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We're back from our break and we resume now our study of the life of Abram in Genesis chapter 13. After the episode with going to Egypt, leaving the land of promise, endangering fulfillment of the promise by losing his wife, Abram is expelled and returned to the land. Most of us have had enough exposure to Genesis to know that this is not the only time there is this episode.

It actually is recorded in Genesis three different times. And this has been the basis for scholars who don't believe in the authority of God's word or its authenticity or its inspiration to think that maybe one account has been reworked and included two or three times. But there are a number of distinct differences.

At the same time, the similarities make us wonder how this could have happened three times. But let's turn forward and see the other time in Abram's life when this same sort of operation took place. This is in Genesis chapter 20.

After the things that we're going to see in the next few chapters with the kings of the plain and with Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah and so forth, in chapter 20, it says Abram journeyed from there, meaning up in the area near Sodom and Gomorrah. You remember Abram could see the smoke rising from the brimstone attack on those cities. And so Abram journeyed there to the south and right away he's going to the Negev.

And you think, oh no, hopefully he's not going to make the same mistake he made before and leave the land. There is no famine here. It just says he journeyed.

He liked to move around. I'm sure some of that was necessitated by his large flocks and herds. He journeyed from there to the Negev and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur and in Gerar.

So he's gone to the southern part of the land, but he has not left it. He's on the northern edge of the Negev here. And Gerar is not terribly far from the Mediterranean coast.

If you can picture the curve of the Mediterranean coast as it goes around to Egypt and the Nile Delta and as it comes up and bears north right around the place where it's starting truly north-south. If you go in several miles due east, that's where Gerar is. It's in the land that for a good portion of biblical history belonged to the Philistines.

So they go there and stay in Gerar and inhabited at this time by Philistines. And again, biblical scholars have said, well, it's too early. The Philistine migration didn't take place until much later where there was a major incursion of Philistines much later that so that they were present in the land enlarged during the time of David and so forth.

But earlier settlements had taken place in the hundreds of years preceding that, and there are already Philistine land as well as Canaanites in Abram's day. So by this time, as

Abraham in verse two said of Sarah, his wife, she is my mother. Now you would think after the events of chapter 12, Abraham would know better.

And there's no famine. There's no necessity here. By the way, something I didn't mention in connection with this before is there is an oxide to this whole deception because think about the ancient world and the customs involved in marriage.

You have many examples in scripture of fathers not present for some reason that brothers are responsible for the brokering process of having their sisters become engaged and married. And there is a huge exchange of goods involved in a marriage. You payment of the bride price and you see a man who is prosperous and who can pay a large rate.

You think, well, if we have a woman among our people that this man takes a fancy to, we will get an amount of goods in exchange for our sister or our daughter. He's sister. And the possibility of relationship with this very prosperous man is a good thing.

So there is another factor to be considered when Abram comes in and says, well, we're a brother and sister. This creates interest and favorable environment because people are looking at all of his goods thinking there's the possibility of economic benefit here to us. There is an avenue by which we may be able to gain these things through negotiation, through the brokering of a marriage.

Abram's fear is if he comes in and says, well, I'm already married. I have children that there's no, he's got all of these goods and the way to gain them is not through any diplomacy or any negotiation or any marriage contract, but you must get those goods you pretty much got to kill him to get them. So he gains an entree and creates a favorable environment for himself by dangling the possibility of marriage in either direction.

Abram could pay a bride price and get a bride from their people. He can establish a relationship by brokering one of their men entering into a marriage with Sarah. So there's an enticement factor there where Abram is able to take unfair advantage of people's hospitality because they think there's a potential there that isn't really there.

So Abram compromises and deceives to create a more favorable environment for himself and to give himself an entree in the land. And we think, well, that would have only been possible in Abram's day. But think about the church today and think about some of the things that the organized church today does to gain an entree and to have itself appear to be favorable in the eyes of the world and in the eyes of others.

We have compromise and we have deceit. We have bait and switch where Christian organizations and churches will say, well, we're going to have a film or we're going to have a speaker, we're going to have a seminar that will be useful to you. We're going to

talk about real estate or we're going to talk about home hobbies or we're going to have a marriage counseling seminar.

We're going to have a really exciting film where we'll talk about prophecy. We'll talk about Armageddon in the end times and we'll try to get people's interest when the church has as its goal to do a bait and switch. Well, if we can just get them in, then we'll hammer them with the gospel and get them saved.

And it's all justified on the basis of, well, how can you argue with wanting people to be delivered from the lake of fire and wanting them to be saved? And we'll be rationalized and justified that the end justifies the means. We'll deceive them a little bit. We're not going to tell them on the flyer that we hand out in the neighborhood, oh, by the way, there's a 25 minute pressure play put on you at the end to come down.

