

Genesis 19-20 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 18 ended with Abraham's intercession on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah.

It's a classic scene of man bargaining with God – and surprisingly, of God's repeated yielding to the bargain.

God told Abraham that He'd heard horrifying reports about the wickedness of the cities of the Jordan Plain and he and the two angels who were with Him were going there to see it first hand.

If it was indeed as bad as it had been reported, then God would destroy the place.

Abraham, knowing that his nephew Lot and his family lived there, plead God to reconsider IF there were righteous people to be found there.

He based his intercession on the awareness that God is just and would never judge the righteous along with the wicked.

So, he asked God to withhold judgment if 50 righteous people were to be found there.

God easily agreed – and Abraham, emboldened by this ready response of mercy moved to ask if the number could be reduced to 45, then 40, 30, 20, and finally 10.

God agreed that if only 10 righteous people lived in Sodom, He would spare the whole!

As we come to chapter 19, we face a sober fact – not even 10 righteous people were to be found in Sodom!

Only 4 people were exempted from the judgment; and even they were so badly compromised that they barely escaped, not because of a lack of mercy or righteousness on God's part, but because they were reluctant to leave!

About 15 years before the events of ch. 19, Sodom & Gomorrah had been defeated and sacked by a Mesopotamian Alliance of 4 kings.

It was Abraham's miraculous raid that rescued them.

It had to be obvious to all the people of Sodom and Gomorrah whom Abraham had saved that their deliverance was a miracle!

They were even there when Abraham met Melchizedek, the King-Priest of Salem who'd come out to bless Abraham and witnessed Abraham's worship of the true and living God.

As we saw in ch. 14, Melchizedek was in all likelihood an OT appearance of none other than Jesus Christ.

This means the people of Sodom saw Him!

What a profound picture!

They were captives who had been miraculously set free by the power of God working through a man of Faith in God.

They encountered an OT manifestation of Jesus Christ, if not in person, then at least powerfully in representation.

And there, as they stood with Abraham before Melchizedek, the defeated king of Sodom shows up and lays claim to them.

The reality of salvation is within their grip – but they turn and follow their old king back to Sodom!

How many people see the reality of God’s power and ability to save them, but they just shrug their shoulders and go back to their moral stupor & captivity in the world?

The Sodomites ought to have taken their defeat at the hands of the Northern Alliance as a warning and wake-up call to seek the Lord, but in the 15 years since then, they’ve grown even more corrupt and wicked.

Did 9/11 serve to spark revival & renewal, or has our nation grown more wanton & perverse in the last couple years.

If moral trends continue, what will THIS NATION look like in 13 more years?

GENESIS 19

1Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

By gate, don’t think of a garden gate or the gate of a modern day fence.

The gate of an ancient city such as Sodom was a massive complex.

It would have been about 40 to 50 feet long & a good 20 feet wide.

[Show Megiddo rendering]

At the opening there would have been a large open area with places around the edge for benches and canopies providing shade. [Show Dan Gate]

On these benches sat the elders; the rulers & dignitaries of the city.

They were the judges who would hold court; deciding both individual cases & the issues that effected city life.

That Lot is sitting in the gate in the evening means he isn’t just living in Sodom; he’s one of the city fathers!

Knowing the wickedness of the place, this is a bit disturbing!

Maybe he thought he could be an influence for good.

2And he said, “Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.” And they said, “No, but we will spend the night in the open square.”

Lot shows the same kind of hospitality to the visitors Abraham had; he offers them lodging & refreshment.

But they reply by saying they intend to spend the night in the city square.

Now, Lot knows what goes on in Sodom after dark and there’s no way he wants these uninformed newcomers to be subjected to what might happen.

They’re angels, and even though they’ve come in human appearance, Lot sees them as prime targets for the uncontrolled lust of the people of Sodom.

3But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

4Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. 5And they called

to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."

Word had spread among the people of Sodom of the visitors Lot was lodging.

They were seen as new, fresh meat, something novel to enjoy.

