

When Sinning Seems Easier

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[0 : 00] Genesis chapter 12, Benjamin Harris was the 23rd president from 1889 to 1893.

He and the first lady were the first couple to live in the White House after it had been wired for electricity. And President Harrison was a brave man.

He was a man who was known as ruthless on the battlefield and as a brigadier general in the Civil War. But he and his wife had a real fear in the White House.

Light switches. It's a new concept. They were scared of it. It was new and it was novel and it was mysterious and they were scared to death of it.

That if they switched the light on, they may be electrocuted. So their answer to the problem was they kept servants handy to take care of the light switch.

[1 : 00] And if there were no servants allowed, available at the time of bed, they slept with the lights on. That's fear, my friend. And fear can make you do strange things.

You know what else can? Hunger. Hunger can make you do strange things. People change when they get physically hungry. I find that out about five minutes to 12 when I look out there at y'all.

But there are many other types of hunger as well than just physical. Weariness will make you do different kind of things. So when you're afraid and when you're hungry and when you're weary, if you're not careful, it can cripple your life of faith.

Because if you get scared enough and you get hungry enough and you get tired enough, you'll make spiritual mistakes. Abram did. And I believe that we ought to learn from his mistakes.

I believe that's why they're here. But brace yourself. Genesis chapter 12, beginning in verse 10. It says, now there was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.

[2 : 27] When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarah, his wife, I know that you're a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, this is his wife.

And then they'll kill me, but they'll let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with you, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.

When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful, and when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house, and for her sake, he dealt well with Abram.

And he had sheep and oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

So Pharaoh called Abram and said, what is this you've done to me? Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say she's my sister? So that I could take her for my wife.

[3 : 34] Now then, here's your wife, take her and go. And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

What a shame. What a shame. It's amazing to me that the Bible includes stories like these. But that's one of the reasons why I love it so, because God tells the truth.

I mean, he tells the truth. And this giant of faith, Abraham, made mistakes too. And some of them were huge, and this is one of them.

Now, I will be honest with you this morning. It is much easier to avoid a passage like this than it is preach on it when you preach through the life of Abraham. And I've done that before.

I've avoided it before. It's not easy to look at. But kind of like when you pass a car wreck, let's rubberneck for just a moment. Into the life of Abraham and try to learn something.

[4 : 40] Let's look at it, break it down, learn from it, and not make the same kind of foolish mistakes in our lives.

Now, understand the setting. Abraham had moved to the Negev. The Negev is the desert. And that was not where he was used to living.

He had previously lived in the Fertile Crescent, known for bumper crops, but he no longer lived on the bank of the Euphrates. Instead, he was in a wasteland, and he needed food.

And they were in the midst of a famine. And scripture does not tell us here that he sought the Lord. Last week, I preached about all those times when he sought the Lord and built an altar to the Lord and left it smoking behind and left that testimony there.

You don't see any of that at this point in his life. It just says he went to Egypt. Egypt. And Egypt was the granary of the world. We know more about that from Joseph's life, but it was becoming that way already at this time.

[5 : 47] And with rare exception in the Bible, Egypt is a representation of the world. And an alliance with Egypt is like aligning with the world.

It's a sign that Abraham acted on his own if he tied up with Egypt. I want you to listen to what Isaiah said about Egypt years later, what he said about it.

He said, woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because there are many and in horsemen because they're very strong. Now, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord.

Woe to them because if they seek the Lord, they wouldn't go to Egypt. And he did. He went out of hunger instead of out of faith.

And when he got there where he should not have been, he acted out of fear. Now, his wife was 65 years old and was beautiful at that age.

[6 : 53] So beautiful that he was afraid that the Egyptians would kill him in order to have her. So he told her to help him stretch the truth. Tell him you're my sister.

Now, just to be clear, that's not an out and out lie. She was his half sister. They had the same father. It's a half truth.

But I want you to understand something. A half truth is a whole lie. And it was a strategic lie.

