

**TEXT: Genesis 12:10-20**

**TITLE: Abram lies, the Lord rescues**

**THEME: While Abram's scheme puts the holy line to the verge of corruption, the Lord rescues his holy Seed by sending a plague to Pharaoh's house.**

Two weeks ago, we looked at the first half of chapter 12, in which the Lord called Abram to leave his homeland and to follow him. We saw how the call was also accompanied by the rich promises of blessings. We saw Abram responded with obedience and with worship. Today, we will continue today with the series of sermon on the book of Genesis. And we come to second half of chapter 12, verses 10-20. READ.

### INTRODUCTION

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, do you ever think that all the Old Testament Bible characters are different from you and me? Maybe when we read the story about Noah, Abraham, David, and Solomon, we see them differently because these people walked the earth thousands of years before we do. They lived in a different time period. They lived in different societies from us. They did not have the technologies we have today. I think that it is easy for us to put these Bible characters in a very different category than ourselves. While I agree that these people walked thousands of years before us, but are these men really that different than we are? Or is our human nature still the same even after thousands of years?

Back in the summer, we looked at Noah, we saw how the Lord destroyed the whole world but preserved him and his family. We saw how he built the ark 120 years after receiving the command from God, but we also saw him fell by drunkenness. Two weeks ago, we also saw Abram as a man of great faith. The Lord called him to go forth from his country to an unknown land and he responded with obedience, and he also built an altar to worship the One True God in the midst of a pagan land. **But does Abram really have perfect faith? Is Abram really that different from you and me?**

**The goal of the sermon is that you may rejoice in the wonder of God's faithfulness to his covenantal promise despite our disobedience.**

Today, we will be considering this text in three sections.

- I. Abram plans a lie (vv.10-13)**
  - II. Abram tells a lie (vv.14-16)**
  - III. The Lord intervenes (vv.17-20)**
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- I. Abram plans a lie (vv.10-13)**

Moses begins these verses by telling us that there was **a famine in the land of Canaan**, the Promised Land. **This seems to be in contradiction to the promise of God as we saw two weeks ago.** Remember that the Lord brought Abram into this land and promised him that he would give this land to Abram's descendants. The promise entails that the Lord would give him a son and also a land with blessing. But notice what is happening here? **Not only was his wife Sarai barren. Notice also here that the Promised Land was also barren. There was a famine in the land.**

And how did Abram respond to this current situation? **Moses tells us that he decided to go to Egypt.** Notice that the text did not say anything about him inquiring of God. **In other words, the decision to go to Egypt was Abram's decision. Abram here was acting by natural human instinct.** He decided to leave the Promised land that the Lord brought him into and go to the pagan Egypt. And we can relate to this as well. **This situation is like a person who has a decent job who suddenly goes unemployed and cannot find a job in Toronto.** You see, it is not wrong to move to another city for work. But our priority must be our spiritual life instead of physical well-being. Like we may have to find a Gospel-preaching church and a good Christian school first before we consider our houses or cars or any material good. **Just a reminder. We must not prioritize our physical well-being over our spiritual well-being. From this point forward, we will see everything is starting to go down hill from here.** Let us continue with the text and see what is going to happen!

So, Abram decided to go to Egypt to escape the famine. **But right before he entered into Egypt, he sensed a great danger. He realized that his wife Sarai was beautiful.** He thought that the Egyptians would kill him in order to take her. In order to prepare for this, he came up with a moral dilemma: if he tells the Egyptians Sarai is his wife, they may well kill him; if he lies, they will probably take her and leave him alone. So, we see here that Abram told his wife to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister. **Abram likely thought that he could justify this lie since Sarai really was in fact his half-sister.**

**As a result, he pleaded Sarai to say that she was his sister.** Notice what he said in vv.13, *"Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."* **Realize in this verse that the focus was his own life, and his focus was not on his wife. He didn't seem to think of how he would protect his wife and protect the**