So a mob gathered at Lot's door & began to call for them to come out for some fun.

But the fun would have been one-sided on the part of the men of Sodom.

It's clear from the way vs. 4 & 5 are worded that what the men of Sodom intended was homosexual rape of Lot's guests.

That such a large group of the men of Sodom was involved proves the extent to which Sodom's depravity had gone.

You see, hospitality was a sacred virtue in the ancient world and specially in that region!

The kindness shown strangers was one of the moral virtues that was the last to go – yet here we see it not only neglected, but violated in the most heinous manner.

Not only were the people of Sodom not hospitable, they saw strangers as nothing more than objects to be used for their own sick lusts.

This is a culture that is in the last throes of a very ugly death!

Most of us wouldn't allow our little children to be out alone after dark because of the sick, sick people out there.

But we probably wouldn't think it too dangerous to go for a walk after dark ourselves.

Lot couldn't stand the thought of his two visitors being out at night in Sodom because of the threat of danger to them!

He knew the men of Sodom were relatively safe simply because they all knew each other and had known each other.

But someone new – well, that was a different story!

And because these visitors were angels, they were in all likelihood extremely attractive as well!

There are some who like to make homosexuality THE sin, THE reason why God destroyed Sodom & Gomorrah, and indeed – homosexuality was the premier sin we see manifested here.

But it wasn't just homosexuality that called down God's wrath – it's the abundance & intensity of sin that was the issue.

All people are sinners and there is no perfect nation or city.

The problem is when people cast off all restraint and go head-long after sin; that's when God steps in and brings judgment.

Vs. 4 & 5 tell us virtually the whole city of Sodom turned out to rape Lot's guests!

Romans 1 makes it clear that homosexuality is a sin which indicates a fundamental overturning of God's whole order and plan for a man or woman.

It isn't merely a perversion – it's an inversion.

It's one thing when an individual struggles with homosexual desires – but it is an altogether different thing when an entire society accepts homosexuality as NORMAL.

Paul makes it crystal clear in Romans 1 that when a culture gets to the place where homosexuality is accepted in this way – it is a sign of the end of that culture – they are in their death throes.

So it wasn't really homosexuality that was the special object of God's wrath at Sodom – it was the viciousness & hunger of the men of Sodom to sate their sinful lusts by casting away all morality, all the rules of normal and acceptable behavior.

Sodom was a rabid dog that HAD to be put down.

6So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, 7and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! 8See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."

Lot has a twisted sense of morality!

He places the bond of hospitality above the value of his own children!

He's willing to protect strangers but surrender his own innocent daughters!

The moral corruption of Sodom has tweaked Lot's sense of what's right and wrong. He's lost all moral discernment!

This is the great danger we face in living in the world; it's a question of immersion & influence.

What I mean is this:

Where we spend our time & what we give attention to – what we're immersed in, is going to influence us. It's inevitable.

What's repeatedly heard by the ear & seen with the eyes is going to fill the mind & influence our thoughts.

I majored in geology in college and on a weekend field trip camped out with a couple of guys who had just been discharged from the military.

Every other word they spoke was a profanity; it was absurd how profane they were in their speech.

It really bothered me but I didn't say anything because their behavior caused me to believe if I had they would only have turned on me with even more abuse – so I remained silent.

I ought to have moved my stuff to the other camp but didn't and spent the entire day and night with them.

I noticed in the drive home alone in my car that my thoughts, the thinking inside my own head was filled with profanity.

The internal conversation sounded just like those guys, though it was me! That next week I really struggled with my speech.

If the world you're immersed in is profane or sensual, materialistic or greedy, envious or carnal, chances are that is going to influence you.

1 Corinthians 15:33 says –

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

This is why it's so crucial that as Christians we make sure we're immersing ourselves in the culture & community of the Kingdom of God.

While you don't have to go to church to be a Christian, if you want to be a healthy, growing Christian YOU DO!

Believers are like scuba divers and this world is the ocean.

We spend a good amount of time in this world but we don't draw our life from it.