Because by being her brother, he was her guardian. And the Egyptian custom that he had in mind when he said that was that if someone came into Egyptian land, moving as an entourage.

Now, understand. Abraham was rich. And he came in with quite a crowd. Remember that when he set up those altars in the area of the moon god, it said his crowd grew.

[8 : 09] And we believe that that means that he was reaching people to follow the Lord instead of following the moon god. And they went with him as he traveled.

And now he's traveling in this large entourage. And if you're going to travel in a large group into a foreign country, there needs to be an understanding of what you're doing there.

And the way they would do that is they would form a treaty to clarify that it was not intended to be an invasion. Such a treaty would be sealed, usually with an acceptable daughter or with an acceptable sister that would join into Pharaoh's harem.

And Abraham's thought seemed to be that when he was approached by Pharaoh's people, he would offer her to go into Pharaoh's house. And if he didn't do that, they'd just kill him and his men, and they'd take her anyway as a trophy of war.

So he offered her, and Pharaoh chose to make her a wife. And if he did that, that he could possibly drag out some negotiations long enough in this treaty to get through this famine and to be able to leave and just move on.

[9 : 35] That seems to be the plan. And the plan seemed to work. She entered Pharaoh's house and into the preparation time of engagement that was filled with rituals and beautification techniques.

And she had to be time-tested in that atmosphere to prove that she was not pregnant before she could become a wife to Pharaoh.

And so there was this betrothal time. And meanwhile, Abram was given a wealth of things for payment for her.

And in the midst of all that, God intervened with plagues. During that time, in the Lord's mercy, at least upon Abram, the Lord sent plagues upon Pharaoh.

And when you look at that word there for plagues, it literally speaks of diseases and infestations, both of which are very unpleasant.

[10 : 38] And it sounded similar, it sounds similar to what happened to Pharaoh when Moses was there with his people, and he wouldn't let the people go worship. He immediately knew, Pharaoh knew something was wrong, and he knew what it was.

And so we asked Abram why, and then kindly provided out of fear of Abraham's God, had him escorted out of the country to make sure that he got out safely and to make sure that he got out. Get out of here. I wish that I could be true to Scripture and lighten this somewhat, but I've got to be honest.

This is a mess. I mean, it's a mess. Make no mistake, sin is always a mess. And it's always bigger than it appears.

I mean, it starts out small. Sometimes it even seems like a good idea. But then it just gets larger, and it has a larger impact than you could ever imagine. And so this morning, I want you to notice four truths about his sin and about our sin because there's similarity here.

[11 : 55] I share this because I think that we can learn from him. Let me be clear. I don't think you'll ever be in this situation, okay? At least not exactly.

But I will believe you'll be in situations of possible compromise. And I believe the lessons that we can learn from him in his compromise are lessons that we can apply to our life.

Sinful compromises that do not have to happen. So I want you to know this. One is, our sins are never justified.

They're never justified. Now listen, Abram was hungry. He was weary. And he was trying to lead his own life without the counsel of God. And he moved into the enemy's territory, and it made it worse. He was afraid. Why? Because he was going in the wrong direction. Don't be surprised when you're afraid, when you walk away from the leadership of the Lord.

[13 : 09] And fear will lead you to really mess up. It did for him. Egypt, don't misunderstand me, was and is a real place. But in Scripture, it always represents an alliance with the world.

And times were hard for him. But he never needed to go to Egypt. It never gets that bad. Never does.

It's the wrong place. It's the wrong people. In that culture, in that time, and if we respond too quickly, when the heat is on, we will make bad choices.

Erratic choices often show godless choices. They really do. You don't hear or read here of him building an altar anywhere.

There's no talk of that right now. That talk has stopped. You don't read of his prayers here. There's no talk of that at all. What we read of is his strategies that are made without prayer and a desperate run into the enemy's camp out of desperation.

[14 : 25] And that's what happens when we try to figure it out on our own. His sin was not small. It might have felt that way to him. His sin was not isolated. It might have felt that way to him.

