Me and that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who lives within us and we are to honor God with our bodies.

Is there some area of disobedience, some area of sin in your life today that you are guilty of rationalizing away?

Possibly rationalized it away so much that it has ceased to be seen as disobedience or sin to you?

If so then why not take it to Jesus?

Ask Him to help you not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but help you to be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you can test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Ask Him to help you learn to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ by subjecting, even our every thought, to Him, holding our every thought up to the standard of His Word.

Are we ready to put an end to rationalization in our life and replace it with the sure foundation of God’s Word, Gods truths, truly giving Jesus Lordship of our life where we allow Him to rule and reign supreme?