**SARAH BORE A SON TO ABRAHAM**

Genesis 20:1-21:7 (Key Verse: Genesis 21:2)

*Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.*

In today’s passage we are going to learn from Abraham who after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah moved on and went into the region of the Negev, the land of the Philistines, an unknown territory. When Abraham moved into the unknown territory, he was filled with fear of being killed and resorted to his old ways of not trusting God and said to the king Abimelek that Sarah was his sister. When Abraham compromised by telling a lie, God rescued him to teach him that he is God almighty, furthermore, God revealed to Abraham his faithfulness by fulfilling his promise. Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to a Son Isaac, at the very time God had promised.

Are you in a situation where you feel like you are stepping into new territory? Are you tempted to compromise on your faith? Is fear and anxiety making you doubt God’s provision and protection? Is the exam period feeling like an unknown territory, triggering you to compromise on your prayer time? Worship service time, so you can study an additional chapter. Or is the decision to marry feeling like an unknown territory, parenting, finding a job? Are you filled with fear and anxieties because of all these? From today’s passage we will learn how God was with Abraham when he entered an unknown territory, how he protected him and even granted him laughter through the birth of Isaac.

I pray that God may have mercy on us all to receive one word today, be filled with faith that even though we might be entering an unknown territory, he is with us and will protect us and grant us laughter.

The passage begins with Abraham who moved from trees of Mamre in Hebron, to the Negev and lived between the Kadesh and Shur. Abraham probably travelled to the Negev after the devastating destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. We know that the trees of Mamre in Hebron were based on the hills overlooking the destroyed Sodom, and so because of this devastating view, Abraham moved and settled in the Negev. Now Negev was a region of the Philistine, and it was notorious for being fierce and godless. And so, when Abraham settled there in Gerar, something tragic happened. Let us look at **verse 2**: “***2****and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.”* In fear of the Philistines, Abraham told a lie saying Sarah was his sister, yes Sarah was his half-sister, a daughter of his father, but a different mother, also Sarah was his wife, the one whom God had promised to bear him the Son of the promise.

In fear of the Philistines, Abraham compromised the promise of God to bless him with the Son, by telling a lie and handing over Sarah to the king Abimelek. In fear of the world, in fear of Abimelek, in fear of the Philistines Abraham compromised, he did not keep his faith in God almighty. He said in **verse 21**: “*‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’*” Sarah was to give birth to the Son of the promise, so handing her over to Abimelek was a great risk, Abraham was supposed to protect Sarah by all means possible. However, Abraham compromised and sabotaged himself by standing on the way of God’s promise being fulfilled, because of fear. Do you relate with Abraham’s sin, have you ever been in situation where because of fear you sabotaged yourself from receiving the blessing of God?

Lately my family and I have been praying to God for my career, we have been praying that God may bless me with a career that will enable me to take care of the family and serve God’s ministry without hindrance. However, because of fear of disappointing my current employers, I found myself filled with fear and great burden to make the change. Though I could see the pain and sadness in my wife’s eyes, fear still hindered me to trusting in God, but rather I was consumed by the fear of being a disappointment to my employers. I saw myself sabotaging myself from stepping into the promise and blessing of God. I believe God has settled me here in Johannesburg and called me as a shepherd, and God would not just call me here and leave me, but it is his nature and character to take care of his servants, his children. So, I should not fear, but trust in him.

Now what happened when Abimelek took Sarah? Let us look **verse 3-5**: “***3****But God came to Abimelek in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”* ***4****Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?****5****Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.””* Even though Abraham and Sarah compromised and did not put their faith in God, God never abandoned them, he did not change his plans because of their lack of faith. But rather God protected them, by coming to Abimelek in a dream saying, he is as good as dead because he has taken a married woman. God protected Abraham and Sarah because of his faithfulness, he protected them to help them to repent from fear of the world, and to trust him, he protected them to remind them that his is God almighty. When we fall into sin, God does not want to punish us and remove us from his face, His desire for us is that we may repent, his desire is that we may realise our sin, be reminded of who he is and return to him and put our trust fully on him.

Furthermore, it turns out that Abimelek was actually an innocent man, he said: “*“Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?****5****Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.*” He was not a godless man as Abraham had thought, he feared God and hence he asked for God’s mercy. Because Abimelek asked for God’s mercy, feared God and his conscience was clear, God blessed him and said: “*“Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her.****7****Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.”*

Even though Abraham sinned against God, and did not put his trust in God, compromised the promise of God, God still recognised Abraham as a prophet and a man of prayer. How is this possible? This is all because of mercy, even though Abraham did not trust God they way he should, God had mercy on him. And this moved Abraham’s heart, it taught Abraham something deep about who God is.

