

# Grace That Is Greater Than Our Sin

## Genesis 20

**I. When We're In Danger, We're Tempted Solve The Problem Through \_\_\_\_\_, Compromise And Pragmatism Instead Of Faith (1-2)**

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**II. When We Don't \_\_\_\_\_ Sin, We Are Prone To Repeat It (2; cf. 12:11-13; Prov 28:13; Ezek 6:9)**

**Proverbs 28:13** Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

**Ezekiel 6:9** Then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols. And they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations.

**III. When We Get In Trouble, God Graciously \_\_\_\_\_ Us From Our Own Sins (3-7)**

**IV. When We Lie, We Will Have To \_\_\_\_\_ For It (8-13)**

**V. When We Sin, God's Grace Is \_\_\_\_\_ Than All My Sin (14-18)**

### Conclusion:

- God deals with sin
- God heals with grace

**Ephesians 1:7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

**Ephesians 2:8-9** <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not of works, lest anyone should boast.

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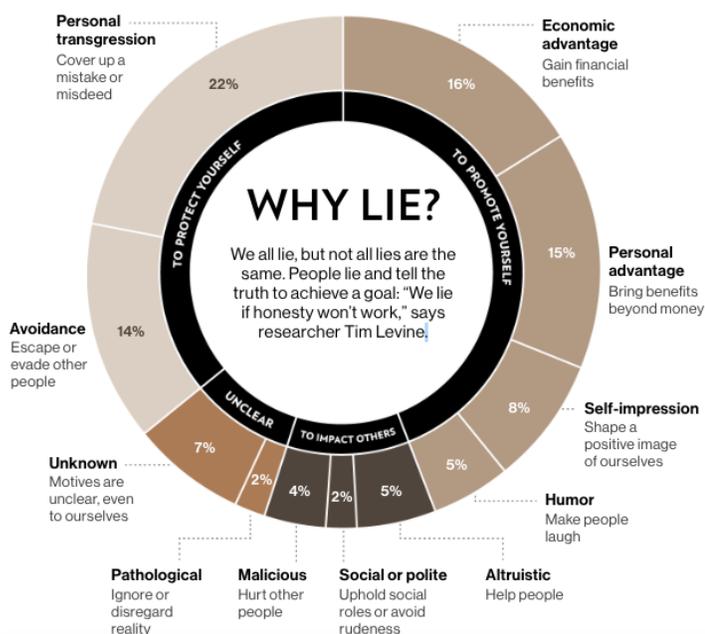
### Introduction:

- Genesis 20 deals with the sin of compromising marriage and the truth
- Abraham's covenant of marriage is put at risk because of Abraham's fear
- Abraham's integrity as a man of faith is put at risk because of his pragmatic response to fear
- We live in a day where marriage and integrity are compromised regularly
- We will see in this chapter God's preservation of these 2 key issues for the benefit of Abraham and his Promised Seed
- This also comes just before the birth of the promised son, Isaac – this could have been compromised as well

### Chiasm:

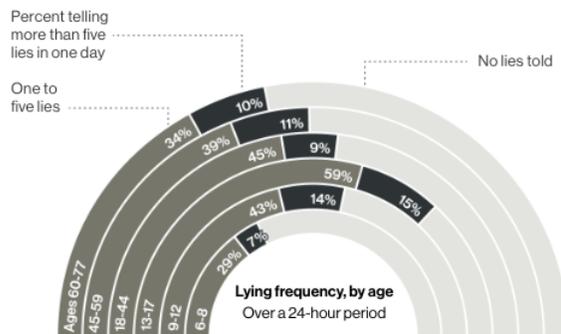
- A. Abimelech takes Sarah (1-2)
- B. God confronts Abimelech (3-7)
- C. Abimelech fears God (8)
- B. Abimelech confronts Abraham (9-13)
- A. Abimelech pays Abraham & Sarah (14-18)

- If you didn't know anything about Abraham and Abimelech before reading this passage, who would be the one with integrity here? Who would you identify as the servant of God?
- Abraham's behavior is troublesome.
- Because of Abraham's lack of faith in a dangerous situation, he **risks**:
  - **His Marriage** – his marriage to Sarah
  - **His Family** – the birth of Isaac
  - **His Integrity** – a man of his word



### BENDING THE TRUTH

"The truth comes naturally," says psychologist Bruno Verschuere, "but lying takes effort and a sharp, flexible mind." Lying is a part of the developmental process, like walking and talking. Children learn to lie between ages two and five, and lie the most when they are testing their independence.



