

Abraham moved to Gerar. And what does Abraham do—again? He declared Sarah to be his sister.

Was that a lie? It was a half-truth, as they had the same father. She was his step sister.

Application: Abraham will re-learn that half-truths are lies and they have consequences. Have you ever told a half-truth or embellished something to make yourself look good? What did you learn from it?

How old is Sarah at this point? 90

Sarah was probably a beauty at 65, the last time this happened in chapter 12. Why would Abimelech take a 90-year-old woman to be part of his harem? For political reasons. To establish an alliance with powerful Abraham.

How--and why—did God intervene? God spoke to Abimelech in a dream. Even though He wasn't Abimelech's God, He got Abimelech's attention! Abraham has again complicated/threatened God's promise of providing an heir by compromising Sarah's opportunity to bear him a son.

What was Abimelech's response to God? He had "a clear conscience and clean hands" (verse 5) which God acknowledged. But he still needed prayer from Abraham—God's prophet—to be allowed to live (verse 7).

How quickly after God spoke to him did Abimelech respond? Immediately. Verse 8 says, "early the next morning."

Why do you think Abimelech called in his officials and told them what had happened before he called in Abraham? Perhaps he feared that Abraham would deny it. It also affected the officials—not just Abimelech.

How did God protect Sarah? 20:6 He did not let Abimelech touch her.

What does this encounter say about Abraham's character? His faith had a weak spot. He didn't believe God could work in the midst of a pagan people. Therefore he "had to" lie. This is another clear case of situational ethics. This incident shows a follower of God in his weak moments.

When Abraham is rebuked by Abimelech, how does he respond? He makes excuses. With no remorse or repentance—the same as in chapter 12. He blames it on God.

Application: It is shameful when a believer is justly rebuked by a pagan man of the world. We should be setting the example. How does this episode between Abraham and the pagan king Abimelech apply to our behavior among non-believers? We should be consistently interacting with all people. We do not need to fear the unknown or uncertain. **We should live in such a way that we can never be told by non-Christians, "You have brought guilt upon me, and done things to me that should not have been done."**

Why didn't God just throw His hands up in the air and abandon Abraham—choosing someone else to father this fledgling Jewish nation? Why does God remain faithful when Abraham doesn't? God's nature is to be faithful even when we are not. He made an unconditional covenant to bless Abraham and remained true to it no matter what Abraham did.

Application: Like Abraham, our relationship with God is not based on our performance. It is based on His faithfulness and grace. Just like God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham so He has made an unconditional covenant with us. The New Covenant is an unconditional covenant of grace. See Hebrews 8:7-13.

What is Abraham's "punishment" as a result of this deception? Sheep, cattle, slaves, etc. More wealth.

Did Abraham pay any consequences for his deception? He was shamed in front of Abimelech's people. He suffered a loss of respect among his people (and his wife). He lost the opportunity to have a credible witness to Abimelech and his people.

What does this chapter tell us about our God? God is not a hands-off spectator on the sidelines of history. He's not sitting on His porch observing our lives and rewriting the plan as we make mistakes. His sleeves are rolled up and He's involved in a hands-on fashion. He can redeem the evil or mistakes of His people.

- “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

What was the cause of Abraham's sin? A lack of faith in God. He did not believe that God could take care of him in this new situation.

When Abraham began to doubt God, thinking less of Him than he should have thought, his view of himself was also altered, for he began to think more of himself than was proper. This is “seesaw theology.”

- As long as our view of God is up, our view of ourselves will be down. God will be sovereign, wise, and holy. We will see ourselves as weak, foolish, and sinful.
- But if our view of God goes down, so that He becomes less than sovereign in our thinking, then our view of ourselves will go up and we will begin to imagine that we are able to take care of ourselves.
- Thinking that God could not take care of him, Abraham assumed that he would have to take care of himself, and this got him into the foolish predicament of this episode.

Note: God brought judgment on Abimelech by closing the womb of every woman in his household. But at this very time, God was preparing Sarah's post-menopausal body to receive new life—according to His promise.