Just as a scuba diver breaths air from a tank on his/her back, so we draw our life from the Spirit.

And just as a diver has to surface regularly to fill his tank, so we need to replenish our supply by joining with other believers in genuine Christian worship and fellowship.

It's all a matter of immersion & influence.

To counter the influence of the world in which we are immersed, we need to regularly immerse ourselves in Christian fellowship where we can be influenced by the truth & love of God.

One more thing – because we live in this world, it's inevitable that we're going to hear & see that which would influence us negatively.

Besides countering that influence with immersion in the Kingdom of God, we need to exercise some active discernment as we live in the world.

Many people take a passive posture toward the influences of the world.

They flip on the tube or radio & whatever's presented there they just allow & accept as entertainment.

If we take this stand toward the world, we're going to find our moral discernment blunted & tweaked as Lot's was.

We need to be active in looking at the world through the lens & filter of the Word & Will of God.

Don't just accept whatever's presented as okay – Judge it by the criteria and standard of Truth!

There are some Christians who limit their exposure to the things of the world – and more power to those of us who set such personal standards!

We must each live by the light of our conscience as Paul says in Romans 14.

But no matter where you set the bar on what's acceptable to listen to or watch, it's virtually inevitable that something is going to sneak through.

In ALL your watching and listening – exercise active discernment and filter it through the screen of God's Word & Will. What's God's take on this?

Right now, our nation & world is embroiled in a loud and acrimonious debate over War with Iraq.

There are some who are all for using military force to disarm Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein while others are adamantly opposed to the use of force.

What ought to be our take on this?

Well – How does God feel about War?

Is there such a thing as a just war? Scripture indicates there is!

So the question becomes - Is a War with Iraq a "just war?"

If it is, how ought it be prosecuted?

This is what it means to exercise active discernment in the face of the influences of the world.

The world's influences aren't the criteria of God's Word & Will.

They're merely patriotism, politics, pacifism, accommodation, & ideology.

Lot had been so immersed & influenced by the culture of Sodom his moral sense was all out of whack – the same thing can happen to us if we're not careful.

And by all accounts, as recent polls indicate, this is precisely what's happened to the majority of the Body of Christ in modern America.

9And they [the men of Sodom] said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. **10**But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. **11**And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.

The mob was in no mood for bargaining.

Lust had them in its teeth & they had their wicked passions set on the rape of the two visitors in Lot's house.

They will deal viciously with anyone or anything that gets in their way.

In fact, they decided to warm up on Lot and rushed him, slamming him into the door of his house.

That's when the angels went to work.

They opened the door, reached out & grabbed Lot, dragging him to safety, then they blinded the people so that they couldn't find the door.

The way this is worded, it's probably best to take the blindness, not as total blindness so that they were stumbling about in the dark, but that the angels blinded their minds from being able to sense the door by sight or touch.

After a while, they gave up and went away in frustration.

12Then the men [the angels] said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place! **13**For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it."

14So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

The behavior of the people of Sodom that night was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

The angels tell Lot that God's judgment will proceed and he'd better warn his family.

Besides the two unmarried virgin daughters who still lived in his house, he has at least two other married daughters because it says he went to his sons-in-law and warned them.

But they didn't take him seriously! They thought it was some kind of joke and no amount of pleading on his part could convince them to listen.

How sad when we lose credibility with the lost because of our own moral compromise.

I wonder how much respect toward the Church and toward pastors has been lost because of the scandals of the past 30 years among the televangelists & more recently with priests in the Catholic Church.

How much influence does the average Christian carry with the unbeliever when they are sharing the gospel with them when the Christian's lifestyle is carnal and sinful and caught up in all the things they say they're saved from?

It has to seem like a joke to the lost!

And when we talk about the Last Days and the Judgment of God, they think we're a bit loony because as they look at our lives, they don't see any preparation, any real sense that we're living for heaven, sporting up treasure there.

Lot's failure in influencing his own family was the result of his compromised life & backslidden heart!

