

Introduction:

- We are going to look at the first recorded healing in the Bible tonight. And we shall see the first time where God uses a man to pray for another.
- Genesis 20:17-18
- Background:
 - Abraham is married to Sarah.
 - Sarah is a beautiful woman. And Abraham knows that too!
 - Abraham is afraid that someone will kill him to get to his wife Sarah.
 - On several occasions he asks Sarah to lie and say that she is his sister. (They have same father but different mothers.)
- The actual story: In Genesis 20, Abraham and Sarah journey to a city named Gerar. The king of this city is named Abimilech. Abimilech finds out about Sarah somehow, and he takes her to be in his harem. Abraham and Sarah lie to Abimilech saying they are brother and sister.
 - Before Abimilech is able to have relations with Sarah, God warns him in a dream that she is Abraham's wife. God makes it clear that Abimilech is in trouble if he does not return her to her husband, Abraham. In fact, he's going to die, and the women in his land are no longer able to have children!
 - So, Abimilech returns Sarah to Abraham. Then Abraham prays for healing for Abimilech and everybody else, and God heals them all.
 - That's it for the summary. It is an odd story that does not go the way most of us think it should go.

I. The Integrity of The Word

- A. The truth that stands out to me most in this passage of scripture is the integrity of God's Word.
 1. Two times we find Abraham lying about his relationship with Sarah. We can safely assume that this was his mind set in every populated city he went, while he was the weaker vessel, unable to protect he and Sarah.
 - a) As Abram (exalted father), he lied to the Egyptians in Gen 12:10-20.
 - b) As Abraham he lies to Abimilech in Gen 20:1-18.
 2. Two times we find God bringing judgment into the lives of these kings and their countries in which Abraham is a foreigner. And to which he has lied.
 - a) In Egypt (Gen 12:17) The Lord sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household.
 - b) In Gerar, almost due west of Sodom and Gomorrah, (Gen 20:3) God shows up in a dream of Abimilech and says, "You are a dead man!"
 - c) It is not their fault! So we have to ask ourselves what is going on here???

- B. Two times we find God intervening to protect the integrity of His Word to Abraham: Sarah will bear you a son and you will be the father of many nations! God was intervening to protect the integrity of His Word given to Abraham.
1. "Integrity is the hallmark of God's Word that makes it absolutely trustworthy! God authored the Word and He affirms its integrity. God Himself is the Epitome of Integrity; therefore, His Word displays the same unsurpassed integrity, and we can fully depend on it. We can totally trust and rely on His Word for every aspect of life and dimension of destiny." Rodney Howard Brown. We enjoy being around people who are honest, reliable, and dependable; but even the most trustworthy individual may still fall short. Not so with God: *"God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?"* (Numbers 23:19, ESV)
 2. *"Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."* (Proverbs 30:5, ESV)
 3. God does not lie: *"It is impossible for God to lie."* (Heb.6:18). Integrity.
- C. Abraham (father of many nations), lies because he does not yet see in God the ability to keep and protect he and Sarah. He is walking in a limited faith in spite of all that God has done for them so far.
- a) He lies because he has believed a lie: The lie: "God will not be able to protect you and Sarah." Fear was getting the best of him.
 - b) He lies because he does not yet trust God. He does not yet know/realize the integrity of God's Word.
 - c) What this tells me is that you can have a great call, serve a great God, and still believe a lie if you are not careful. You can have a great call, serve a great God and still not trust the integrity of God's Word to you.
 - d) What it reveals about God is His faithfulness to His Word and His mercy extended to us as we grow in trust of Him.
- D. If God would bring judgment to two Gentile rulers for attempting to defile His Word, how much more will God rise up to judge sickness in our bodies to keep the integrity of His Word.

II. Healing Flows Through People

- A. After we establish the integrity of God's Word, someone needs to 'do the word' and pray for someone. God works through people in the scriptures. Where you find people being healed someone is sharing the good news of healing and/or actually praying for people to be healed.
1. No one was healed in our text or in the first recorded healing until Abraham prayed for Abimilech. vs. 17. This is the first record of someone praying for someone else.

2. God desires to do miracles through us, but we have to be willing to do our part and cooperate by taking steps of faith. The word, "*Lay hands on the sick and they will recover.*"
- B. A second thing that stands out to me in this passage is that healing flows through Abraham even though he was the one who lied.
1. So often we feel we are unworthy to pray for others. But this passage shows us that our ability to be sinless is not a prerequisite to operate in divine healing. Sin does not stop God's power. God is bigger than our sins. Another way of saying this is that we are not the healers, God is. Our sin may shake our faith as I have taught previously but it does not stop God from moving.
 2. It is not about works or our earning or deserving something from God. It is by faith!
- C. Healing flows through Abraham even though he and Sarah have need of healing. Abraham is husband to a barren wife and yet he prays barrenness off of Abimilech and his kingdom.
1. There will be times that you are asked to pray for people even when you yourself need prayer. It does not mean that God will not answer you.
 2. When God said to Abimilech, "You will die". He meant it!
 3. And he also was saying to Abimilech, "I will erase your name from the earth through the barrenness of your wife and concubines".
 4. God tells Abimilech, Abraham is a prophet, vs. 7, he will pray for you and then you will live. So faith is growing in Abimilech! And his expectation is that Abraham will pray for him...because God said so! Integrity of His word!

III. The Mercy of God

- A. A third thing that stands out to me in this passage is the very people Abraham fears are the ones who end up being his greatest blessing because of God.
- B. When you have the promise of God you have favor!
- C. When God showed himself to Egypt and Abimilech. They 'changed their tune' and were ready to bless Abraham and Sarah.
1. In short, it is not good to curse what God is blessing.
 2. It is better to bless what God is blessing!

Conclusion:

- The take-aways for tonight:
 - God's Word is integrity itself. You can trust it.
 - You don't have to be perfect to pray for others.
 - You may have the very need that you are praying others be delivered from, don't doubt—pray.