

When the Old Way Has Its Way

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[0 : 00] Your Bibles turn to Genesis chapter 20. Genesis chapter 20. I appreciate you being here. We enter into what I call the long hot summer.

Busy time and a lot of people are going and doing and all that kind of stuff. And you've heard this because it's been repeated back to me several times, but I just want you to remember this.

Don't miss for the ordinary. Only miss for the extraordinary. You'll have some extraordinary spots possibly this summer, but don't just make it a practice to miss the fellowship of believers.

I want to encourage you during this summer season. And I want to ask you something. Have you ever really messed up? I mean, not one of those first-time mess-ups.

I mean one of those mess-ups that you're good at. You fell back into an old way.

[1 : 01] An old habit. An old vice. An old decision. That was wrong the first time you made that decision. And it's just as wrong and a little more stupid the second time because you didn't learn from the first time.

And I'll answer that for you. Yeah, you have. We all have. And the devil has a heyday with repetitive sins.

He loves for us to repeat ourselves, whether it be habitual or whether it be a recurring pattern or whether it just be a backslide, which is a season of returning to an old way.

The sin problems of yesterday too often are the sin problems of today. And it need not be. But Abraham did it.

30 years before the events of Genesis chapter 20, Abraham, who married his half-sister, moved into a foreign territory and told the enemy that she was his sister.

[2 : 12] He told him that so that he wouldn't be killed because she was beautiful. And the thought was they'd kill him to get to her. And so he put her in harm's way.

And God watched over that. I would imagine there was a marital discussion that happened afterwards. But life moved on. And now 30 years later in a different land with a different king, it sounds to me like he did the same thing.

Now understand, they are traveling after they have seen the horrific sight of Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed. And it is in Giarr that Abraham falls into an old sin pattern.

It's in Genesis chapter 20, beginning in verse 1. And it says, from there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur.

And he journeyed in to Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister. And Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah.

[3 : 30] But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.

Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, Lord, will you kill an innocent people? 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 the innocence of my hands, I have done this. Then God said to him in the dream, yes, I know that you've done this in the integrity of your heart.

And it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore, I didn't let you touch her. Now then return the man's wife, for he's a prophet, so that he will not pray for you and you shall live.

But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours. So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called out his servants and told them all these things.

[4 : 37] And the men were very much afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, what have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you that you brought on me and my kingdom a great sin?

You've done to me things that ought not be done. And Abimelech said to Abraham, what did you see that you did this thing? Abraham said, I did it because I thought there's no fear of God at all in this place and they'll kill me because of my wife.

Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, though not the daughter of my mother. And she became my wife. And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, this is the kindness you must do me at every place in which we come.

Say of me, he is my brother. Why did he do it? I mean, we haven't been down this road before. And why do we do it?

When we've already been down that road and struggled in that way? I hope it's not this case, but we fall into, back into old ways of sin that we shouldn't.

[5 : 53] And maybe our reasoning behind it will be, we understand, if we saw the reasoning behind it, maybe we'd understand why we mess up. Maybe it would help us not to mess up.

I believe God gives us the details of Abraham's life and the narratives of so many people's lives in scripture so that we can learn from their experiences. So we don't make the same mistakes or mistakes very similar to theirs.

We need not fall back into an old way of sin patterns. But why do we do it? One reason we do it is because it's our way of doing things.

It's what we've, it's like we've done in the past. In the sixth grade, I was out in the woods behind the house with my buddies and one of them was smoking.

He wanted the rest of us to join him. And so I took a toke and inhaled. And it was a worse decision I could have made at the time, but the best decision that I could have made since that hour, because I thought my lungs caught a fire.

[7 : 06] I thought I was dying. I went to the same creek that I had previously relieved myself in and drank the water until I got relief. It wasn't downstream.

Kid, chill out. But anyway. Now the problem is some of you enjoyed the first toke and have taken plenty since. Maybe stopped years ago.

But when the, when the stresses come or whiff of that smell comes by, you may be tempted for just a moment. Well, not me. My lungs burn when I smell it.

I don't like it. I'm thankful for that. The same is true for every other pattern though in our life when the devil especially gets a stronghold on us.

We fall back into patterns if earlier in our life we receive some pleasure from it. God forgives us and he removes it. Thank God as far as the east is from the west.

[8 : 02] God removes it. But the devil keeps bringing it back up. And so beware. Because I want you to understand there is a demonic team of experts that are checking the algorithms of your life to see where the evil one can steal and kill and to destroy.

He don't want to give you a headache. He wants to ruin your life. And your sinful patterns of the past is often where the devil attacks you. Because he can't read your mind but he can watch your actions.

