God Protects His Promise

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[0:00] Guess where we are today? Genesis chapter 20. Oh, we get to look in on a really weak time in Abraham's life.

! Like each one of us, you follow each one of us around long enough through the week, you're! You're going to see a nasty moment, aren't you? You're going to see a moment of weakness. You're going to see a moment when it's more about me than it is about Jesus.
And that's certainly what we're going to find in Abraham's life this morning. So the title of my message this morning, God protects his promise. That's the major theme, I think, of what we're looking at in this particular chapter of the Bible.
So let's begin and we'll just read through the entire thing. If you'll just follow along with me. Genesis chapter 20. Now Abraham journeyed from there, that is the Oaks of Mamre, toward the land of the Negev and settled between Kadesh and Shur.
And then Abraham journeyed or sojourned in Gerar. Abraham said of Sarah, his wife, she's my sister. So King Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah.
[1:25] That means he took Sarah to be part of his harem. But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night and said to him, Behold, you are a dead man.

Hmm. Because of the woman whom you have taken. For she is married. Literally, for she is married to a husband. Now Abimelech, and that's just a heightened Hebrew way of saying she has a husband already.
Now Abimelech had not come near her. And then he responded to the Lord, Lord, will you slay a nation even though blameless? Did he not himself say to me, she's my sister?
And she herself said, he's my brother. In the integrity of my heart and in the innocence of my hands, I've done this. Then God said to Abimelech in the dream, Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this.
And I also kept you from sinning against me. Therefore, I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man's wife. For he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you will live.
[2:38] But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die. You and all who are yours. So Abimelech arose early in the morning, and called all of his servants, and told all these things in their hearing, and the men were greatly frightened.

Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you that you've brought on me in my kingdom a great sin?
You have done to me things that ought not to be done. And Abimelech then said to Abraham, What have you encountered? What have you come against that you have done such a thing as this?
And here's Abraham's reply in verse 11. Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.
Besides, she actually is my sister. She's the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother. And she became my wife. And it came about when God caused me to wander from my father's house that I said to her, This is the kindness which you will show me.
[3:45] Everywhere we go, save me. He's my brother. That's his excuse. And Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants and gave them to Abraham and restored his wife Sarah to him.

Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before you. Settle wherever you please. So he's going above and beyond, isn't he? To Sarah he said, Now this is really beautiful.
To Sarah he said, Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. Behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared.

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Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. For the Lord had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.
Wow. Alright. Well, if after reading that, you are left wondering, What in the world does this mean? [4:55] Why is this so important to God to include it here in this chapter in Genesis? Why is this in the Bible? Why would God air the dirty laundry of Abraham this way when he's going to be the father of many, many multiple billions, if it were, of people, at least millions and millions who will come to know the Lord?

Why put this in here? Well, you're in good company if you're wondering stuff like that. That's actually a good thing you'd be asking those questions. I want to share with you the opening sentence of commentator Henry Morris' analysis of Genesis 20.
Here is what he said about this. In many respects, Genesis 20 is one of the most difficult chapters in the Bible to understand. Alright?
So we've got our work cut out for us this morning. I suspect that Morris also echoes our own thoughts when he goes on to add this. How could Abraham and Sarah at this time repeat the very same sin they had committed many years ago in Egypt?
They had over and over again seen many wonderful answers to prayer, many miraculous proofs of God's care and protection. Their faith had stood many tests, and God had never failed them.
[6:20] And now, finally, finally, they were about to have their long-promised son, Isaac. Sarah may, he says, he's surmising, Sarah may even have been actually pregnant with Isaac at this particular juncture in their life.

The truth is, Abraham is not alone in this problem of repeating the same sin, is he? He's not. I've been telling you that now for several weeks, getting you ready for this chapter.
In fact, most of the time that I spend in my own ministry coming alongside my brothers and sisters in Christ in counseling has to do with what sins they have repeated or are repeating.
Most people don't come for counseling if they've encountered something one time and they've overcome it and it's not continuing to be an issue. They come because something is continuing to bother them, plague them, drag them down in their walk with the Lord.
So, I'm just saying he's not alone, is he? He's not alone. Now, what we're talking about when we identify repeated sins in our life is this.
[7:29] We are talking about sin patterns or sin habits that become ingrained in our thinking and then are expressed in some way or ways in our lifestyle.

Sinful patterns. You might have heard this referred to as a foothold in your walk with the Lord or a stronghold in your walk with the Lord.
Certain sins that seem to plague you. And you don't have to think of what might be the top three worst kinds of sins that a person can commit.
This can be the sin of apathy. Just ignoring the things of the Lord and getting comfortable in your own self with being your own little God and not living in the priorities of heaven.
That's sin. You know that? To become apathetic about the purposes of the Lord and try to coast in your Christian life is not a good thing. There is no such thing as coasting.
[8:34] You're either moving forward in the Lord or you're moving in the wrong direction. So, this is the kind of thing that we're dealing with in Abraham's life. Something that seems to be ingrained.

Now, you might argue, well, Jeff, this is only the second time in a few years this has happened. Look at the magnitude of it, though. Right? It's not always how many times you do it. You've got to look at also the impact.
We're going to talk about that. In Abraham's case, this passage emphasizes more than the impact his sin has on others and on his walk with the Lord than just the fact that he repeated it.
I think what we're seeing here is God is saying, yes, the repetition of this is not good, but it is more the issue of how this particular sin in his life is affecting all of the people around him and his own walk with the Lord.
And I think it's always like that with us. So, this is a true account and it focuses our attention this morning. It draws our attention from a shotgun kind of approach to a rifle bead, a laser beam, to this.
[9:44] It's a sobering, two-fold reality about sin in our lives. Here it is. This is what we want to see, okay? The first deals with repeated sin. We're not going to deny that that's an issue here and that

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we have that issue.

