

GUILTY AS SIN

Scripture: Responsive Reading # 735
S1: #159 ~ Old Rugged Cross
S2: # 300 ~ Rock of Ages

INTRO

- Two weeks ago ... **most** of the Christian World observed **Easter Sunday**
 - **Because we're sinners** ~ ~ Jesus hung on the **Cross** to provide us an **opportunity** for Eternal Life
- Sometimes when we consider the sacrifice Jesus made ... we get frustrated w/ ourselves because we are sinners ~ ~ who continue to sin
 - What really frustrates us are those **old-sins** ~ the ones we can't get rid of
- Genesis **Chpt 20** is an episode in the life of **Abraham** that provides **good news** for those of us who get down on themselves because we continue to **sin**
 - Here's the **bottom line** of today's sermon:
 - **Conversion** is **instantaneous** ~ ~ God completes it the moment we trust Jesus Christ for salvation ... and repent of our sins
 - **Spiritual Growth** is a gradual thing ~ it is a **life-long process**
 - For **example**, someone has observed:
 - It took **God** just one day to get Israel out of Egypt ... but it took Him **40** years to get Egypt out of Israel
- If you get discouraged because you are not a **perfect** saint ...
 - ... then **Genesis Chpt 20** should provide you with some comfort
 - We'll see Abraham hadn't reached **perfection** ~ ~ even in his later years

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ABRAHAM'S SIN

- After the destruction of Sodom ~ ~ Abraham traveled again: **Gen 20:1**
 - Gerar is @ **50 m** west of Hebron ... located in what we **now** call the Gaza Strip
 - **Back then** ... it was on the edge of **Philistine** territory ...
 - ... an aggressive tribal group who possessed superior weapons
- A powerful king lived there by the name of **Abimelech**
 - Abraham fears Abimelech might **kill** him ... and take Sarah for himself as a wife
 - SO ... he commits the **same sin** he committed years ago ~ back in Egypt
 - **Gen 20:2**
 - In that society ... this indicated to **King Abimelech** that it was alright for him to take Sarah to be his wife ~ ~ **which he did**
- It's puzzling to see Abraham ... **the example of faith ~ the Friend of God** ... reverting back to the lie that brought him embarrassment and anxiety in Egypt **20 yrs** earlier
 - By this time ~ Abraham has seen many demonstrations of God's protection
 - ... so for **us** to see another dismal failure of his faith ~ ~ is strange indeed
- **But,** before we get down on **Abraham**, let's see what lessons are here for **us** to learn ...
 - For one thing, **Genesis Chpt 20** gives us great confidence that **God's Word** tells the truth ~ the whole truth ... and nothing but the truth
 - God's Word does not hide the sins and flaws of its characters
 - For example ... consider a couple of the giants of faith
 - **David** sins **2 Sam 11:2-4**
 - **Peter** denies Jesus **Matt 26:73-74**
- The fact the Saints of the Bible were flawed **doesn't** take away from the Bible message
 - God's Word proclaims the **Holiness of God** ... **NOT** the perfection of His followers

- Biblical saints are presented ~ **warts and all** ~ to show they're mortals just like us
 - What they become happens through **faith** ... in spite of their weakness and sin
 - It was their faith in **God** ~ **not in themselves** ~ that made the difference
 - Their shortcomings only reveal how inadequate they were ... apart from God.
 - What was true for them ~ ~ can be true for **us** too

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ABRAHAM'S SIN

- **Read V 3**
 - If we weren't familiar with Abraham' life when we read this verse ... we might think that **Abimelech** was the man of God
 - Dreams are a frequent mode of revelation in the OT
 - Think about Joseph ~ Gideon ~ Solomon ~ Daniel ~ and King Nebuchadnessar
 - Dreams are a normal mode of communication for God to use
- Although not a man of God ~ ~ **Abimelech** was a man of integrity
 - When God spoke to him, he responded with reverence (**Vs 6/7**)
 - **Abimelech** had inadvertently wronged an ambassador of God ~ ~ and being a man of principle he did the right thing
- When we think of **Abraham's** sin we must remember ... sin affects other people
 - For **example** ... the results of David's sin affected his family & nation
 - Other Disciples were impacted when they learned @ Peter's denial of Jesus
- **Our sin** ... doesn't occur in a vacuum
 - It always spills over and hurts other people ... usually those we love the most

THE CAUSE OF ABRAHAM'S SIN

- Abimelech responded when God spoke to him in the dream ~ ~ **V 8**
 - Hebrew word translated "servants" includes **gov't officials** of all ranks
 - He told them about the dream and the warning from God