After the dream, Abimelek summoned all his officials and told them about what had happened and called Abraham saying: *What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.” “What was your reason for doing this?”*  Abraham gave an excuse, saying she is really my sister, the daughter of my father, but different mother. Abimelek did not dwell much on this, rather he brought sheep and cattle and male and female servants and gave them all to Abraham, and he returned Sarah to Abraham and said to him “My land is before you; live wherever you like.” To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”

After that Abraham prayed to God and healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, for the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelek’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah. God listened to Abraham’s prayer and answered, confirming that indeed he still recognized him as his servant. Furthermore God answered the prayer and healed Abimelek to teach and remind Abraham once again that he is God Almighty, the creator the heavens and the earth. God was very much concerned about Abraham repenting and knowing who God is, God wanted to restore Abraham to trust him fully. In order to be a father of many nations, Abraham needed to put his full trust on God.

Now as Abraham and Sarah settled in the Negev, something amazing happened. Let us look at **verse 1-2**: “*Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised.****2****Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.”* God’s time eventually came. It took 25 years. Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah 90. It might have seemed late, but it was the very time God had set. God keeps his promise regardless of how long it takes and how hard it happens. God is a God of promise. God’s idea is different from our time schedules and calculations. So, we need to learn to wait on God. In **Hebrews 6:15** it says: “*And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.”* To receive what God has promised, we must patiently wait on God. Although it seems too long to wait, we must stand firm and trust in his wisdom and that his schedule and timing is perfect.

Furthermore, the promise of son was fulfilled not because Abraham was perfect, as we saw earlier Abraham compromised. So the promise was fulfilled because God was faithful to his word. God said I will make you into a father of many nations, and he fulfilled it. In the same way today, God will fulfil his promises to us, all we need to do is put our trust in him. When we live trusting in God, we can live a joyful life, a life with peace, Abraham could not have peace when he went into the Negev, because he did not trust in the promise that God will be with him and protect him, and so he lived with fear and anxieties and compromised. I pray that God may have mercy on us so that we may not compromise but trust in God who fulfils his promises, even though they seem impossible.

In **verse 3** it says: “***3****Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.*” The name Isaac means laughter, before when God said the son would be called laughter, it was meant as rebuke for when God said Sarah will be with child she laughed, for she was barren and at an old age, it was rebuke for their lack of faith. But now the name Isaac bears a different meaning, it was laughter of joy. In **verse 6-7** it says: “***6****Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”****7****And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.””* The birth of Isaac brought joy in the household of Abraham, it brought joy to the people around Abraham, it brought joy throughout all generations, Sarah said: “*and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”*

The laughter of unbelief became the laughter of joy and gratitude. Abraham had thought that he was satisfied with Ishmael—and indeed, he had enjoyed some human happiness. But Isaac, whose name means “laughter”, was more than just a happy little boy who brought human happiness to Abraham. Human satisfaction is temporary; it is there now and after a moment it disappears. Furthermore, human satisfaction blocks us from seeking the best happiness only God can give us. True happiness comes from a gift of God; it is what only God can give. It provides incomparable joy into our hearts. When we know this blessing, we can surely wait on God. The living joy came into the barren life of Sarah. Isaac represented God’s love and faithfulness. He was God’s gift of love. He brought spiritual joy in God to Abraham—joy that only comes when we have peace with God and when we realize that God really loves us personally and deeply.

**Conclusion:**

From today’s passage we have learnt how when Abraham entered unknown territory was filled with fear to be killed, and as result compromised and sinned against God by saying Sarah was his sister, offering her to the king of Gerar Abimelek. Although Abraham’s actions could have resulted in a big mess, God did not abandon him, or wipe him altogether from his plans and blessings, but rather God protected Abraham and Sarah, and continued to teach them and reveal to that that he is God Almighty and that they should put their trust in him regardless where they are, known or unknown territory. Instead of wiping them out, God led them to repentance and continued to use them as his servants. He used Abraham as a prophet to pray and heal Abimelek and his household. Furthermore, God fulfilled their long-awaited promise, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to Isaac, God turned their laughter of unbelief into laughter of joy and gratitude. Through the birth of Isaac, Abraham’s faith could grow, he could trust in God who miraculously granted him a Son through Sarah who was barren and in her old age.

In a world we live with many unknowns, it may not be easy to wait on God or trust God, many things around us may plant so much fear and impatience leading us to compromise and throw away our identity as a servant of God. I pray that God may have mercy on us, to wait on him, to trust him and overcome all kinds of fear and wait on the Lord. As we learnt, God is faithful, his timing might not align with ours, but he is faithful and will not leave us, but rather he will bless us with laughter of joy in his perfect time.

Amen

Key Verse