But the second reveals the harm our sins bring to others. The harm that our sin brings to other people. We need to talk about that.
As I say that to you, let me ask a question rhetorically of you that you can just think about in the way of an answer. As bad as it is for us to repeat sin and as bad as it is for us to hurt other people in our sin, which all sin does that.
Every sin hurts others. Even sins, listen now, even sins that you think you're doing in private hurt other people. Why? Because it hurts you, it hurts the Lord, and it takes you out of that mentality, that humility of heart that puts you in a servant-mindedness toward other people.
It can even put you in a mentality where you think you're serving other people, but there's always an agenda. When you're living in private sin, there's always an agenda in your heart toward others because you're not dealing with your own sin and it's getting in the way of you being servant-minded.
[11:05] Don't fool yourself. Sin is deceptive. It's deceitful. So when it works in your heart, that's what happens to you. And you can become very manipulative and self-deceived.

As bad as all of that is, that's not the worst thing that there is about sin. And so I'll ask this question. I'll even put it up there on the screen. What is the worst thing about our sin?
I just put it up there. What is the worst thing about our sin? The worst thing about our sin is this. It's against God. Now, folks, that's where you have to start.
This is all in the way of me setting the table in an introduction for all this. What is the worst thing about you sinning and me sinning in any given moment or situation or context?
It is the fact that that sin is against the Lord first and foremost. Now, that's where we need to start with sin. Too often we think about the negative consequences of sin on me, on us.
[12:12] And maybe we want to get rid of the sin because it doesn't feel good or it's not giving me what I thought it would or it's costing me too much to hang on to it or whatever. But that's not the worst thing about sin.

The worst thing is it is against Almighty God. Start there. Now, this one fact should lead you to address sin as soon as you become aware of it in your life.
But again, too often we push it off. That's why we repeat it. At least that's one of the primary reasons that we repeat it.
But look at this. I'll put this up on the screen. Sinning against God should break your heart. It should lead you to ask God to do these things. Alright, here we go.
It should lead you to ask God for these things to give you a biblical sensitivity to sin. Now, you and I both know that apart from the Holy Spirit we don't have that, do we?
[13:14] Right? In and of yourself and myself we do not have a biblical sensitivity to sin. That's something the Holy Spirit brings to your life as you walk with the Lord.

But now, even Christians can callous over their heart and become more insensitive to certain kinds of sin, types of sin in your life. You make excuses. You become apathetic.
You justify it. See, this is what Abraham's doing. He's justified this sin in his life to himself. You'll see that in a minute. No, we want to ask God to give us a biblical sensitivity to sin.
And that sensitivity begins with God, it's against you. First and foremost, I'm sinning against you. However it hurts other people or it hurts me. It hurts you.
That's what we want. Next, we want to ask God to reveal that sin in our life because sin is deceitful. We need God to show us our sin for what it is. Because we will rationalize and make excuses.
[14:16] We need God to lead us to confess that sin. Now, confession might sound real basic to you, but please hear your pastor on this. When we confess sin to God, we call it what God calls it.

And that takes rationalizing out of the picture. When I'm calling my sin what God calls it, I'm on the right track. Even in the midst of, now this is for free, even in the midst of you being stubborn in the moment and not wanting to adhere to the counsel of your brothers and sisters, your pastors, and repent of your sin, even in that, we're going to persevere with you.
Now, we may have to get to the point where we've pled with you, we've met with you, we've tried to come alongside of you, and you're continuing to be prideful and stiff-arm all of that.
And we may have to say to you, okay, here's what we're going to do now because you're making us do it. We're going to turn you over to the devil. You know what that means? In the discipline of the Lord, we're going to remove fellowship from you and the grace protection that you come under as a

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fellowship.
Your brothers and sisters are going to step back from you and we're going to give God the use of Satan in your life to buffet you as He disciplines you. Hopefully, that will make you miserable and you'll come back and you'll say, please forgive me and we will wrap our arms around you and tearfully thank the Lord for your repentance and restore you fully to our family.
[15:50] You see, it's not to punish you. It's not to take revenge on you. It's to bring you back to the Lord. To sober you in your heart.

It's called restoration. And that's what this entire passage is about. It's about biblical restoration. That's how a family does. You know, Ben wouldn't be showing Rowan any love if he let Rowan just do whatever he wanted to do and wrong and sin.
Right? You're 10 years old, brother. 11 now? 11 years old. What does he know? No offense. Everything? Well, I think I waited until 15 and then I knew everything.
So you got a head start on me, brother. But we protect them, don't we? They don't always maybe feel like that's protection. And when we're working with you that way, if we have to step back from you that way after many attempts to help you, it's not because we don't love you.
It's because we do. Now, you may not feel that way, but that's the truth. And that's what we do here. That's what we do here. So, here's your pastors, both of us, looking at you and pleading with you.
[17:04] Don't make us do that. Okay? If we have to come to you and say things to you, listen. Listen to us. And take us soberly.

Because worst is to come if you don't listen. If you can show us when we come to you that we're not being biblical, we will repent before you and ask God's forgiveness and we'll start on a different direction.
But you're going to have to show us that. Okay. That was for free. Now, back to where we need to be in all of this. As we think about this process of repentance, we are trying to strive in holiness. The goal isn't simply not to sin. The goal is to live in godliness. And we can't have it both ways. So, we need to be about the business of repenting.
And you'll do that the rest of your life. You'll never get to the point where we will live above sin on this earth. You'll never get to the point in your Christian life where you don't sin anymore.
[18:13] I know there's some teaching like that out there. It's wrong. It's not biblical. Or the Lord wouldn't tell us to confess our sins. Alright. That's another sermon for another time.