- God will **not** always shield us from the embarrassment of our sins
 - Abimelech summons Abraham to give him a piece of his mind ~ **V 9**
 - The King's words of censure must have been humiliating
 - The irate king demands an explanation ~ **V 10**

- In Abraham's explanation we find the real cause of his sin
 - Realize his explanation was just as embarrassing as his sinful actions ~ **V 11**
 - Abraham said **this** to a King, who's so filled with the **fear of God** he could hardly keep from trembling as he sat on his throne
 - Abraham's behavior slandered Abimelech ~ ~ this King who had a good and honorable sense of right and wrong
 - How humiliating that a pagan King should demonstrate greater integrity than Abraham ~ ~ the "**Friend of God**"
 - Here Abraham demonstrates a very **weak faith** in God ... and a great sense of **pride** in his own problem solving skill

- Don't know @ you ~ ~ but **in pride** I've decide that a sinful way is better than God's Way
 - ... then I learned about a powerful warning found in ~ **Prov 16:18**

- The **second** part of Abraham's explanation is no better than the first ... **V 12**
 - Abraham did not tell the whole truth ~ he thought that half the truth was OK
 - When half the truth is presented as the whole truth ~ it is a complete **LIE**
 - God has some strong ideas @ those who lie:
 - **Prov 6:16-19 ~ Prov 12:22**

- So far, Abraham's sin was cause by: **1)** his lack of faith, and **2)** by his pride ...

- **Third** cause is found in ~ **V 13**
 - Agreement btw Abraham and Sarah when their journey began ~ some **30** yrs ago
 - Maybe it could be accepted back then as they were younger in their faith ...
 - But now they've had **30** yrs to grow in their faith ... for example ...
 - God had reprimanded Abraham for this his sin in Egypt ~ ~ his faith grew
 - **SO now** ~ Abraham decides to do something **HE KNEWS** is wrong
- Probably ... Abraham **repeated** his sin because he never really repented of his deceitful agreement with Sarah
 - We must realize it is not enough to be sorry for sin ... or even to confess our sins
 - **Proverbs 28:13** { **forsake** }
 - The only way to prevent repeating a sin is to confess and forsake it

THE COMPENSATION FOR ABRAHAM'S CONFESSED SIN

- To show there were no hard feelings ... **Abimelech** showered Abraham with gifts
 - Let's see what he said afterwards: **20:15-16**
 - Piece of silver = shekel
 - Normal wage at that time was ½ a shekel per month ... so Sarah was given money in excess of **166** yrs of labor
 - Notice Abimelech's generosity ~ compared to Abraham's fear and deception
- But because of Abraham's confession, gifts were given as evidence to everyone that the wrong had been righted
 - **God** uses Abimelech to show He does not disown His children when we sin
 - **this is a key point**

- Don't misunderstand ~ God did not **ignore** Abraham's sin ... nor does he ignore **our** sin
 - **Quite the opposite ...** God used Abimelech to expose Abraham's sin
 - **But Abraham's sin didn't alter God's Love for him**

- To better understand the loving God we serve ... please notice that when Abraham is mentioned in the NT ~ this sin is never revealed: **Heb 11:8 – 10**
 - Abraham is praised for his demonstrated faith
 - Here's the lesson for **us** today:
 - When we sinned we must **not** think God will desert us ...
 - Rather ~ let's remember the promised found in: **Phil 1:6**

- By honestly admitting his deception to Abimelech (God's instrument in Gen 20), Abraham was confessing his sin
 - When we confess our sins ... notice what God promises ~ **Jer 31:34b**
 - "and their sin **I will remember no more**"
 - Abraham responded to Abimelech's generosity by praying for him: **Gen 20:17-18**

SUMMARY

- In **Genesis Chpt 20**, we see that Abraham's slipped back into sin
- A contributing f(x) was **Abraham living on the border of God's Will** **V 20:1**
 - He was still in the land God promised him; but ... just on the very edge
 - By moving into what he knew was dangerous territory, Abraham put himself in a position he knew could lead to sin
 - If we have a problem with alcohol ~ ~ don't get a job at a bar
 - If we have a problem with gambling ~ ~ don't live in Las Vegas

- As sinners, we can't live on the edge of **God's Will**
 - *It just too easy to step over the line*
 - **During** this coming week ~ ~ please reflect upon **God's love** for you
 - *God's love is limitless and never ending*
- As Easter fades into the background of our hectic lives ~ ~ let's remember:
 - It **wasn't nails** that kept Jesus pinned to the cross
 - **It was our sins**

#300 ~ Rock of Ages