Past vices and sinful habits are often where we're weakest. And it often comes from good intentions. It's just the way we do things. It's our way.

But we need not be like Elvis. We need not have it our way. Abraham felt vulnerable. And in his vulnerability he slipped back into his old ways.

Well thank God when we surrender our lives to Christ we surrender our old ways to his ways. Hey listen we surrender our current ways. We surrender all of our ways to his ways.

[9 : 15] God makes all things new. Isaiah chapter 43 verse 19 says behold I am doing a new thing. Now it springs forth.

Do you not perceive it? I'll make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. God will make a way. He'll guide us through those tempting times. If we'll call on him.

If we'll focus on him. If we'll determine in our hearts to please him. And if we don't and we do it our way we'll fall back into the same old traps. Let me tell you another reason why he did it and why too often we do it.

It's because we fail to trust God. We just fail to trust God. We don't like to talk about that. We won't admit that. But the reality is we go our own way because we fail to trust God with the matter.

After he had witnessed Sodom and Gomorrah and had seen the details of that. He moves away to a seacoast country on the southwest side of Palestine.

[10:19] That is on the way to Egypt. Nothing good happens in the Old Testament in Egypt. The people that he is now surrounded by would later be known as the Philistines.

Those are Goliath's people. That's the enemy. And sometimes we feel like the only way to get along in the world is to live like the world.

Let me be clear without being specific because we ain't got time for it this morning. Don't be like the world. Don't think like the world.

Don't drink the world's Kool-Aid. Don't fall for it. For Abraham, it was his life that he was working to save. He didn't want to die.

For us, it's often our livelihood. Not usually vocationally, but it could be. It's usually socially for us.

[11:22] If we stand for Christ, if we stand for the precepts of Christ, if we live our life to please the Lord, will we lose our friends? How will they feel when we fellowship differently with them?

And the truth is, we just fail to trust God. We're just failing to trust him. And God gives you everything you need if you'll trust him.

But this walk of faith is all about trusting him. We fail to trust God. The third thing we do is this. We underestimate our influence.

I want you to hear me, Christian, this morning. We underestimate our influence. What is it like for a faithful believer of the Lord who is known for his outstanding faith?

This is Abraham, by the way. Okay? A man who's known for his outstanding faith. To not trust God. To not follow his lead. To not be less sensitive to the Lord than the lost are.

[12:25] To not listen to the Lord better than those without the Lord. When you live for and like the devil in front of non-believers, but they know that you're a professed believer, how do you think it makes them feel about the difference that Christ can make in somebody's life, in their own life?

Ruins your testimony. And these future Philistines are the enemies, but man, they live close. And they're religious people. It just don't mean much because what they worship is false, but these folks represent the random lost churchgoer that watches Christians more than Christians think they do. They're worldly. But agree on enough of the tenets of the faith that Christians mingle right in and often compromise. And we fall back into old patterns.

It's sad to see the social settings of Christians that look no different than the lost world. When you fellowship or celebrate with your friends, it ought to look different than the world.

It's hard to be light when you're not lighting the darkness. And it's hard to flavor your society when you've lost your saltiness. And the devil loves it.

[13:54] He loves it. You know why? Because the lost stay lost and the Christians stay compromised. And that's his plan. He can't have your soul.

So he'll try his best to steal your testimony. And ruin it for so many others. What an influence Abraham could have been if he had trusted God to watch over him, to keep him safe in enemy territory.

But he didn't. He underestimated his influence. Now I want you to notice that Abimelech was put in greater danger than Abraham was with this.

God let his whole household get sick. And he gave Abimelech a deadly disease. It speaks of that. In verse 17 when it says, Then Abraham prayed to God and God healed Abimelech.

And also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. Abimelech was going to die if things were not made right. And thankfully the sickness that had caused Abimelech, the sickness that he got caused Abimelech not to be with Sarah.

[15:09] And therefore not be involved in adultery. But I want you to get this. The sinfulness of the believer caused the danger of the unbeliever.

Now thank God if you're a child of God today, Christ has saved us. And the Spirit of God has empowered us. And we've been changed through salvation.

And that ought to make a world of difference for us. And it ought to make a world of difference for everybody we come in contact with. Because we're different. And we influence them. Instead Abraham was leading the king into sin.

He missed an opportunity. So I'm telling you, let's not do the same. Live for Christ. Refuse to compromise.

And don't underestimate our influence. I'll tell you what else we do. We justify half-truths.

[16:12] Now sometimes we think half-truths are not as bad as outright lies. I mean she was his sister. His half-sister. But he left out the other part of that truth was that he was also his wife.

The truth of the matter is half-truths are sometimes actually worse because we try to justify them. The problem with a half-truth is that it's just enough fact to make it plausible.