So, too often, you and I will suffer the deceitfulness of sin and what we'll do is we will minimize the negative consequences of our sin. We might keep doing it because it seems like it's not that bad. I mean, compared to other people's sins or what I used to do, this one's not that bad. And so, we keep doing it. We may say, well, it's not hurting me that much. We might say, well, it's private. Nobody really knows about it. Is it enough for you to know that God knows that it's sin? See, that's where it should start. God sees it. And God knows it whether my brothers and sisters do or not.
Or it could be that we don't deal with our sin in repentance because of this. We don't know how to do it. We don't know how to overcome it. And so, that's when we need brothers and sisters to come alongside of us and help us see, how do I deal with this in my life?
[19:21] I've been living in this pattern. I don't know how to overcome it. I want to. Okay, well, let's go. Let's start meeting and let's get together and start talking about what needs to happen.

What do you think the first thing we're going to tell somebody who's living in a pattern of sin, what do you think the first thing we're going to tell them they need to do? It's to stop doing what? Sinning. I know that sounds simple and you think, well, they'd do that if they knew how.
Well, you've got, sometimes you just have to look at your brothers and sisters and you have to say, stop sinning. Make another choice. See, we want to think we're victims, don't we?
I don't have a choice. Oh, yes, you do. Oh, yes, you do. And so, you want to say, stop it. Now, let's talk about a different choice. When you're in this context and this has happened, see, I'm doing counseling now.
So, we're not going to do that. I'm going to move on. All right. Here's the one thing that I know we can say for certain about all of this as I finish up this introduction. Here it is. There is no win when we sin.
[20:23] Don't let yourself become convinced that in some way what you are doing, if it is sinful, is helpful or productive. Because here's the number one thing we do when we're sinning against another person and we're continuing to do it.

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We realize we're doing it. We justify it this way. But I need to make my point. Even if I have to sin to do it. And folks, I'm telling you, there's no win in sin.
There is no win in sin. Maybe we need to get shirts that say there's no W in sin. You know? It's S-I-N, not W-I-N.
So what do we need? We need more of God's view of sin. That's what we need. I need to see God's view of my sin. And so do you.
We need God's view to dominate and define how each of us view our own sin. Not just the sin of other people now. You see what I'm doing with this.
[21:25] I'm not telling you to look at somebody else and go run into them and tell them all their sin. We need God's view of our own sin to dominate and define how we view it. Because God hates sin.

Now I know many preachers today for whatever reasons, good to them, they don't want to preach about sin. They don't want to say the word. They don't want to talk about it. That runs people off, Jeff.
You'll always be a little bitty church unless you stop talking about sin and all that nonsense. Tell them how much God loves them and keep it there. Well, of course, the Lord loves you. He doesn't want you to sin because sin's death.
Sin destroys. And so our loving God talks to us about sin. God hates it. So God's view of our sin is going to help us nurture a hard attitude that fights sin.
Number one, because sin robs, affronts, and hurts. It grieves our holy God. That should be enough to stop us right there and break our heart. Then, once we've seen the hurt, the grief that it causes the Lord, we can go to the person that maybe we sinned against and say, will you forgive me?
[22:41] The Lord's made it clear this was all pride. This was my pride. Please, will you walk with me and help me while I try to repent of this and let God work in my heart to change me?

Can we do this together? That will go a long way, won't it? But then you've got to get on it now. You've got to get serious about it.
Okay, here's another question. What should increasingly be our primary motive for fighting and repenting of sin? And the obvious answer, it's because we love Jesus. We're learning to love Jesus. And so we don't want anything about our lives to grieve Him, to hurt Him. Now, back to Abraham. What's this got to do with him? Well, think about it with me. Abraham abandoned the priority of loving and trusting God from a thankful heart.
In the moment that he threw Sarah under the bus, as it were, he wasn't thinking about what was right in the Lord, was he? No. And that was sin in his life. So, he had a very selfish approach to his sin.
[23:48] And that set in motion a series of deeply hurtful effects on everyone around him. Not just Sarah. Everybody got in on this because of his sin.

More importantly, Abraham's sin would have ruined, hear this, it would have ruined God's promise of a child for Abraham and for Sarah if God had not intervened.
Hear that last part. If God had not intervened. Abraham was about to throw away everything God had promised. And if God hadn't intervened, that's exactly what would have happened.
Think of that, friends. Now, here's the greater reality of what I just said. I put it up on the screen. Our sin is not greater than God's grace. Hallelujah.
Abraham's boneheadedness and sinfulness was not greater than God's promise. God was going to do whatever was necessary to protect his promise.
[24:46] Because he can't go back on it. Right? He can't come to you and say, well, you know what? I know I promised you heaven in my son Jesus Christ, but you blew it. So, the deal's off.

Folks, that's called losing your salvation. Do you see why we don't believe that? The God of the universe comes to save you and secure you in himself. And now, for him to go back on that is for him to go back on himself.
He cannot do that. It's as straightforward and simple as that. If you overthink it, you'll end up in a bad place. Your God saves you and keeps you saved.
And he cannot unsave you because he cannot go back on himself. Who comes to live inside of you as proof that you are in the Lord? The Holy Spirit. Jesus. And so, if God is living in you, he'd have to go against himself to unsave you.

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He can't do that. Rest secure, friends. If you're saved, you're saved forever. And there's nothing that you can do to undo it. Why? Because your sin is not greater than the grace of God.
[25:53] You cannot sin your way out of heaven. Now, this particular true account reveals that truth I'm just telling you.

