

Lesson 37
God's Faithfulness to the Covenant

Genesis 20:1-21:34

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The emphasis in these two chapters is man's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness. God never fails to carry out His promises.

B. These chapters also show us the depravity in the best of saints. But God is faithful in spite of man's sinful ways.

II. GOD PRESERVES SARAH 20:1-18

A. 20:1-2. Abraham repeats the sin about his relationship to Sarah by lying to

Abimelech, king of Gerar saying that she was his sister and not his wife. In

order to protect his own hide, he willfully used his wife as a tool for evil.

Abraham was guilty of this once before when he went into Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20).

1. From Abraham, we see that every saint still has a sin nature and is capable of all kinds of sins if he is not walking close to the Lord.

2. Old habits, thought to be done away with, can crop up in the life of the true believer. Former weaknesses and inveterate tendencies, which we think no longer powerful suddenly arise and bring about our downfall. Believers are often found to slip and fall where they have previously fallen.

3. Abraham illustrates the inconsistency of faith. How often those who are not afraid to trust God with their souls are afraid to trust Him with regard to their bodies. How often those who have the full assurance of faith in regard to eternal things are full of unbelief and fear when it comes to temporal things. Men resort to their own wisdom and cunning to solve their problems.

B. 20:3-7. God intervenes to preserve Sarah, for she was to be the mother of the promised child to Abraham. God speaks to the king through a dream, and he claims he is innocent for he simply took them at their word. Both Abraham and Sarah were guilty of lying. NOTE: How wonderful is the sovereignty of God, for He can and does intervene into the affairs of men, even the unsaved, to accomplish his purposes. While Abimelech did not touch Sarah, it was God who actually withheld him from sinning. POINT: Those who speak of man's absolute freedom must never read the Bible. Those who say that puny man can defy the secret counsels of God leave God out of the picture. For many, God is reduced to a mere spectator, full of gracious intentions but lacking in power to do anything. How sad to believe in a God who is less than a man.

C. 20:8-16. Abimelech, an unsaved king, had to rebuke Abraham, child of the King, for his evil deeds. Men of the world stand out superior at times to the people of God, and this is one of the heartbreaking things about the spiritual realm. Abraham tells the king that he and Sarah had entered into a secret agreement to do the "sister plot" whenever he was in trouble (20:13). NOTE. This was a sinful pact that Abraham and Sarah had in every place they went, Instead of trusting God, they

entered into this conspiracy, which was a half-truth, but it was told to deceive and revealed a lack of faith in God. This gives the reason why this last cowardly and unworthy act of unbelief in the life of Abraham was recorded. This sordid sin had to be judged before Abraham and Sarah could have a son and Abraham could be brought to the final test of offering Isaac. POINT: Sin in a Christian must be judged before he can have the full blessing of God.

D. 20:17-18. Abraham gets back into fellowship with God and immediately he takes up the spiritual duty of intercessory prayer for others. God had shut up the wombs of the women of Gerar, but by means of prayer God opened their wombs. NOTE: Prayer does not change God's plan but it brings God's plan into action in our experience.

III. GOD PROVIDES ISAAC 21:1-8

A. 21:1-5. God was faithful to His promise. Sarah brought forth a son and Abraham names it Isaac (Laughter). God did "as He had spoken" and brought forth the child "at the set time." Insurmountable human circumstances were no problem to God. Abraham may be old, Sarah may be barren, but such trifles present no difficulty to Him who is infinite in power. Furthermore, God's plan was right on schedule. God is in no hurry in working out His plan. Man may fret, fume, hurry and bustle, but Jehovah has all eternity at His disposal and works leisurely and with deliberation (cf. Isa. 28:16).

1. The birth of Isaac was supernatural. Sarah and Abraham were past the age of procreation (Rom. 4:19; Heb. 11:12). God showed Abraham that He would do the humanly impossible before He would let one of His promises lapse.

2. The birth of Isaac was a test of Abraham's faith. He waited 25 years from the time that God first made the promise until God fulfilled it. NOTE. Over anxiousness destroys many of God's servants spiritually. Men must learn to wait on God, for God does His will in His time.

B. 21:6-7. Sarah is delighted with her new son, and he grows and matures under the providence of God.

IV. GOD PROTECTS ISAAC 21:9-21

A. 21:9-11. Sarah saw Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, mocking her and apparently Isaac. Isaac was probably around four years old when this happened. Sarah was filled with anger and jealousy and demanded that Abraham put Hagar and Ishmael out of his house. This, of course, saddened Abraham, for he loved Ishmael (who at this time was around 17 years old) very much. NOTE. The sovereignty of God can be seen here again, for Hagar was not of the promise nor was Ishmael. Ishmael was a son of the flesh and he and Isaac could have never lived in the same house. Furthermore, Abraham would have had constant wife problems with Sarah and Hagar living together. It was for Isaac's protection that Hagar and Ishmael left Abraham's home.

B. 21:12-13. God commands Abraham to take Sarah's advice, for in the long run it would be best for all concerned. He does promise Abraham that Ishmael shall have many temporal blessings and be a great nation but he was never in the line of promise. NOTE. One of the hardest things Abraham ever did was put away Ishmael, realizing that he was no longer to have any definite or close part of his life. Yet this severance was really the very best thing that could have happened for all concerned, God was taking up the tangled threads of His servant's life, weaving them into His own Divine pattern, and over-ruling everything for good (Rom. 8:28).

C. 21:14-21. Abraham sent Hagar with Ishmael on her way. When she thinks her child might die, an angel appeared to her and assured her that he would live and from him would come great nation, NOTE. God in common grace deals with those who are not saved. God is good to all men but He is gracious, merciful and loving towards His own, the elect, the children of promise.

V. ABRAHAM AND ABIMELECH (21:22-34). From this incident, we see how important it is to do a good turn to those who have treated you well. Abimelech had been gracious to Sarah and Abraham. Now Abraham could return the favor. He makes a covenant with Abimelech and God further protects Abraham. Abraham planted a tree (grove) in Beersheba and prayed to the "Lord, the everlasting God." Abraham knew the God who is there in a personal way!