RYAN MORRIS, NGM STAFF; SHELLEY SPERRY  
SOURCES: TIMOTHY R. LEVINE AND OTHERS, *JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH*, 2016; EVELYNE DEBEY AND OTHERS, *ACTA PSYCHOLOGICA*, 2015; KIM SEROTA, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

## I. When We're In Danger, We're Tempted Solve The Problem Through Lies, Compromise And Pragmatism Instead Of Faith (1-2)

**1**Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, **2**and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

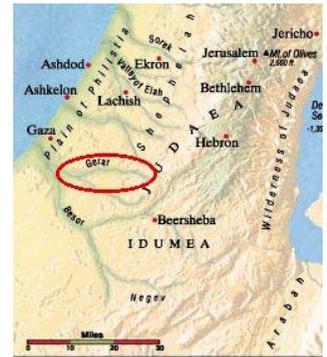
- Abraham was a man of faith, but also a man with failures
- The Bible doesn't remove people's warts from their spiritual complexions
- Lot was a pragmatist and compromiser
- Abraham was liar
- There are 2 types of people presented in Scripture: The Savior and Sinners
- Abraham was a sinner who needed salvation and God saved him

**Genesis 15:6** And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

- Abraham moved from Hebron, where he lived for 20 years
- "Hebron" means "fellowship" and reflected the coalition of allies that stood with Abraham
- Abraham migrates from Kadesh and Shur – an oasis in desert land where his cattle can graze
- We don't know why he moved, but he puts his family in a more dangerous situation in Gerar
- Gerar is still within the Promised Land God was giving to Abraham but was also dominated by the Philistines
- Abimelech is a common name in that area meaning "my father is king"
- He is probably the father or grandfather of the Abimelech Isaac will deal with in Gen 26
- Abraham allows Sarah to be a part of Abimelech's harem out of fear of his safety
- Remember that Sarah is a very attractive 90 year old

### • A Lack Of Faith Leads To A Lack Of Truth

**Proverbs 29:25** The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.



## II. When We Don't Forsake Sin, We Are Prone To Repeat It (2; cf. 12:11-13; Prov 28:13; Ezek 6:9)

**Genesis 20:2** and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "**She is my sister.**" Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

**Genesis 12:11-13** <sup>11</sup>When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, <sup>12</sup>and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. <sup>13</sup>**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."

- In Genesis 12, Abraham told Sarah to lie to the Pharaoh of Egypt
- **“Hey Half Sister, don’t say I’m your husband to the Phar-a-oh, Phar-a-oh”**

### **How To Prevent Habitual Sin:**

- Why did Abe & Sarah repeat their sin?
  - Maybe they didn’t consider the consequences to be severe the last time – in fact Abraham prospered from Pharaoh
  - Maybe it was a pattern in their lives
  - Maybe he felt it wasn’t a frequent sin since the last time was 25 years ago
- **Why do we repeat our sins?**
- Abraham and Sarah did admit their lie to Pharaoh and God
- But they ended lying again 25 years later
- And then Isaac, their son, will also repeat this lying sin (Gen 26)
- But there is a difference between **acknowledging** our sin and **forsaking** our sin

ie/ We might struggle with lying – but unless we see it as being as wicked as God sees it (“confession” = *homologeō* = same word) and do something about turning from it, we will keep doing it

ie/ Pornography – one thing to admit, another thing to see it’s wickedness and put up the barriers and set up the accountability to forsake it

ie/ Idolizing success, education, money, power, pragmatism – but it’s not that bad!

- Trusting in self and working for my own self-advancement
- Are we merely nodding to the fact we sin or are we volitionally (willingly)

**Proverbs 28:13** Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

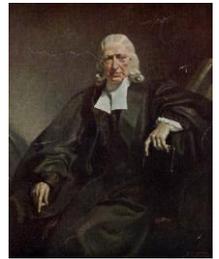
**Ezekiel 6:9** Then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols. And they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations.

### **III. When We Get In Trouble, God Graciously Protects Us From Our Own Sins (3-7)**

**3**But God came to Abimelek 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.”**4**Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? **5**Did 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.”**6**Then 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. **7**Now 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 who belong to you will die.”