God's grace is greater than our sin. This account reveals the truth in two halves. The first half describes human sinful failure and its effects. This is Abraham doing what he did with Sarah and lying.
The second half describes God's grace and its effects. Now, we're going to see God's grace through all of this because it's grace, it's the grace of God that God comes to Abimelech and tells him the truth.
He could have just let him live in the lie and as soon as he would approach Sarah say, boom, you're dead. And Abimelech goes up to Sarah and drops dead and everybody says, what in the world? But God didn't do that.
God spared Abimelech's life. Alright, so here's where we're going to start in this way then. We're going to talk about the power of life's patterns. And this is the example that Abraham gives us.
[26:53] The power of life's patterns. Now, Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev and settled between Kadesh and Shur and he journeyed in Gerar. Abraham said of Sarah, his wife, she's my sister.

So, Abimelech, the king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. We'll talk about that. But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night and said to him, you are a dead man because of the woman who you've taken because she is married.
Folks, the first thing that we want to get out of the gate here in the way of me doing all the introduction, our decisions, actions, and selfish compromises bring consequences for others. Now, you already know that.
We just don't live with that locked at the forefront of our mind. When you sin, you're not thinking of other people. Are you? When I sin, I'm not thinking of other people.
I'm thinking of me. And that's why I do it. That's why you do it. Now, are you okay with that? Are you okay with me saying that? Alright, I'm telling you the truth.
[28:00] Alright, I'm with you because I'm a human. I'm with you. I'm in the boat with you. But this is how we live. When we sin, we're not thinking of others. Our decisions, actions, and selfish compromises have serious consequences for other people.

Now, we're not told why Abraham packed up and left the Oaks of Mamre, where he's been for quite some time. Why he headed south. If you think of the map of Israel and you go out of Israel south, that's the Negev.
And if you make a sharp hook toward the coast, you're going to end up just below what we understand is Gaza today. and this is the land of the Philistines.
And so, this is where he has sojourned. Now, I don't have a map to show you the area, but that's what we're talking about. Now, we have to think of it this way. Why would he do that?
Well, something of consequence spurred Abraham to journey on. He was a herdsman, right? This is a little bit of context. A very astute and wealthy businessman, Abraham.
[29:07] He likely made the decision to sojourn south into this particular part of the country based on his flocks and his business. But now, think of this.

It would be hard to imagine that Abraham would risk possible death that he expresses in verse 11. He said, what does he say in verse 11? Because I thought, surely there's no fear of God in this place and they'll kill me.
Well, then why'd you go? Why didn't you just stay home? Well, so something moved him to do this. Maybe the Lord moved his heart to do this?
I don't know. We're not told. But it was something significant because of the danger. So right away in verse 2, the text draws us into the drama.
And this is the train wreck that's coming. Right? We've seen this boneheaded move from Abraham before. He's back to his old tricks of taking matters into his own hands without trusting God and considering the fallout.
[30:06] Does that sound familiar? Sure. We all have experienced this. But notice in verse 3 what it says. What are the first two words of verse 3 in your Bible? But God.

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That's right. But God came. Now folks, this is another one of those. Pastor Greg and I do this often with you. He does this when he preaches as well.
We have these but God statements in the Bible. But God. And we're so thankful. This is the Lord intervening. This is the Lord taking the initiative in his life.
But God and thank God is what I say. And that is arresting to me because God is using a dream. Think of it. He's using a dream to communicate truth to an unbeliever.
This is not a spiritual man. Abimelech. God is confronting Abimelech with the truth about Sarah and it's happening in a dream while the man is sleeping. Now we don't know how, know very much about King Abimelech.
[31:09] We're going to see a little bit more of him later. But we do know he's an unbeliever. So this is what happens in this passage. God got his attention. Didn't he?

He graciously intervened. The scenario is familiar to us because this is how it works with us. We give ourselves over to sin whether we realize it or not.
And sometimes we can sin in ways we don't realize. But whether we realize it or not because that's Abimelech, I didn't know I was doing wrong. Right? And we'll see what God does. God steps back and goes, oh, oh, okay.
Well, that's alright then. That's not what God does, is it? No. It's very important for us to grab that. God got his attention. We're here now. We're giving ourselves over to sin whether we realize it or not.
God intervenes to show us our error. Maybe he does that through the word of God in your reading which is why you need to stay in it. Maybe God uses a brother or a sister or a spouse or someone in our life.
[32:10] Maybe he uses a sermon that you remember or something you're listening to. But God gets your attention and shows you the error of your life. Then God helps us repent.

He gives us the grace we need to repent and he leads us back to truthful living. A life that will bless us and those around us. Now, what God used to get Abimelech's attention was brutal.
Admittedly, it was brutal. Scary stuff. But necessary because so much is at stake. Abimelech even though Abimelech is largely unaware of it.
Abimelech doesn't know about the promise God has made to Abraham. He doesn't know about what's going on with Sarah. He doesn't even know the truth that Sarah's married to Abraham now. But God's going to tell him.
And now it's all out. But this is necessary for what God's doing in his life. Notice what God says very, very clearly to him. This is how God deals with sin in our life.
[33:11] He doesn't mince words. He does not mess around with this. Notice what he says. Behold, you are a dead man. Notice on the screen how I wrote it up here. You are.

You are a dead man. Not you will be. You are. Now, most likely what this means is that God has afflicted Abimelech with some kind of a recognizable terminal illness or disease.
That's what I think. I think that's what's going on with him here. I think it's more than just what it's mentioned at the end of the chapter when he closes the wombs of all the people.
How is that going to create death for Abimelech? It's not just if you touch her. If you don't restore her, you are a dead man. You're carrying a death sentence inside of you right now.
All I got to do is complete it. And I think it was recognizable enough to Abimelech to scare him to death and say, oh my goodness, I better do what's right and take God at his word.
[34:11] That's exactly what he needs to do. If you look at verse 17, Abraham prayed to God and what did God do to Abimelech? What does it say? Yeah, he didn't just heal the wombs of the women that were associated with Abimelech.

