

OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS

IX. Repeat Dysfunction And God's Enhanced Discipling

(Genesis 20:1-18)

I. Introduction

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.
- B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.
- C. We view Genesis 20:1-18 on God's dealing with repeat dysfunction and His enhanced discipling:

II. Repeat Dysfunction And God's Enhanced Discipling, Genesis 20:1-18.

- A. Out of fear, Abraham and Sarah repeated their initial lie of saying that she was his sister to keep Abraham from being killed by a pagan ruler who wanted to marry his beautiful wife, Genesis 20:1-2 with 12:10-15.
- B. This deed violated God's precedent where He made one woman for one man, taking a rib from Adam's side to make Eve so that Adam would view her as part of himself in an unbreakable marital union, Genesis 2:20-24.
- C. Since this sin was a repeat failure on the part of Abraham and Sarah, the Lord enhanced His effort to disciple them with more pain that they might learn to cease committing that sin, Genesis 20:3-18:
 - 1. When the Philistine ruler Abimelech desired to have Sarah, and Abraham and Sarah had misled him by claiming that she was his sister to imply that she was not his wife, God warned Abimelech in a dream that he would die since he had taken another man's wife, Genesis 20:3.
 - 2. Abimelech had not yet come near Sarah, so he replied to the Lord, asking if He would also slay a righteous nation, Genesis 20:4. This statement would later haunt Abraham when he heard Abimelech tell him about it, for Abraham himself had asked God if He would slay righteous Lot with the unrighteous people of Sodom when Abraham interceded for Lot's family in Genesis 18:20-25. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 62)
 - 3. God answered Abimelech in another dream, saying He knew Abimelech had taken Sarah in his integrity, so the Lord had kept him from committing adultery with her, Genesis 20:5-6. However, God warned him to restore Sarah to Abraham, for Abraham was a prophet, and he would pray for Abimelech that he and all his household might live and not die, Genesis 20:7. This instruction would further humiliate Abraham, for God was directing that Abraham be put in the awkward position of having to pray for Abimelech like he had interceded to the Lord for Lot all because of the lie Abraham himself had told about his relationship to Sarah that had led Abimelech to get into trouble with the Lord!
 - 4. The next morning, Abimelech told his servants these things, and they were afraid, Genesis 20:8. He then asked Abraham what he had done to bring on him and his kingdom such a great sin, Genesis 20:9-10.
 - 5. Abraham confessed that he feared that Abimelech did not revere the Lord so that the Philistines would kill him for his wife, Genesis 20:11. Abraham added that Sarah was indeed his sister as well as his wife, for she was his half-sister by his father's other wife, Genesis 20:12. Abraham confessed that he had asked Sarah to claim that she was his sister in order to preserve his life, Genesis 20:13.
 - 6. Abimelech then returned Sarah to Abraham along with sheep, oxen, male and female slaves and told Abraham to live wherever he wanted to live in the land that Abimelech might please God, Gen. 20:14-15.
 - 7. The Philistine ruler also told Sarah that he had restored her to her "brother," a statement that was a veiled rebuke of Sarah for her deception of him about her relationship with Abraham. Abimelech also gave Abraham a thousand pieces of silver to protect Sarah's reputation. The phrase "he is to thee a covering of the eyes" (Genesis 20:16) meant that Abimelech's large payment was "proof of his high esteem for Abraham and Sarah" that "would serve to stop any scoffing on the part of her household" for her lie and nearly committed sin of adultery with Abimelech. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Genesis 20:16)
 - 8. Consequently, Abraham interceded for Abimelech as he had interceded for Lot to the Lord, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and maidservants so they were able to bear children, Genesis 20:17. God had closed up the wombs of the household of Abimelech in judgment because of Abimelech's taking Sarah into his harem, so Abraham's intercession kept Abimelech's household from harm! (Gen. 20:18)

Lesson: *When Abraham and Sarah repeated his lie that she was his sister to cause another pagan ruler to think he could marry her, God enhanced His discipling of Abraham and Sarah, embarrassing them into avoiding that sin!*

Application: *May we learn not repeat a past sin lest God enhance His discipling effort by inflicting more pain!*