And just enough deception to make it dangerous. Lost people hate nothing more in believers than dishonesty and hypocrisy.

And when Abimelech summons Abraham to ask him what in the worldwide world of sports is going on. Abraham gives this rambling, lame duck kind of explanation.

What he said was true. But it was a poor explanation. Because such dishonesty ruins your testimony. And all the ways to do it.

[17 : 19] A half-truth. Truth with a caveat. All those things are worse. Just tell the truth. Live the truth. And it starts by telling yourself the truth.

How's my relationship with God? How am I walking with the Lord? What are those areas of my life that need to change? What are those areas of my life that I'm compromising?

How am I hurting my own testimony in my walk? How am I compromising my faith with God? Be honest with yourself. Lastly, we fall back into our old ways because we feel we need a crutch.

We need something. He said in that last verse that I read, verse 13. He said, He's saying, He's saying my only way out of this mess is to not be true to the Lord.

Not to live by faith. But to attempt a lie to an enemy. Maybe that will get me through. He used it like a crutch.

[18 : 38] And I know about a crutch. I was playing basketball when I was in college on a Sunday afternoon in open form at the church gym.

And I broke my foot. They didn't have those black boots back then. You had to rough it back in the olden days. And I was on crutches going to college and having to cross campus quickly to get to class.

I was younger and a tad thinner. And I could move on those crutches. And to get real velocity, you swing them out to the sides.

Almost like you're rowing, you know. Therefore, my wingspan was large. As a matter of fact, it was too large. I'll probably never forget when I got to the tripod of army recruitment brochures.

And when the end of my crutch hit it. It never slowed me down. But that poor display took a tumble and scattered all over the floor. And that 12-foot wide hall that, thank God, was empty.

[19 : 55] Except for me. And the last thing I saw when I looked down was be all you can be sliding by me. As I just was trying to be all I could be, son. Get in the class. My point is the crutches took the weight off my foot so it could heal.

We lean on spiritual crutches sometimes when our faith gets weak. Instead of just trusting God.

Let me give you some hope today. Abraham is known as a man of faith. He's known for his faith. But even a man of faith, he still struggled when he moved into the wrong territory.

Listen to me. When he hung out with the wrong people. When he justified the wrong action. When he was too short-sighted to not see what was coming.

And too forgetful to remember his past mistakes. That's what got him in trouble. And that's what will get us in trouble.

[21 : 12] Don't do it. God put this episode in Abraham's life in this passage so that we could learn from him.

And listen. Once the truth was told, all was made well. You can read the rest of the chapter. All was made well. Abraham and Sarah was blessed.

Abimelech gave him a fortune just to get out. Abimelech. And Abimelech was healed and his household was blessed. But it didn't have to be.

None of it had to be. And it still doesn't. It doesn't. It doesn't in my life. It doesn't in your life.

With every head bowed. And every eye closed. I want to ask you this morning. What is those areas of your life that you're not giving over to the Lord like you need to?

[22 : 22] You're having your way. Doing what you do. Instead of trusting him.

There may be someone here this morning. And there's never been a time in your life when you've given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus. You've never trusted Christ as your Savior.

You've never asked him to forgive you of your sins. To come into your life and empower you with the Holy Spirit of God. And to save you for all of eternity. And one of the hindrances along the way may be that Christians ain't quite lived up to Christ's standards a lot of times in front of you.

And for that I want to say I apologize. I'm sorry when we don't meet the standard in which Christ set for us. Please don't let that be a hindrance.

Christ will save you today. He didn't make these kind of mistakes. He was perfect. And because of that he could go to the cross and die in our place. You can give him your heart and life today and be changed for all of eternity.

[23 : 39] Maybe you're hearing God speaking to you about another matter. Maybe it's making a private decision public. You've never publicly acknowledged Christ as your Lord and Savior. You know you've given your heart and life to the Lord but you've never publicly acknowledged him through baptism.

You need to let others know what God's doing in your life. Or maybe God's drawing you to this fellowship. I will tell you I'm thankful. God's doing the work in Pickens First.

I'm thankful for the lives that are being changed. Lives are being challenged and are growing. Thankful to watch it. Love for you to be a part of that.

God's leading you. I just know folks. As long as we fail to do what God tells us to do. We'll never be satisfied.

We'll never find our happy place. We never will. So just trust him today. No substitutes. Just trust him. Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you for the love that you have for us and for that.

[24 : 39] Oh man. That crystal clear message that you give us in your word of how to live it out for you dear God. Without letting anything hinder us. God I pray today that you'll help us to simply respond in obedience.

Exactly the way you would have us God I pray. In Jesus precious name. Amen.