He healed Abimelech himself. So that's why I'm saying I think there's something going on in Abimelech that God put in him that's going to take his life. All right? Just a very interesting little part. So God had to heal him about whatever it was. The point is God got his attention. Now remember, God always deals with each person based on that person's life, that person's actions, that person's attitude.
So this is not unfair of God to do this to Abimelech. You say, man, cut the guy some slack. He didn't know. They lied to him. They tricked him for heaven's sake.
Now listen, remember, God is not being unfair in this in Abimelech's life. God is never like that. He's never unjust. We do that kind of stuff.

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[35:21] We do these gymnastics in our own brain to justify how we act toward other people, feel toward other people. Even when we pray, we might pray prayers that say, I know God and I know about that and I know this isn't right in me, but if you were married to them too, you, you know, or if you had her as a wife, or if you just had them as a friend or a boss or you had to work on, we do, we say that kind of stuff, at least to ourselves.

And I think this is exactly what Abimelech is trying to do in here. So this is not unfair. Now this is where we get to be more specific about how Abraham's actions are affecting the people around him.
And then how the Lord intervenes to do what's right in each one of these people's lives. It's amazing. This is not too big for God. God isn't outmatched here by what Abraham has done.
If you take Sarah as the first one, let's just think about Sarah and how this is all affecting her. All right, if you look at verse 2, she is my sister.
Okay, that's where it starts. She's my sister. Verse 11, Abraham said, because I thought, surely there's no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.
[36:46] So, Sarah, sorry, you're a burden. You're getting in the way. Because of you, I'm most likely going to be killed. So, I'm going to have to take care of you.

Sorry, hon, it's been good. That's what's going on here. He's giving his wife to another man forever. So, you want to ask, did he think that he think in his mind, oh, I'll lie my way through this, but I know in the end God's going to show up and take care of it. So, we're all good. Don't do that.
Don't sin and tell yourself in the end God will fix it. Don't do that. Because God may let you live in it for a while. And that ain't fun. So, this is where he is.
Now, if you look at verse 13, and it came about when God caused me to wander from my father's house that I said to my wife, here it is, Sarah, you're going to lie for me. This is the kindness.
[37:50] Now, listen to how he frames this. This is the kindness, sweetheart, that you're going to show to me. Everywhere we go, you're going to say he is my brother. He's my brother.

And in his mind, he's justifying all of this. You see that in the rest of what he says. He rationalizes all of it. So, he takes his own wife and gives her to another man and lies to that man and lets that man think that it's going to be fine when you decide to finally consummate this relationship and come to her and have intimacy with her.
And he's good with that, guys. That's where we are. Now, ask yourself right now, please ask yourself, how do we get to places like that?
how does the human soul get to places like that? Where I'll sacrifice the very person that I'm supposed to be closest to and offer the most care to, and I'm willing to sacrifice what's best for them on the altar of what's best for me.
How do we get there? Such is the human soul, folks. This is why we call salvation a miracle. When you think about Abimelech and what he did to Abimelech, think about how it affected him.
[39:15] But God came to Abimelech in the dream of the night and said, you're a dead man. Yeah, well, that's hard. You're a dead man. How about verse 7? Now, therefore, restore the man's wife, for he's a prophet, and he'll pray for you, and you'll live, you'll live if he prays for you.

But, but, if you do not restore Sarah, know that you shall surely die. die. You and all of yours. So, take his household.
Right there, you're seeing it's not just Abimelech. You and everybody associated with you, I'm going to kill them all. And think of Abimelech going, my wife, my kids, my servants, my friends, my family, my mother-in-law, you're going to kill them all.
Well, my mother-in-law, okay, well, whatever, but, you know. No, I'm just kidding. Look at, look at, uh, verse, uh, eight.
So, Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all of his servants and told all these things in their hearing and the men were greatly frightened. Can you imagine being one of those people? Your king, your dad, your, your husband, your, your master, whatever, he comes in and that's, that's how you wake up in the morning.
[40:26] Everybody gather together. I've got something to tell you. We're all about to die. Who caused this? Abraham. Verse 17 and 18, Abraham prayed to God and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids.

Why? Well, they were able to bear children now because God had closed fast all the wounds. You see the power of the Lord? This is an amazing testimony of what sin does to other people.

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You think about the people of Gerar in verse 9. Think about all of the people in the kingdom. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, what have you done to us?
How have I sinned against you that you've brought on me and what? My kingdom a great sin. You've done things that ought not to be done. The entire kingdom was being negatively impacted by Abraham's sin.
This is how serious God is about sin. He was getting everyone's attention with this. What about Abraham's household? His own family?
[41:34] How would that affect his own servants when they hear about this and what's going on? Where's Sarah? Oh, Abraham gave him away to the king. Again? Really? Well, we all know how that's going to turn out.

God ain't going to have no part of that. And they would have been right. Think about Israel. The future of Israel hangs in the balance on this promise. This one man, Abraham and his son Isaac. That's where Jesus is going to come from. That blood line. Our salvation hangs in the balance. If God doesn't intervene.
Well, all of this would have played out very terribly if God hadn't come and on Sarah's behalf, safeguarded her against her husband's sin and protected her virtue.
So God tells Abimelech why God is judging and punishing him at the end of verse 3. I'll throw it up here on the screen for you. Because of the woman whom you have taken. Now notice those words, whom you have taken.
[42:36] For she's married. In other words, Abimelech is responsible. Do you see that God did not say, what did he not say? He didn't say because of the woman that they lied to you about and deceived you.