Or, oh, by the way, this is the whole reason where this is. We want you to get saved and join our church. It's justified because, well, obviously it would be a good thing if someone gets saved, no matter what the means is.

So there is deceit. We will accommodate to the world. There are churches, I was reading a church planning book not long ago, and they're saying, how can you make your church more inviting and more popular in the neighborhood? People will want to come.

So they went and polled the neighbors on what the church should look like. They went to a neighborhood of unbelievers and asked them, what should our church offer? What could our church have that would entice you to come? And then they built all of those things into their church, thinking that, well, our church should be a magnet attraction for the unbelievers in the neighborhood to come in, rather than the proper view, which is the church should be a place of upbuilding and nurture and growth for believers, that they can go out into the community and let their light shine before men. So this very subtle and yet very significant detail here about the deception that Abraham perpetrates, because in chapter 20, there's no pressure.

He's not under a famine scenario, but why does he tell this little half-truth? Does he fib to the people of Gerar? He's going to try to explain it later on. He says, again, I thought that you might kill me. But this is another factor.

There's economics involved. People are going to look at him favorably. He's a prospect.

They're going to be able to do some economic things. But the reaction here is different. He is in the land now, not out of it.

He has stayed in the land of promise. And these are people who also dwell in the land, not outside of it. He's not in Egypt, and it's not the pharaoh instead.

But the result initially is similar. When he comes there and says, Sarah's sister,

Abimelech, in verse 2, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. Now, we're not real sure what kind of descendancy Abimelech and his people come from.

Abimelech is a really good Semitic name. So apparently he's not, these people are not Semitic Egyptians. Abi means father.

The Y on the end of it means my. So Abi is my father. Melech is the word for king.

And this is not the man's name. This is his title, like pharaoh. Abimelech means my father is king.

I'm the heir to the throne. So these people in Gerar called their king Abimelech. He's the next man in line here, functioning as the king.

And he's king because his father was king before him. These are good, sound, strong, perfectly good Hebrew words. So we get the idea that these people are probably more closely related to Abram than the Egyptians are.

But Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. Now, what's going to happen this time? Is God going to come to Abraham and say something to him? Is God going to afflict them with plagues? What is the reason going to be when the same sort of threat to the fulfillment of the promise takes place? Isaac has not yet been born. So what's going to take place here? God came to Abimelech in a dream by night.

God is making an appearance to this man. And he says to him, Indeed, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken for she is a man's wife. So God reveals the truth to Abimelech directly.

God appears, and the fact that God reveals truth to this man is the indication that he is a God-fearing man. We'll see more information of that on down in the story. Verse four, Abimelech had not come near her.

And he said, Lord, you slay a righteous nation also. Abimelech, in a sense, stands up for his own integrity and righteousness. And he's essentially saying, God, it's not right for you to slay me or slay this nation.

Did Abraham not say to me, she is my sister? And she, even she herself said, he is my brother. In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands, I have done it. He defends himself before God.

He recognizes that God is the judge. He believes completely that God can inflict death on him and his entire little kingdom there. God said to him in a dream, Yes, I know that you did this integrity of your heart.

God assigns integrity to this man's heart. He is a God-fearing man. I also held you from sinning against me.

Sinning, and this word for this is used of transgression by believers. Therefore, I did not let you touch her. God prevented him from committing a sin.

Now, therefore, restore the man's wife for he is a prophet. Now, nobody's going to care if Abraham is a prophet or not, unless he's a believer. But apparently Abimelech knows who and what a prophet is.

God says, restore the man's wife. He is a prophet and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you don't restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.

So there's a big difference here between Abimelech, who is apparently a believer, and Pharaoh, who manifestly is not. God uses the occasion of Pharaoh taking Sarah into his arm to plague Egypt and to plunder it and give their wealth to Abraham. Here, Abimelech, who is living in the land of promise, and who has, we have no real certainty as to whether, how far Pharaoh got with her, but we know here Abimelech says, I have not touched her.

I've not had any sort of relation with her. And this is exceedingly important at this point because Sarah, within a few months of conceiving Isaac, and Abimelech had been involved in this process, then there would be some doubt about Isaac's paternity. Because you'll remember back in chapter 17 and chapter 18 is when God and the two angels come and speak to Abraham.

Sarah laughs and says about this time next year, Sarah will have a son. So it's after that that they've gone to Gerar. So you're within, I mean it takes nine months and this greatly impairs the nature of Isaac's birth.

And so God ensures that, and in this case Abimelech, he's a man of integrity, there's been no sort of physical relationship involved here. So in verse 8, Abimelech grows early in the morning, called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing. This is real and something that Abimelech freely communicates.

He doesn't think, well that could have just been something I ate. He's apparently a man who responds to the word of very positive fashion. So he told these things in the hearing of his servants and the men were very much afraid.