**sanctity of his marriage.** Remember what the Bible tells us about marriage? **Marriage is a holy, covenantal union between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24-25).** The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:25-28, “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.*” **What we see here is that Abram was not fulfilling the duty as a husband here. He was not fulfilling the duty that God called him: to be a husband who loves and protects his wife. He was willing to risk the sanctity of his marriage for the sake of his own life.**

This is the Abram that Moses is presenting to us. We often think of Abram as one of the great heroes of faith (Heb 11) and as the father of all believers (Romans 4:1). But you see here that the Scripture presents Abraham as a sinner just like you and me. The Bible presents to us a sinner who stumbles through fear and weak faith. **This is quite a contrast to the Abram we saw two weeks ago, who responded to God with obedience and with worship. We see a faithless and weak Abram.**

## II. Abram tells a lie (vv.14-16)

And what happened when they went into Egypt? That leads us to our second point.

Moses tells us that it happened as Abram had anticipated. The Egyptians indeed saw Sarai and praised her to Pharaoh. They did not kill Abram for Sarai's sake. He was not only kept alive, but received from Pharaoh all the material blessings. Vv.10 tells us that Abram came to Egypt as a sojourner, but now, through his lie, he became an honored guest.

**But notice that his scheme came with a consequence.** Moses tells us that Sarai was so beautiful that **Pharaoh took her into his own palace.** Was this part of Abram's plan too? Perhaps Abram thought that the Egyptians would simply leave him alone. But things did not go that way. Can you imagine what a complicated situation into which Abram brought himself? Yes, his scheme actually worked. He deceived the Egyptians. They didn't kill him and they also gave him many material blessings. But would he ever thought that they would take Sarai away from him? Surely things went downhill from the day he decided to go into Egypt. **We saw earlier that he was willing to risk his marriage for his own life, and now, his scheme has really put his marriage under the bus!**

**But more importantly, this situation not only brought a threat to Abram's marriage, it also brought a huge threat to the promises of God.** This is significant. Remember God's promise? In Genesis 3:15, after Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the Lord promised them that there would come the seed of the woman to deliver them. The Seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the Serpent while being injured in the process. We saw that this promise was carried through Seth to Noah, to his son Shem, and two weeks ago, we also saw that God made clear that this blessing would come through a child born to Abram and Sarah (vv.3). It means that the holy line was to carry through Abram and Sarai! **So, what we see here is that this situation was a real threat to God's promise.** How could this promise be fulfilled if Sarah was taken away? How could this blessing come to pass if beautiful Sarah became the wife of Pharaoh? **Abram put his marriage at risk, but more importantly, he also put the chosen line of the woman at risk.**

What a hopeless situation Abram had brought himself into? Can you imagine him beating himself after seeing what happened? Maybe thinking to himself: “What have I done? Should I now go and tell Pharaoh the truth?” **This is really the consequence for relying on himself rather than clinging tight to the promise of God.** Everything really went downhill from the day he decided to leave the promised land and to go to Egypt.

## III. The Lord intervenes (vv.17-20)

But is Abram really going to lose his wife? Is the sin of Abram really going to ruin God's promise and his eternal plan of salvation? That brings us to our final point.

Moses tells us in vv.17. “But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.” The answer is NO! **The Lord divinely intervened!** Moses tells us that the Lord sent a great plague on Pharaoh and his house. Notice that Moses doesn't even tell us how exactly did the Lord plague Pharaoh. It was not the focus. **The focus was that to draw the Israelites reading this text to see God's hand in this situation! He wanted us to see the power and sovereignty over Abram and Sarai's hopeless situation.** But you see, Abram and Sarai were miserable and hopeless, **but it did not mean that the Lord God was hopeless.** He would not let Pharaoh defile Sarai.