And so it's all good for you. Don't worry. No, he said whom you have taken. You took her, bud. For she's married. God is holding this man responsible.
He's not letting him victim his way out of this. Now look at this second thing I want to show you here in this one. Our thoughts drive our actions, which form habits and patterns of relating to others.
So we apply this first thing to Abimelech and his appeal to God in verses 4 and 5. Now Abimelech had not come nearer and he said to the Lord, Lord, will you slay a nation even though blameless? Really? Really? Blameless? Okay. Did he not himself, did Abraham not himself say to me, she's my sister? In other words, he lied to me, Lord, he tricked me. She herself said he's my brother.
[43:39] These two people took me in. In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I've done this. So that's his comeback to the Lord. Abimelech's entire perspective is grounded though, now hear me, his entire perspective is grounded in unbelief and in his culture.

That's what's driving him to say this to the Lord. He's not saying it because he knows the truth, honors the truth, and loves God. Lord, please, I didn't know, I'm so sorry.
That's not what's happening here. He's just, he didn't want to die. Right. The text tells us that Abimelech had not yet had relations with Sarah as his new wife.
So this whole question is an appeal to God. Did they not lie to me? Come on. His question shows what he's basing his appeal on.
He is allowing that himself and his nation are, he says, blameless. Really? Now the word is a strong one. It means righteous. Righteous means not guilty and made right with.
[44:49] So he's not guilty of wrongdoing, but moreover, he is now being found in the right. So he's doing what we do. He pleads his case. Not only am I a victim, not only has wrong been done to me, and folks, they did do wrong to him, right?

They did do wrong to him. But not only that, now he goes a step further. And he said, not only am I a victim of someone doing wrong to me, but I am in the right.
Oh, there may be a tweak here and there, but mostly I'm right. Right? That's his attitude. That's Abimelech's attitude before Almighty God.
That's what he means when he said we're blameless as a nation. You're going to kill us all when we're blameless in this? In verse 5, he's feeling the full confidence that comes from believing that he's not only innocent in this matter, but he's justified in telling God that he's the victim of wrongdoing.
So Abimelech understands the stakes. His entire empire at this moment hangs in the balance. But here's what Abimelech didn't do with the Lord.

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[45:58] Please notice this. This is what Abimelech will not do in this. I'm going to put it up here on the screen. Abimelech did not ask God what God thinks about all this.

Now God's going to tell him, but Abimelech's not standing back and hearing this from the Lord and going, Lord help me understand better how I need to see this the way you're seeing it.
Right now I'm having trouble because I can't get past the fact that he lied to me and deceived me, but obviously there's more to this going on. Lord help me see it. See that's what an unbeliever says. That's how a repentant believer excuse me, that's what a believer says.
A repentant believer entreats the Lord. I don't see it like I should. Help me see it Lord. Help my weak faith. Open my eyes to see this. There's obviously more to this about me that you need me to see.
We're so others focused. We're such a victim. Did you know this was in the Bible? Now I'm going to ask you seriously because I do this from time to time.
[47:01] Do you think you're a pastor right? And you can tell me and then we'll get together afterward. I can't do it now but we'll get together after. Am I reading into this too much? What do you think?

Am I showing you that this is here? Are you seeing it? I'm just trying to bring it out but if I'm not doing a good job I'm going back up because your pastors are not about trying to make the Bible say something we want it to say.
I'm trying to show you this is what it says. We're just unpacking it. All right. It's okay for you to come to me afterwards and say I'm not sure about this one and get clarification.
All right. That's fine. We're not infallible. Only the word is infallible. So Abimelech understands this. He doesn't ask the Lord.
It's so often what we do but here's the thing in God's sight Abimelech is not the innocent man he wants to think he is.
[48:00] Has he been wronged? Yes. But he is not the innocent that he wants to believe he is. Has Abraham sinned against him?

Absolutely. But him and his nation they are not innocent by God's laws. Abimelech took Sarah according to the wicked laws of the land of Canaan.
You want to ask yourself how many wives do you need dude? This is what this is the unbelieving culture. Abimelech is acting as a king according to his own laws and culture not God's.
So he's not innocent. No one is righteous in this enterprise except the Lord. Now folks please please hear me in this next few minutes because this is where it really gets nitty gritty for us.
Let me say it again. even when we're wronged. No one is righteous in the enterprise or the situation except God alone. Not even us when we're wronged.
[49:02] Now how can I say that? Listen. This speaks to the truth that even when we are not guilty of a certain aspect of sin that we might be being accused of we are still sinners and we cannot claim blamelessness except by God's grace in Christ.

So I can say to my wife when I've wronged her or she's wronged me that either one of us we can't say well I'm innocent of all of this because I'm a sinner and I might be free of guilt in that particular moment but I'm not free of guilt in other areas of my life and the only way that guilt can be assuaged and dealt with and forgiven is in Jesus Christ.
So I have no righteousness of my own that I can appeal to. I have to appeal to the Lord and say it's only Jesus that makes me righteous. I'm a sinner that constantly needs cleansing so I can't come to my relationship with my wife even when she's wronged me and have this attitude of aboveness you know I'm not wrong in this you are.
I better be careful. Because I might not be wrong in terms of that particular issue in that particular moment but I'm still carrying this issue of needing forgiveness from the Lord.
Are you with me? Alright let me tell you more about why this is important for all of us folks. Now I'm talking about all of us here. Listen this is why that we have to think about this very very carefully.
[50:42] We cannot claim blamelessness again except in Christ Jesus himself. Now if I didn't do this particular thing that I'm being accused of if I'm not guilty of what you're saying I'm likely guilty of something else.

Maybe you don't even know about. Right? It fosters what this does is it fosters a heart attitude of humility which will not allow us to get puffed up in our perceived innocence because that's what we do in the moment.