Let that be a solemn warning to all of us, and specially us parents!

As we read the next verses, take careful note of the reluctance we see in Lot and his family -

15When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." 16And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

We covered these verses in depth last Sunday.

What I want to ask you to focus on tonight is Lot's reluctance at leaving Sodom.

In His mercy, God had to drag him, his wife, and two daughters out and then urge them to run for it!

But even then – Lot argued with them -

18Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! 19Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. 20See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live."

First, Lot lingered; then he argued; then he begged to be allowed to go his own way.[\[1\]](#)

Instead of being grateful for God's mercy and obeying his rescuers, Lot resisted & created trouble for them -

21And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. 22Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

Which means "Little One."

Abraham had asked God to spare the city from judgment if 10 righteous people could be found there.

He based his intercession on the knowledge that God is righteous and just and would not judge the righteous with the wicked.

This passage proves Abraham's knowledge of God was sound – the angels say they cannot bring down judgment on earth until the righteous are taken out!

23The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. 24Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. 25So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and

what grew on the ground.

26But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

As we saw on Sunday, the wording of v. 26 means she lagged behind, her steps dogged with reluctance at leaving her home and she ended up being caught in the judgment that came on the plain.

Archaeologists have done extensive work over the years in an attempt to locate Sodom & Gomorrah.

For a long time it's been assumed their ruins lie under the southern end of the Dead Sea.

Gen. 14 describes the cities as being located in the well-watered Southern Jordan Plain. [Map of Dead Sea & Jordan Valley]

The southern part of the Dead Sea is actually much different from the northern part.

The Southern section averages only about 15 feet deep, while the northern part averages over a thousand feet.

The evidence indicates that at the time we're reading about here in Gen. 19, the southern part was in fact dry land and the northern part was a freshwater lake.

The catastrophe we read about here saw the southern end drop several feet, spilling the water of the northern lake into this region, and exposing large deposits of underground salts that altered the composition of the lake from freshwater to extremely salty.

This is reasonable because the whole Jordan valley is part of the Great Rift system and has been highly unstable geologically.

Ch. 14 tells us that the region around Sodom & Gomorrah had asphalt pits.

These would have been highly volatile and could have provided the fuel for a catastrophe like we're reading about here.

Take raw petroleum pools, add either lightening or a volcanic spark, mix in some chemical salts and you have a recipe for major disaster.

Lot's wife, who'd lagged behind and dallied on the road to Zoar ended up being buried under a salt bomb.

More recent archaeological research has identified 5 cities located on the main streams that come down from the Jordan hills and empty into the Dead Sea.

Two of these sites are noticeably larger than the other 3, and are massive!

It's estimated they would have housed a population of several thousand people.

What's interesting about 4 of these cities is that they all appear to have been totally destroyed by fire at the same time – and they were never reoccupied!

That's unusual for ancient cities.

Also, the fires that destroyed them aren't fires that were started within their buildings, as most fires usually start.

The buildings were uniformly burnt from the top down.

The evidence has led several archaeologists to conclude that these are Sodom and Gomorrah and the other 2 cities which were destroyed leaving only Zoar standing.

But even Zoar, which depended on the other cities, was then quickly abandoned.

27And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. **28**Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. **29**And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

30Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.

When Lot saw the devastation of the other cities, he grew fearful and decided to head for the hills where the angels had originally said safety lay.

But then, at Lot's pleading, they had consented to let him find refuge in Zoar. That Lot doesn't find it safe any longer is another sign of his spiritual distance from God.

He doesn't know if he can trust the Lord.

Compromise & Carnality does that to us – it saps our confidence in the dependability of God.

The best way to increase our faith & confidence in the Lord is to trust Him!

31Now the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. **32**Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father." **33**So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

34It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, "Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father." **35**Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

36Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. **37**The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. **38**And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day.

As we noted in an earlier study, the law against incest wouldn't come until later when the genetic stock of the human race would be far more sorted out and flawed enough that the union of close relatives would actually be dangerous. But even then, the sexual union of a parent with his or her child was always taboo – as is evidenced by the fact that Lot's daughters have to get him drunk before they can carry out their plan.

