

The Father of Nations:

A Study of Abraham

Lesson Two: The Compromise of the Father of Nations

March 8, 2020

I was ashamed when I began to seek Him, I am more ashamed now; and I expect to be most of all ashamed when he shall appear to destroy my last enemy. But, oh! I may rejoice in him, to think that He will not be ashamed of me. –

John Newton

Opening Illustration: Never meet your heroes. Have you ever heard this expression before? What does it mean? What is it trying to protect us from? What this means is that the closer we get to anyone, the more obvious their flaws become. In the case of our heroes, seeing their flaws may make us lose respect for them. We may discover that they were really nothing special to begin with. Then again, would that be good or bad?

I. Introduction

A. *To our approach tonight.*

1. Abraham fell into the same trap twice. Instead of treating these two passages separately, I think it would be better to deal with both at one time.
2. We will compare and contrast the 2 situations to see how they are similar and how they are different.

B. *To our topic for tonight*

1. We have to be careful to avoid:
 - a) Being too hard on Abraham
 - (1) We may struggle in different ways, but we all struggle!
 - (2) There can be no denying that:
 - (a) There was indeed a famine—you have to eat!
 - (b) There was probably a real threat—apparently it was common for kings to assimilate entire people groups into their countries through these strategic marriages.
 - b) Being too easy on Abraham
 - (1) After all, we will see that Abraham fails to learn from his mistake.
 - (2) After all, what Abraham does is pretty serious and mind-boggling.
 - (3) After all, there is a God and Abraham got to hear His voice! He should know better.
 - (a) “Abraham didn’t need fraud to protect himself. God was able to provide safety for him.”¹

II. The Compromise of the Father of Nations (Genesis 12:10-20 & Genesis 20)

A. *A brief overview of each passage:*

1. Genesis 12:10-20
2. Genesis 20:1-18

B. *What was the problem?*

1. In Chapter 12
 - a) There was a famine in the land.
 - b) Abraham decided to leave the land in search of a more comfortable life.
 - (1) Was it wrong for Abraham to go to Egypt? Not necessarily.
 - (2) However, it does seem that God is left out of Abraham’s decision making in these passages.
 - (a) “Yet all the indications are that Abram did not stop to enquire, but went on his own initiative, taking everything into account but God.”²
2. In Chapter 20
 - a) We are not told why Abraham went to Gerar.

¹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 43.

² Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 127.

b) It may very well have something to do with what happened in Sodom and Gemorrah (19:27-28).

C. *What was Abraham's fear?*

1. He was afraid that the Egyptians [chap 12] and the people of Gerar [chap 20] would kill him and take his stuff in order to get to Sarai.

D. *What was Abraham's proposal?*

1. Sarai was to say that Abraham was his brother, not her husband.
 - a) There was a sense in which this was technically true. (See Genesis 20:14)
 - (1) "But using one half of the truth to conceal the other was so clearly a lie that on this occasion Abram attempted no defense."³
 - b) There was a sense in which this was dangerous and unkind.
 - c) There was a sense in which this demonstrated a lack of faith.

E. *How did this work out?*

1. He was exposed.
 - a) Pharaoh called Abraham out about his deception.
 - b) Abimelech called Abraham out about his deception.

Quote: Abimelech's three questions in 9, 10 make it clear that Abraham had only asked himself 'What will this do for me?', stifling the reflections 'What will it do to them?' 'What do they deserve?' and 'What are the facts?'⁴

2. He was embarrassed.
 - a) I am assuming this, but I can't imagine it being otherwise. Take this with a grain of salt.
3. He was blessed despite his treachery!
 - a) How could Abraham keep the payment that he received from Pharaoh?
 - b) How could Abraham keep the payments that he received from Abimelech?
 - (1) See 20:14

III. The Character of the Father of Nations—What do we learn from this?

A. *We learn that the Abraham was only human.*

1. **Quote:** "The best of men are just men at best." — Alistair Begg (and many other authors)

B. *We are encouraged by the fact that Abraham seems to be just like us—well intending, but inconsistent.*

1. He refused payment for rescuing Lot in 14:22-24
2. **Quote:** His craven and tortuous calculations are doubly revealing, both of the natural character of this spiritual giant (cf. Jas 5:17a) and of the sudden transition that can be made from the plane of faith to that of fear. Entangled in his deception, he found himself unable to refuse his questionable earnings (16), if indeed he wished to, and unable to answer Pharaoh's stinging rebuke.⁵

C. *We learn that no matter how hard we try, we can pass our flaws on to our children as well as our strengths.*

1. Notice that Isaac does the same thing that Abraham did...in the same place (Gerar). See Chap 26.

D. *We learn that we are only human.*

1. If God can work through Abraham, can He not also work through us?
2. If God can call Abraham his friend, despite his flaws, Can He not also feel the same way toward us?
 - a) **Isaiah 41:8** But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend,
 - b) **Psalms 103:14** For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust.

³ Derek Kidner, [Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 127.

⁴ Ibid, 149.

⁵ Ibid, 127.