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We grab that bad boy and run with it because this time I'm innocent. See? This time. I'm glad you don't know about those other 40 but this one.
And we run with it. Now look when we hold on to the reality that we're sinners in need of God's forgiveness and that God forgives us and cleanses us and loves us and perseveres with us and will never give up on us no matter how nasty and wrong and filthy our heart becomes in that moment of sin.
When that comes and settles on us it keeps our heart humble. So when we're sinned against we're the last person that wants to throw stone or hold on to unforgiveness because God doesn't do that with me.
[52:03] You see? We start with God. We see sin the way He sees it and we understand that it's an offense first and foremost against Him. We start there.

That's the foundation. Then we move out into human relationships. It keeps us humble. Others wrong us. Yes, folks, I'm not denying that.
People sin against us and we sin against them. So the heart attitude of humility helps us approach other sinners with a godly perspective. It helps us approach other sinners with patience and kindness forgiveness.
Because we have a deep awareness of our own neediness, our own weakness, our own sin. And that brings us to God's answer to Abimelech and how God used each of these men to affect his plan for protecting his promise to Abraham and Sarah.
So the second point, and I'll move through this quickly. Don't worry about it. We'll get there. The power of God's protection. This is God's grace conquering and correcting all this sin that's going on both with Abraham and Abimelech.
[53:11] You might feel sorry for Abimelech. Don't. He's not an innocent man. He's an unbelieving pagan who hates the Lord. If you look at verses 5 and 6 again, he told me a lie, right?

And she told me a lie. In the integrity of my heart, I'm innocent. And God said to him in the dream, you know what? I know. I know that in the integrity of heart you've done this. But look at this.
I kept you from sinning. I didn't let you touch her. He's still speaking to Abimelech in the dream and he says, I know. I know. It's the same thing that he told to Abraham when he sent the angels down, right?
I'm sending them down and I will know what's going on in Sodom and Gomorrah. It's the same concept. God knows. I will know. I fully know the condition of your heart.
So just take note now that God says clearly, I put it up here on the screen for you, I also kept you from sinning against me. Therefore, I did not let you touch her.
[54:12] Now, what's the inference? The inference is this. If God had not intervened, Abimelech would have sinned against God and Sarah, right?

That would have happened whether he realized it or not because he's adhering to his culture. I can have as many wives as I want. That's not what God says.
Even Abraham fell victim to that kind of stuff in his own mind. In verse 7, Now, therefore, restore the man's wife. He's a prophet. He'll pray for you and you'll live. But if you don't, you're going to die. And everyone else around you will also die. Now, folks, we need to put this up here and put it in our minds. God does not prejudge or misjudge anyone.
God is not making a mistake. He says, I know. And I'm the one that kept you from sinning, Bub. You want to take credit for this. I'm the one that kept you.
[55:10] I protected you. I saved your life. If you'd even gone near her, I'd have snuffed you out in a heartbeat. Pretty serious, huh?

God's not biased. He doesn't play favorites. He's not a game guy like that. God knows our hearts. God knows your heart, my heart.
He works in our hearts. What matters is what God says. Abimelech can argue his point all day, but the issue God is focused on is this, restoration.
Abimelech can say, but, but, but, but, but, but, but, but, all day long. What God is interested in is restoration, repentance. I don't want to listen to your excuses.
I don't, I know. You don't have to tell me. I know. Now, here's what you need to do. Again, did you know this was in the Bible? This is all here.
[56:08] We must always measure our own thoughts and actions by God's word of wisdom. Always. Or we're in trouble. What Abimelech did with Sarah was culturally acceptable, but when

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you better understand why he did it, you see that it wasn't about personal integrity.

In the integrity of my heart, I've done this. No. It's not about truth. It's not about right and wrong. It's not about honoring God. Sarah, yes, was unusually beautiful.
Now, at this particular point, she's 90 years old. She's right at 90 years old. But she's unusually beautiful. But now look, even given that people aged better than they do now, lifespans were longer, even with that, it was more than Sarah's physical beauty, which has, which has waned, right, at 90, that drew Abimelech's interest.
Here's, here's why he wanted Sarah. Sarah was married to a very wealthy man. Maybe when she was much younger, he would have thought, they're going to kill me because you're so beautiful and men are going to lust after you and want you.
They're just going to take you. Now it's about, this dude is super wealthy. Wherever he goes, there's thousands and thousands of livestock. I mean, this guy needs some space. And people see that.
[57:23] And that's wealth in those days, right? So I marry this woman and I get, I get some of that. And I think that's what's driving the guy. He saw a profit to be had, a profit to be made.

And Abraham, in his own mind, reasoned there's nothing to stop these wicked people from killing me. If you look at verses 8 through 10, this is what we're, we're facing with Abimelech. He's going to call his servants and tell him what's going on.
Then he's going to confront Abraham. What have you done to us? And then Abraham's going to give him this lame excuse. And starting down in verse 11. But these questions that Abimelech's asking are good.
Abimelech did confront Abraham. Do you see that? What in the world were you thinking, man? Why did you do this? What did we do to bring this on ourselves from you? Did we wrong you somewhere in the past?
He just, it's terrible what you've done. In verses 11 through 13, we see this. Abraham, because I thought, I thought. Surely there's no fear of God in this place.
[58:23] Do you see how Abraham's thoughts are driving what he does? Because I thought this, I did this. I thought, I assumed, I reasoned in my own mind that you would kill me.