It seems they have come to believe he's the last man alive and they have to repopulate the earth.

The story of Noah and the flood was a reality & lesson that was still fresh in their minds and they thought the same kind of thing had just happened to them.

When they flee to the hills from Zoar, where, certainly they would have seen other

men still alive, they make sure they bring some wine along!

Clearly their priorities are messed up.

These verses teach us that compromise & accommodation to the world leads to all kinds of problems.

1) It leads to fuzzy headed thinking – No men left!

2) It leads to really bad conclusions – Let's get pregnant!

3) It leads to terribly misplaced priorities – Let's be sure to take wine!

4) And it results in horrible moral decisions and the devastating fruit they bear.

– Let's sleep with Dad & raise a Moab & Ben-Ammi.

The Moabites & Ammonites ended up becoming serious trouble to the Jews.

Lot's life is one sad, sick story as it reveals to us the sorry state of those who compromise with the world.

One commentator remarks - "Ironically, in his own drunkenness Lot carried out the shameful act that he himself had suggested to the men of Sodom: he lay with his own daughters."

This is the great danger of toying with the world – if you start to compromise, where will it stop?

For far too many, just as it was with Lot, it doesn't stop – it ends in ruin.

GENESIS 20

1And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar.

The commentators want to assign some reason for Abraham's move to the events of ch. 19.

But this isn't necessary – he was a nomadic shepherd and had been living at Mamre for a long time.

It was simply time for him to move his community to a new region with different pasture. [Show Map]

So he moved South, to a region that would have been just about at the end of suitable pasturage for his flocks.

Any further south and it would be desert.

2Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

Abimelech is more a title than a name, like the word "Pharaoh."

Abimelech was the title for the ruler of what would later be known as the Philistines who occupied this region at this time.

Though Sarah is 90 she's still an attractive woman & Abraham follows the same silly ruse he'd used years before when they went to Egypt during a time of famine.

He tells the people of Gerar that she's his sister – which was a partial truth but a whole lie.

He was fearful the people of the region might kill him in order to take her.

So as happened in Egypt, when word reached Abimelech, the ruler of Gerar that Sarah was Abraham's sister, in the same ploy Pharaoh had used, in an attempt to increase the size and prestige of his harem, he sent his servants

to take her.

In Abimelech's thinking, this would forge a political and economic alliance with Abraham who was a rich and powerful man in his own right.

Don't forget, the cities and nations of that time were all about securing themselves and increasing their strength.

This was an astute move on Abimelech's part.

But we wonder, just how attractive could Sarah have been at 90?

Apparently, she was still a sight to behold! The original Sophia Loren!

It's also possible that with God's promise to bring her a child now in the works, there's been something of a rejuvenation process that has worked upon her to make her more attractive than the years would seem to allow.

Whatever the reason – she was still a babe – a senior babe, but still drop-dead gorgeous!

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

4But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? 5Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this."

6And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. 7Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

God appeared to Abimelech in a dream and told him the truth about Sarah.

Abimelech replied that he had no idea and that he did what he did out of a pure motive.

God said he knew all about Abimelech's motive and that it was indeed pure.

In fact, because of this, God had arranged circumstance so that Abimelech hadn't come near Sarah.

He then told the king to return her to her husband and Abraham would pray for him.

I take great comfort in what God says to Abimelech here.

I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says –

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

In the disciple's prayer, Jesus said we're to pray thus –

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Look – we know that God isn't going to tempt us or lead us into temptation; so why pray this?

The point is that Jesus is affirming to and for us that when we are tempted, it is not because God is setting us up for a fall.

Praying this prayer makes us mindful of the fact WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED, that there is a way of escape.

Jesus knows that one of the dangers of temptations is that we lose sight of the fact that there is a way of escape, a way out – and that ultimately God ALLOWS us to be tempted, all so that we would chose the way of escape.

Look – we are not made stronger by facing NO challenges. Strength, victory, maturity come only through the struggle!