But do you know why? Do you know why the Lord would not let Sarai become the wife of Pharaoh? **It is because the Lord was faithful to his promises despite Abram's faithlessness. The promise that he sworn in Genesis 3:15 and to Abram was covenantal.** When God obligates Himself to a covenant promise, even the sins of His people cannot prevent its fulfillment. He would not stop his action until his promises are fulfilled. His eternal plan is carried out through mankind, but it is not based upon man's decision. Out of his good and sovereign counsel, the holy line would continue through Abram's loins through Sarai. **The holy line would continue for generations, and ultimately, the Seed of the woman would come from the same line.** And we know that this promise was fulfilled, it is because a few chapters later, we will see the Lord opening the womb of the barren Sarai, bearing the child of promise, Isaac, then Jacob, Judah. The genealogy in Luke confirms that the line then continues through David, Solomon, and generations later, came the Lord Jesus Christ, the True Seed of the woman.

**Brothers and sisters in the Lord, do you know that God's promises of God hold true even today.** Maybe we look around and we see the hypocrisy in the church, we see pastors and leaders fell, the members in sin—We see these things and we are discouraged and despair. But here in this text, we learn that God's promises to his true church will never fail. Yes, we may fail, but he does not. And we also have Jesus' promise in the Great Commission: "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." **This is a reminder that we do not walk this journey alone, the Lord is with us and his promises are firm and true.**

And after Pharaoh found out that the Lord sent a plague on his house because he took Abram's wife, he called Abram and confronted him. Isn't this interesting? **He was supposed to be the one who goes to Pharaoh to confront him for his sins, but we see the opposite here.** And after the confrontation, Pharaoh told Moses to leave. Notice what Moses tells us in vv.20. Abram left Egypt a rich man! Can you believe that the Lord still blessed Abram despite his sin and disobedience? Can you see what the Lord was doing in his providence? Yes, Abram was at fault. He relied on his human instinct and left the promise land to go to Egypt. **But notice what God does in his glorious providence: He used a plague to restore Sarah to her destiny (Gen 3:17); and, He used deportation to get Abraham back to the Promised Land (Gen 3:20).** He also used his experience in Egypt for his good. The Lord also used Egypt as a means to provide for Abram. What grace! Such grace! This is God's grace toward a sinner. **Brothers and sisters in the Lord, this is the Lord our God. The God who controls all things.** Nothing is outside of his sovereign control. Things that the Devil used as a harm for God's people, the Lord used it for the good of his people. The Lord has the power to employ evil things as a means of his goodness and grace. Remember Job's words in Job 42:2, "*I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.*"

**But I want to draw you to a greater significance in the departure of Abram from Egypt.** What happens here actually anticipates what would happen generations later, when the Israelites would again be in Egypt, where they would again be miserable. Just as the Lord divinely delivered Abram from the misery in Egypt, at that time, the Lord would once again plague Pharaoh and his house, and lead his people into a great exodus out of the bondage of sin and misery into the Promised land which was filled with abundant milk and honey.

**But the two exodus of Abram and Israel actually point us to the greater Exodus that which the Lord Jesus Christ would lead us in Jerusalem.** Remember the transfiguration? In Luke 9? Luke tells us that "*As He (Jesus) prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. 30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease (Exodus) which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*" At the transfiguration, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus were talking about the new Exodus. **And that Exodus was the climatic exodus that contains not just a temporary exodus from the bondage of sin and hell. But that exodus is God's saving work for the whole world. The Exodus at the Cross wouldn't involve blood on the door posts anymore, but instead, it would involve the shedding of his own innocent blood.** And through the shedding of blood at the cross and his resurrection, the Lord Jesus brought his people out of the misery of sin into His Kingdom. But although the victory is won, we are still waiting for his return when he will bring us into the Eternal Promised Land, the final consummation, where sin will be no more.

**So, in closing, let me ask you a question: are you rejoicing in the wonder of God's faithfulness to his covenantal promise despite our disobedience.**

Yes, we are weak and often lose sight of the promises of God. **But the message presented to us in the text is that: even though we often fail and we are weak, nevertheless, the grace of God prevails.** Our actions may lead us astray, but they cannot negate His bond with us. May we always be reminded that God's promises are firm and sure, even when we fail, not because we are worthy, but because of Jesus, who secured our salvation for us. May we also wait for his second coming with eagerness, trusting that just as he was faithful yesterday, He would also be faithful to us today and tomorrow, until he returns and takes us into glory. Amen. Let us pray.