

Marlon DeCaul

Dr. David Emmanuel

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God's faithfulness in seasons of deception

Often when I read the scripture and see similarities in the text, the thought is, what is God trying to convey? In Gen. 12: 10 – 13: 2 and Gen. 20: 1- 18, the narrative of Abraham entering an ungodly foreign land and expecting to be put to death if the rulers discover that his beautiful wife Sarai was his spouse. Abraham deliberately tells a half-truth to protect his life, saying Sarai is his sister. Being captivated by Sarai's beauty, both kings took her as their wife. In God's sovereignty, He would not allow the rulers to disturb His plans for His chosen people. They both came to a realization in different ways, but ultimately Sarai was given back to Abraham for any wrongs committed.

In reading both accounts, we can see a fear of death in Abraham's mind because he was anxious about the response Sarai would receive for her attractiveness. In Abraham's reaction, he willingly gives over his wife to protect himself and Sarai. Because God was dissatisfied with what happened, He displayed Himself to the kings to set His will back on track. God's revelations urged the kings to confront Abraham about his deceitful actions, eventually leading to the return of Sarai. Neither account leaves Abraham empty-handed, though it did not seem ideal. Abraham gained many material possessions by offering his wife to both rulers. God used

both kings to be a blessing to Abraham despite his recurring failures. This points to God's faithfulness in seasons where we miss the mark.

Though the accounts have many similarities, the differences are also essential to the theme of the scriptures. For example, the gifts of Pharaoh in Gen. 12 came as an exchange for Sarai being taken into the palace, but in Gen. 20, the gifts came after the manifestation of God in Abimelech's dream. In the case of Pharaoh, God sent plagues to halt the relationship between Pharaoh and Sarai; on the other hand, Abimelech was spared disaster, and Abraham prayed for Abimelech's house in order to restore healing to his people. This paints a picture of God's wrath and mercy; revealing Himself in both ways allows the reader to see the extent God will go to keep his promises to his people.

As the question is posed, was Abraham right in his actions? Being deceitful should never be a choice a believer has to resort to in accomplishing God's will. Abraham's willingness to tell half-truths could have landed him in even more dangerous circumstances than he could have anticipated. I firmly believe there Abraham lacked trust in God for protection. In neither account the author does not portray Abraham as seeking God's counsel in his decision-making. If God did not intervene, these decisions could have drastically altered or voided the plans God intended for Abraham and Sarai.

In Gen. 26, we see a similar occurrence with Abraham's son Isaac. These men were loyal servants of God, but there was still unbelief that God would protect them if they were honest. So when Isaac stayed in Gerar, he also lied to the men there to protect himself. What is ironic about each account is that the people of the foreign lands had more reverence in this situation

for God than His chosen servants. The outrage portrayed by Abimelech offers insight into the acknowledgment of possibly sinning against God.

Looking at both stories, I can see that Abraham was willing to abandon his wife to keep his own life. But, contrary to that, we see God's character fully portrayed despite our unfaithfulness to God; he is continuously faithful to us. Realizing that Sarai had a marriage covenant with Abraham allows us to compare God's covenant with us. Alongside His faithfulness, He will accomplish his will for His namesake. God could never allow people to distort His plans, and His agreement with Abraham had to prevail to prove truthfulness.

These scriptures reassure me that if I am faithful to God, even when I fall short, God is devoted to his name. Resting on this belief allows me more confidence to '...know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.' (Rom. 8:28).