I was a wrestler in high school.

We had practice every day –endless drills of learning how to do takedowns, reversals, escapes, holds, pins.

We did extremely tough conditioning because wrestling is incredibly tiring and if you aren't in shape, you'll get whooped. Many matches are determined simply by who can outlast the other guy.

But all the drills and conditioning was just preparation.

It was the match, the tournament, when you come face to face with a real opponent that makes you a real wrestler and when you get a real victory and the medal.

Tonight, sitting here in study is like wrestling practice.

We go through the drills of reading and digging, but it's when we leave here and face the fight, the challenge, the temptations that we get a chance to put it into practice.

Therefore, know this – every temptation is only allowed by God –not to see you stumble, but to GIVE YOU ANOTHER VICTORY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Abimelech had a choice – what he'd done he'd done innocently.

But now that he knows the truth he has another choice – keep Sarah or return her to her husband.

God spells out the consequences of each choice – life or death!

8So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. 9And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done." 10Then Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?"

It's always tragic when those who are apparent pagans rebuke the people of God for their moral failure!

11And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. 12But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"

Abraham's error was in thinking that God was NOT AT WORK in Gerar and Abimelech's house.

Friends, we must never draw conclusions that God is not at work in the world around us!

God is far bigger than what we've figured out and the narrow box we've grown

comfortable keeping Him in.
He is at work in the lives of everyone around us, even if we or they cannot see it.

14Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. 15And Abimelech said, "See, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you." 16Then to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who are with you and before everybody." Thus she was rebuked.

The "thousand pieces of silver" was the value of the sheep, oxen and servants he'd given Abraham.

The word "vindicates" is literally – "a covering for the eyes," a veil.

Abimelech is saying HE is doing for Sarah what she & Abraham had failed to do – protecting her!

Their lies had exposed her, his action covered and protected her.

You see, this gift was a dramatic sign of recompense for a terrible wrong Abimelech had done to Abraham.

Really, it was Abraham who ought to have been giving Abimelech the gifts since he was the one who'd erred.

But this action was a serious rebuke to both Abe and Sarah.

Remember when Abraham had refused the gifts of the king of Sodom because he didn't want to allow any man the ability to say that he had made Abraham rich?

Why is he taking these gifts here?

Probably because he's so humbled by Abimelech's integrity, mercy, and rebuke that he feels he doesn't have the moral ground to stand on at this point.

God had also said when Abimelech restored Sarah to her husband, then Abraham would pray for him.

What a humbling thing – to be called on to pray when you've just been busted for a really nasty sin!

But such post-sin prayer is often the crucial step in finding victory over such future temptations!

When discipling our children, praying with them afterward and as the final step in discipline is really effective.

17So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; 18for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

This gives us the impression Sarah may have been in Abimelech's harem for a while.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 20 tells us the story of Abraham's sin of deceit and failure of faith.

It's a virtual repeat of the same thing we see him doing in ch. 12 when we're first introduced to him.

Though nearly 30 years and many encounters with God have taken place – we find the great man of faith stumbling in the same way he did when he was brand new to the walk of faith and trust in God.

The lesson for us is this – there are some weaknesses every one of us carry over which we will have to exercise diligent watchfulness for the rest of our lives. Each of us has a unique struggle with something, that keeps us humble and in the place of realizing our utter dependence on God. He is great & worthy of our trust and will give us victory in that struggle as we yield to Him – but unless we STAY in the place of surrender & yieldedness, we will surely fall.

Don't let yourself think there comes some great day of liberation when you will step out from the place of all temptation into total sinless perfection. That day will not come till Jesus comes.

While we live in these unredeemed bodies, in this fallen world, we will struggle with sin – and some of those sins we will struggle with more than others.

Like an onion, the Spirit will peel off layer after layer, but under each layer is another layer of stinkiness that will bring us to tears if we don't stay surrendered to the Lord.

[\[1\]](#) Wiersbe, Warren, *Be Obedient* (STEP version)