

## WHEN OUR FAITH FACES OUR FEARS

**Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18**

We live in a world sometimes characterized as “a jungle out there.”

**How do we defend ourselves when we face “life in the jungle”?**

Do we develop schemes to protect ourselves?

How do we approach life in the 20th century?

Do we try to work everything out for survival, by our own strategies?

This morning we’re going to consider how Abraham faced the “jungle” in his neighborhood.

*“Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

Abram trusted God enough to obey His call and follow Him

He left the comforts of home—his land and his family.

He moved to a new home—when he didn’t know where he was going.

He’s willing to follow God’s call, wherever He may lead him

*And yet, . . .*

### PEOPLE OF FAITH SOMETIMES FACE TIMES OF DOUBT

*Real believers sometimes have real doubts!*

**Abram failed to trust God to protect him in a pagan land.**

*Twice!!*

He invents his own scheme to protect himself.

It worked so well 1<sup>st</sup> time, instead of learning lesson, he repeats it.

### **ABRAM FEARS THE PAGAN KING AND DEVELOPS A SCHEME TO PROTECT HIMSELF**

Abram is afraid the pagan king will kill him to get Sarah

**12:10-12; 20:11**

What does it reveal about Abram’s faith in God’s promise to make a great nation from his seed?

God must be planning to keep him alive and keep Sarah for him!

When we’re struggling with doubts, we don’t think straight

We don’t see things from God’s perspective—through eyes of faith!

Abram makes up lie: she’s his sister; asks Sarah to agree

**12:13; 20:2a, 13**

His lack of faith causes Abram to drag her into his deception.

When lack of faith causes us to drift, we often take others along!

Abram rationalizes that his lie is really a half-truth **20:12**

Is glass half full, or half empty?

Which half is more important? Is he telling a lie or telling the truth.

Half-truths are NOT TRUTH AT ALL—it's a lie!

But *technically*, it's true! She really is his half-sister!

See how easily we can rationalize to defend our schemes.

**God's man is deceiving the pagan king!**

Sarah's sacrifice--

Sarah goes along with the lie to protect her husband

**12:14-15; 20:2b**

She's willing to go along with Abram's deception to protect him.

She would even allow herself to be used sexually, if necessary.

She's the one who bears the consequences of Abram's deception.

Yet she's willing to do it for him—that's submission! **1 Pet. 3:1-6**

Abram is enriched materially by his scheme to protect himself

**12:16**

Pharaoh gives him great wealth because of his "sister."

Abimelech gave him gifts and allowed him to settle wherever he'd like.

Abram could deceive himself into believing God is blessing his deception!

Yet you sense that while he's enriched materially, Abram loses something spiritually.

The whole scene carries a tragic tone to it

—you're left asking: "*What's wrong with this picture?*"

## **GOD INTERVENES TO PROTECT ABRAM AND SARAH FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF ABRAM'S PLOT**

In spite of his lack of faith      In spite of his scheming and deception

The Lord sent plagues against Pharaoh's household

**12:17** (Cp. Exod.!)

The Lord warned Abimelech in a dream **20:3-8**

[ Pagan kings' perplexity ]

## **PAGAN KING WONDERS WHY ABRAM WOULD DO SUCH A THING TO HIM 12:18-19a; 20:9-10**

"Why would you do this to us?" "What have we ever done to you?"

They treated him well!

## **GOD ENRICHES AND BLESSES ABRAM 12:19b-20; 20:14-18**

God protects Abram and sends him out with great wealth 12:(16)

=> 19b-20; 20:14-16 --Even after his scheme is revealed

Abram intervenes on behalf of Abimelech, and God heals his household 20:17-18

We too face hard times! How do we respond when faced with life's difficult moments?

### **OUR FAITH FACES OUR FEAR**

**God's people often respond to hard times by developing schemes**

Our self-centered schemes are *often* deceptive

They deceive others They even deceive US!

Our schemes jeopardize the blessing God wants to pour out on us when we trust Him.

**God *sometimes* intervenes to protect and bless His people.**

Even from the consequences of our own schemes!

Not always—not guaranteed—but *sometimes*, by His grace, He intervenes.

**Though God may intervene to protect His people, our schemes still impact people around us.**

Explicit impact: how does this scheme affect pagan observers around us?

Implicit impact: how does scheme affect godly participants around us?

*How do you think Abram's scheme affected Sarah?*

*How would YOU respond?*

**Our failure doesn't cause God to rescind His promises to His people.**

His love and His blessings aren't conditional!

### **Sidebar on Genesis:**

Throughout story of God's dealings with Israel, we inspect what the flesh produces

*—when we in our desperation make our best efforts to get ourselves out of the messes of life!*

Our self-centered, manipulative schemes *always* produce ugly, rotten fruit!

Our flesh *never* produces what's pleasing to God!

**OUR SCHEMES NEVER PRODUCE GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS!**

**Several lessons for us that I observe:**

1. God's people often respond to difficult circumstances with fear and self-protective schemes
2. Our schemes affect those closest to us.  
They drag those closest to us into deception with us—at least into consequences!.
3. We deceive *ourselves* by clever rationalizations to justify our schemes!
4. When God does intervene and rescue us, that doesn't eliminate the impact of those schemes on people around us.
5. Though our schemes impact our lives, and those around us, they will *never* destroy God's love for us, nor His plan to bless us.

**If Abraham was subject to such doubts, *any of us* could be.**

None of us *always* trusts God *every day* for *everything*!

In spite of Abraham's moments of doubt, he's listed in "heroes' hall of fame:" *"Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

***"Never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light!"***

Uncle Oscar took first airplane ride. He was scared!

When he got back, his friends asked if he enjoyed the ride.

"Well, it wasn't as bad as I thought, But I'll tell you this: I never did put all my weight down!"

Is that the way WE deal with FAITH?

We'll trust God, but we're not going to put all our weight down on HIM?

When we don't "put all *our* weight down" we're not *really* trusting God!

How do WE betray a lack of confidence in God?

—when our moments of crisis come, how do WE respond?

Do we trust Him, or do we scheme to work our own way out?

How do our schemes affect those who are watching us?

Can they see that we've learned to trust the Lord?

**Phil. 4:6-7; Is. 26:3-4**

\* Not likely to die for our wife! However, fear of failure DOES motivate us to scheme for success

\* Pagan observer—"If HE's a Christian, I'm not interested!!! Winona Lake ambient/syndrome?"

RELEVANCE?—Our schemes? How do we come up with our own schemes?