And so I took action. And that's how sin works. I reason in my own mind. I said it in my own heart. I want. And now I'm willing to sin to get it.
Or I'm willing to sin if I don't get it. And that's what Abraham did. I'm willing to sin to save my life. That's what I want. What I want most is not to die.
And so I'm willing to sin to get that. Do you see now? Are you with me? All right. That's what he did. Unfortunately for everybody else, it's a really, really bad scene, isn't it?
Everybody else is suffering because he's made this very selfish decision. And I'm going to put it up here. I say Abraham justified himself to himself. Folks, godly thinking is truthful thinking.
[59:30] Godly thinking is truthful thinking. And Abraham was not thinking in a truthful manner. Therefore, he was not thinking in a godly manner. Abraham did not anchor his thoughts in the truth of God's promises to him.

If he'd only continued to believe the Lord about producing an heir with Sarah, he could reason from that truth of what God told him about his life and his wife, and everything would have been fine. God is saying, I've got you, Abraham. I've made you a promise. Nothing can happen to you. I've made you a promise. Now, let me just add this real quickly.
God is getting Abraham ready for an even greater test of faith. What's coming? What's coming? What's he going to have to do? Now you know why chapter 20 is in here.
That's why. What is God getting you ready for, friend? What are you facing now or have recently faced that God is taking you through as he builds your faith in him and keeps his promises, as he works perseverance and patience and kindness and humility in your life?
[60:42] What's he getting you ready for? You see? Don't get too far ahead of yourself, but ask yourself, this is just the next thing for the next thing.

And as long as you're here, that's the way it works. God's always getting you ready for the next thing. Now live in the moment, but get ready. Aren't you glad you have Jesus?
Aren't you glad you have each other? Prayer? If you can lean on each other, as we should. Alright, well let me get to the end here and give you a couple of things because God had some requirements that he made of both Abraham and Abimelech in all of this.

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He's going to use both of these men because both of these men have sinned. So first, God required Abimelech to make public restitution to Sarah.
And you see that in verse 16. Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. Wow! It is your vindication before all who are with you and before all men you are cleared.
[61:58] This is beautiful. In this culture, Sarah had no voice. She had no advocate. If her husband didn't advocate for her, she was dead in the water.

No voice. No ability to help herself. And so God led Abimelech to do this for her. And to Abraham's shame, God used an unbelieving man to right Abraham's wrong against his own wife.
Guys, did you hear that? Ladies, don't give up on the Lord. Pray for your husbands. Pray for God to continue to use them and work in your husband's life as imperfect as we are as men and husbands. Pray for us. That God will use us in your life. And don't give up on the Lord. God will protect your virtue. God will safeguard you in your own walk with the Lord. But you've got to look to the Lord for that and not get in the deceitful pattern of now trying to manipulate or control your way into your husband being what you want him to be.
See, Sarah didn't do that. She trusted the Lord. And now God used an unbelieving man to safeguard her virtue. To restore her.
[63:15] It should have been her husband. But God did it. That's the power of the Lord, isn't it? Second, God required Abraham to pray. And I put in there, you see the parentheses, publicly.

Now I personally believe that Abraham had to make a public prayer of this. And I think he had to do it before Abimelech and his household. Because they're mentioned.
Now that's my personal belief. I'm not trying to pass that off as definitive in Scripture if you say, well, that's fine. But I think because Abimelech had to do a public restoration with Sarah, I think Abraham had to do a public prayer.
And that's what God required of him. It was very humbling for him to do this. You think about it. Think about if God had you, if you had affected someone in a negative, sinful way, if He required you to go pray in their presence and in the presence of their family for healing and blessing in the favor of God on that person that you hurt and sinned against.
What would that do to you? Would it humble you? That's exactly what happened. Abraham, this very wealthy, astute businessman had to go and humble himself before this household, I think, and pray for them publicly that God would restore them.
[64:28] I lied and I caused you guys a lot of hurt and a lot of pain. Please forgive me. And that's the way we need to make confession. People have asked me before, I sinned against this person and they don't even know it.

Should I go and ask for their forgiveness? And we talk about that. And I say, look, if there's not obvious and immediate repercussions from what you did that they're aware of in their life, then you only need to ask the Lord to forgive you.
The sin was done in private against them. Maybe something they held in their heart. They don't know. It hasn't negatively impacted them that they know of. You don't have to go to them. But now, if you sinned in a public manner, you need to make a public confession and ask for forgiveness publicly.
You with me on that? Yeah. And I think that's what these men were required. Alright. Give you four quick things. Nothing can threaten God's promises to you as His child.
God is carefully watching over you to do good to you. God's grace is greater than our sin. God allows us to live with consequences we create for ourselves.
[65:42] Abraham and Sarah have had to live with consequences from past sin. Hagar is still around. She's going to come up again in just a little while. But God is good, is He not?

And He loves us. So Abraham's life becomes a great example of the grace of God in our lives when we sin and how we're to deal with it as we look to the Lord and walk with Him.
Will you join me in prayer? Father, we've covered a lot of ground today in this entire chapter with so much going on and we just trust that You will help us by Your Spirit to grab hold of what it is that You've convicted us about in our life.
Father, we've all been sinned against and it's hard and it hurts. And sometimes the consequences are grievous and they hang on and they go on.
I pray that You will give us a humble heart that helps us to pray for those who've wronged us. Just at least pray for them that we would not see anyone live in sin and end up in a devil's hell, but that

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we would ask You to forgive them, to open their eyes and help them to see their need for the forgiveness of God Himself because their sin is worst because it grieves You and hurts You and it's against You.
[67:05] Help us to have the same attitude about our own sin so that we will be quick to repent, to confess it to You and call it what it is, name it as You name it, and then turn away from it and replace it with what is godly and good.

Help us to do that, God, as we put our arms around each other and get to know each other, as we trust each other with the issues of our life and confess these things to one another, that we would truly bear one another's burdens and walk with each other in the grace of Jesus.
We thank You that the truth is Your grace is greater than our sin and we live in the promises of Jesus to help us, to guide us, to live in us and to one day bring us to glory. In His name we pray. Amen.

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