It affected a lot more than he thought it does. And it always does. It was not justified, although sin often feels and seems justified.

I mean, it felt justified. But the state of our sin is not determined by how we feel about it. Church, you've got to get this because America's telling us something different.

The state of our sin is not determined by how we feel about it. Our sin is determined by the standards of God. Period. Period.

And God's standards do not change. You can call it old-fashioned. You can call it contemporary. You can call it postmodern.

[15 : 28] You can call it whatever you want to. But it never changes. God's standard never change. And as the world that we live in, as the country that we live in, as the state that we live in, even as the city that we live in, as they ignore God more and more, His Word may feel out of touch.

But the state of your sin is not determined by how you feel about it. It's not determined by that. It's based on the Word of God. And sin is never justified.

Never. Even if it feels right. Even if nobody's going to know. Even if you feel under pressure. All of those things are a ploy of the devil.

Every last one of them. That's how he works. It's what he does. And we cannot fall for that. Sin is never justified. Second thing is this. Our sins lead to more sins.

I mean, it will. Abraham sinned when he was without prayer and set out on his own. He sinned when he moved into a wicked land.

[16 : 42] He sinned when he lied to protect himself. He sinned when he put his wife in harm's way. Sin always leads to more sin. It's kind of like running downhill. It's hard to stop.

When you get old enough, it's kind of like running, period. You know? I mean, it's hard to stop. My head's as fast as it ever was. My legs can't keep up more. It's amazing. However, the sooner you do stop, the better off you are.

And those that you take with you, they'll be better off too. If you know there's sin in your life today and you sense that, turn from it.

It's not going to get easier. It's not going to get simpler. It's going to lead to more sin. And so turn from it.

Third thing is this. Our sin always hurts those closest to us. Always. Men, I hope you understand what's wrong with this picture.

[18 : 04] Because I promise you, the ladies understand what's wrong with this picture. Okay? And I would advise you at the lunch table not to say, I don't see what Abram did wrong.

Okay? I'm just telling you, I wouldn't advise that. Okay? If you do, and y'all come see me next week, I'm taking her side.

I'm just telling you. Okay? So, just, although he understands, understood the customs and probably thought that he had a way out without being harmed, this problem got a lot bigger because Pharaoh got involved.

He was hoping it would stop before Pharaoh got involved, but Pharaoh got involved. And it, it was not Abram that was at risk. Actually, Abram was living the high life.

I mean, he was given, more than he needed. He was already a rich man. He left Egypt richer. He did. He was, he was, he was living a high life.

[19 : 10] He was treated just fine by Pharaoh. It was, it was Sarah who was with strangers. She, she was the one that was living in unfamiliar customs. She was the one that was uncertain about what was to come. And thank God, God intervened.

He saved her life. He saved his life and got them out of there. But at what expense did it take to get out of there? I'm telling you, I bet that was a rough ride home.

Don't you think? I mean, come on. A painful one. And it always will be because your sin always hurts those closest to you.

Let me be clear. even if they don't know about it. It always hurts those closest to you. It didn't stop with her though.

Not only was she affected by this, but Lot was affected by this. Lot lived off the benefits that came to Abram.

[20 : 14] Lot got a taste of the luxurious pagan world. And we'll get there.

We'll study together that when Lot would be faced with his own life decisions later, he would make the wrong choice. They would be prayerless choices. They would be made by his eyes.

And they would be made because a seed was planted in him in Egypt, the enemy's territory. And the fruit would be bore in Sodom and Gomorrah.

And it did not have to be. Honestly, if you go back and look at the first part of Genesis 12, he shouldn't even brought Lot with him.

He wasn't even supposed to be there. And he sure shouldn't have taken him to Egypt where he got a taste of it. Our sin always hurts those closest to us.

[21 : 20] Fourth thing is this. Our sin always hurts our testimony. It always hurts our testimony. Think about this for just a moment.