- Abimelech is an unbeliever and God is going to protect His believers – Abe & Sarah
  - Abimelech has demonstrated integrity, but God was intervening to protect Sarah
  - V. 3 – God warns Abimelech in a dream – telling him Sarah is a married woman
  - V. 3 – because she’s married, it’s a sin and sin is worthy of death before a holy God
    - Marriage is not only protected in the Scriptures, but also in the Near Eastern culture
    - Even the Egyptians had marriage contracts to be honored
    - God is protecting Abe & Sarah’s **marriage**
    - And guarding the institution of marriage with the threat of a death penalty
  - V. 4 – Abimelech pleads for his nation not to be destroyed
    - Abimelech’s argument sounds familiar to Abraham’s plea for Sodom & Gomorrah – would you destroy a nation if there is innocence found?
  - V. 5 – I’ve been lied to, I have a clear conscience, I haven’t done anything that I wasn’t supposed to do
  - V. 6 – God kept Abimelech from sinning
  - John Wesley – understand grace at least in 5 ways
    - **Preserving grace** – saved him from a fire set by an arsonist at his father’s parish at Epworth
      - called himself a “brand plucked from the burning”
    - **Preventing grace** – kept him from gross sin as he learned the discipline of righteousness from his godly mother and strict school master
    - **Quickening grace** created a thirst for holiness at Oxford and he got involved in the Holy Club which saw the futility of good works for salvation
    - **Regenerating Grace** – as Wesley’s heart was warmed
    - **Assuring Grace** – affirmed his justification in Christ at Aldersgate
      - on way back from an aborted missionary venture in Georgia, he met up with Moravian pastor, August Gottlieb Spangenberg, who asked Wesley “Does the Spirit of God witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?” Wesley answered “I hope he died to save me.”
      - even as a missionary he struggled with doubt and uncertainty
      - “I felt an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”
- (“That Amazing Grace”, David McKenna, Christianity Today, May 13, 1988)
- God’s **Preventing** Grace kept Abimelech from sinning against Sarah
  - God’s **Preserving** Grace preserved Sarah from harm
    - God is preserving Abe’s marriage
    - Preserving Abe’s promised son
    - Preserving Abe’s role as a prophet and man of faith



- Eg/ I'm so thankful that God saved me in my teen years – right when my peers were getting into drinking, drugs and questionable parties

#### IV. When We Lie, We Will Have To Answer For It (8-13)

**8**Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid. **9**Then Abimelek 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 never be done." **10**And Abimelek asked Abraham, "What was your reason for doing this?" **11**Abraham replied, "I said to myself, 'There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' **12**Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. **13**And 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."'"

- The IRS will detect lies on a tax form and call for an audit
- Congress will detect lies from politicians and call for an inquiry
- Parents will unveil a lie from their kids and call them into question
- God exposed Abraham and Sarah's lie to Abimelek and now they must answer
- V. 8 – Abimelech calls his officials – his whole royal court feared God
- V. 9 – Abimelech: "What have you done to us? How have I wronged you?" (both the concern of Pharaoh and Abimelech)
- Abimelech actually feared God more than Abraham at this point though Abraham didn't think so (v. 11)
- Matthew Henry: "A lying tongue is but for a moment. Truth is the daughter of time; and in time, it will out."

#### V. When We Sin, God's Grace Is Greater Than All My Sin (14-18)

**14**Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. **15**And Abimelek said, "My land is before you; live wherever you like." **16**To Sarah he said, "I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated." **17**Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, **18**for the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelek's household from conceiving because of Abraham's wife Sarah.

- Abimelech compensated Abraham and Sarah with sheep, cattle, servants, land and silver
- 1,000 shekels = avg. Babylonian laborer would earn half shekel per month – thus 167 years to earn 1,000 shekels (Waltke, p. 287)
- Abraham prayed for Abimelek (17)
  - not only did God restore Abraham's integrity and increase his possessions
  - but God also restored his role as a **Prophet** in praying for Abimelech

- God, who had afflicted Abimelech, his wife and female servants with the inability to have children, removed that curse and healed them
- Abraham and Sarah sinned
- They had to confess
- And then God blessed them
- Abraham ends up settling in “the royal pasturelands around Gerar” (Waltke, p. 284)
- God doesn’t want to keep us in punishment
- God wants to bless us
- That’s grace!

### **Conclusion:**

- God deals with sin
  - Abraham looked for practical and pragmatic ways to get out of danger
  - He sinned by putting his marriage at risk
  - He sinned by putting his faith in God’s promised son at risk
  - He sinned by lying putting his integrity as a man of God at risk
- God heals with grace
  - God preserved and protected Abraham, Sarah and Abimelech, as well
  - God saved them from the damage and judgment of sin

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