Who called Abram out on his sin? Pharaoh. A lost pagan leader called him out on his sin.

Remember what God said to Abram in his calling? He said, I'll bless you and I'll make you a blessing. That's not a blessing. God was to use Abram to build a great nation.

There's no way you can build a great nation set apart from the Lord. What kind of witness is this to the world? And we need to think about our witness when we get around our lost friends.

We need to think about our witness when we get around weak Christians. We need to think about our witness when we get around opportunities to really make a difference in people's life, but instead we blow it because we don't live by God's standard.

[22 : 42] If you look like the rest of the world, you'll waste more time doing nothing for the Lord and defaming the name and the work and the character of the Lord in the eyes of those that so desperately need God.

That's exactly what will happen. Our sin always hurts our testimony and when we mess up, it's bad and we can't gloss over that. Man, I thank God this ain't the end of the story.

But sin is never justified. Sin always leads to more sin. Sin hurts those that are closest to you and sin kills our testimony. But I want to share you one more truth and it's not about Abram and it's not about us, it's about God.

One truth and that is God is always more faithful to us than we are to him. Can I get an amen? That's the place to put it folks. He's always better to us than we are to him. Genesis 13 verse 1 through 4.

[23 : 52] Let me read this. So Abram went up from Egypt he and his wife and all that he had and lot with him into the Negev. Now Abram was very rich. Do you get the irony there?

Very rich in livestock in silver and in gold. And as he journeyed on from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and Ai to the place where he had made an altar at the first and there Abram thank God there Abram called upon the name of the Lord.

He went back to Bethel. He got his heart right at the altar that he had built earlier and he called upon the name of the Lord.

I told you last week you need to leave reminders in your life of how God used you and worked in you in the past. What he's done in your life so that you can go back there and find strength.

And when Abram was going back and retracing those steps and he saw that altar don't you know it was convicting to his heart. God blessed him by providing more than he needed.

[25 : 09] God blessed him by leading him out of harm's way. God blessed him by receiving him back when he called upon him. None of us have always been faithful to God.

But God has always been faithful to us. I will tell you something today friend and in his grace he'll receive you back if you'll come back.

When wrong motives lead to wrong moves, wrong moves are made, it's time to come back to God. By the way, I want to remind you that Bethel is the Hebrew word for the house of God. It's time to come back to the house of God.

It's time to get it right. So what is it? what is it in your life that you're harboring, maybe enjoying a little bit too much?

[26 : 24] Or maybe not enjoying at all. You just feel like you're in a pit and don't know how to get out. Well, I'll tell you how to get out. Stop doing what you're doing and get out.

Stop doing what you're doing. Because it's not justified. It's bigger than you think it is. It's going to hurt those closest to you. And thank God, he loves us enough to be more faithful to us than we'll ever be to him.

I don't know what's going on in your life today. I don't know what you're struggling with. But I promise you, if you bring it to the Lord, he'll receive you where you are.

You turn from that sin and confess that to God. He'll make you new. And he'll help you build back what you need to build back in your life.

He's always more faithful to us than we are to him. With every head bowed and every eye closed, if you've never come to know the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, I want you to know the invitation is open to you to come to him.

[27 : 37] It's not my invitation, it's his invitation. That everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So I encourage you, if you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the first step, is to acknowledge the wrong that you've done in your life and ask him to forgive you and to cleanse you and to come into your life.

And he'll do just that. We'd love to guide you in that process. Maybe you're here and you have done that, but there's a hindrance in your life.

You've not been obedient to him. You need to get some things right. Quit worrying about everybody else. Just get your heart and mind on God and do exactly what he tells you to do.

You can do that where you are. You can do it at this altar. You can do it with a pastor praying for you. It don't make any difference to me. The main thing is what God's doing in your life and what he tells you to do that you're obedient.

[28 : 39] Don't stumble again because you fail to be obedient when God shows you exactly what you're to do. And maybe you're here and God's drawing you to be a part of this church. You know