Abimelech has surrounded himself with people who also treat this as reality. They don't say, well why'd you feed the king last night that he had this weird nightmare? They're afraid because they believe. They believe in God.

They believe that he is capable of destroying the king and his kingdom for this matter and they are very much afraid. Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, the old question, what is this you have done to us? How have I offended you that you have brought on me, on my kingdom, a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not

to be done. This brings out another aspect of this type of behavior on Abraham's part because when he went down to Egypt, he brings cursing.

He brings a blessing to others. A part of God's covenant promised to him is that his presence and his offspring are going to be a blessing to people. But when Abraham goes to Egypt and lies, it brings plagues on the Egyptians.

When he goes to Gerar and lies, he brings fear and potential disaster on the inhabitants. So his presence, people get cursing by association rather than blessing and this again runs counter to the fulfillment of God's purpose in Abraham's life. So in verse 10, Abimelech said to Abraham, what did you have in view that you have done this thing? What was your motivation? Abraham explains it in verse 11, because I thought surely fear of God is not in this place.

And of course he was wrong, but he estimated Abimelech, he underestimated the people around him. He said, I figured the fear of God was not in place and they will kill me on account of my wife. Notice he doesn't bring up the fear of God when he's down in Egypt because they're not interested in God.

The fact that there's a Hebrew God doesn't impress them at all. But Abimelech does and Abraham now realizes God has appeared to him that there is a fear of God in that place. He says, I thought surely there is no God in this place and they will kill me on account of my wife.

Indeed, she truly is my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother. And she became my wife.

And this is confirmation of the fact that they really are in fact half brother and sister. And I don't think at this point, Abraham is going to engage in falsehood because he knows that God has directly intervened in this situation. Verse 13, it came to pass when God caused me to wander from my father's house.

Now Abraham feels free to talk to Abimelech about God and the nature of God's direction in his life, because he knows that Abimelech believes in God. Caused me to wander from my father's house that I said to her, this is your kindness that you should do for me in every place we go. Say of me he is my brother.

There's a simple result in verse 14 to what we saw in Egypt. Abimelech took sheep, oxen, male and female servants and gave them to Abraham and he restored Sarah his wife to him. The difference is Pharaoh gave these things to Abraham when he thought he was his brother.

Here, Abimelech gives these things to Abraham after he knows the truth. Pharaoh had given these things and didn't take them back. Abimelech apparently had not yet given these things until after he finds out the truth, but then he gives them.

So there's a completely different motivation involved in Abimelech's giving of these things and restores his wife. Verse 15, Abimelech said, see my land is before you, dwell where it pleases you. There's no expulsion here because A, Abimelech is a different kind of man.

B, Abraham is in the land that God has promised to him, so he's not going to be expelled out of his own heritage even though the current resident of that heritage is Abimelech. Then verse 16 is really comical because Abimelech speaks up and to Sarah he said, behold I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. He doesn't say your husband or he doesn't say Abraham, he says I've given your brother, you know, with a hard look in Sarah's face for lying to him, a thousand pieces of silver.

Indeed this vindicates you before all who are with you and before everybody. And this phrase, if you have a note, if you have a New King James, when it says this vindicates you in Hebrew is this is a covering for your eyes, this is a veil for your face, this is a testimony to your chastity. I am paying the bride price even though I'm not marrying you to confirm the fact that I never touched you and I'm giving this brother in good faith and I'm not even going to pursue the marriage.

But it's a huge slap in the face to Sarah in a way. It's a vindication of Abimelech and his integrity and it's a big rebuke to Sarah because she, and this again goes back to what I mentioned earlier, that there was a lot of economics involved in this and you get the idea that this part of Abram's thinking here is this scheme to beat people out of what they've got. We can, you know, they'll treat me well because they think that maybe there's a potential of a marriage and Abimelech knowing full well now that the scheme is exposed, he gives these things his own free will and it's a rebuke that it says I would have given you these things anyway, you didn't have to lie, you didn't have to put on like their possibility of a marriage, I am a man of integrity, I would have given you these things anyway.

And it's a horrendous rebuke that here's a Philistine king that has more integrity than Abram has. Just earlier on the Egyptian pharaoh acting mostly out of self-preservation gives those things and doesn't take them back. But it's amazing that after God works with Abram and eats bread with him and walks over to, has the conversation about if there are 50 righteous, if there are 40, if there are 10, will you pray? God has walked face to face and broken bread with Abram that he still falls back into the same weakness that he expressed when he first got to the land.

But there is a difference. He doesn't leave the land and now there's a difference in the king that he's dealing with. Abimelech is a man of integrity, he's a God-fearing man and he doesn't expel, it's necessary for Abraham to separate from Egypt and return to the land of promise.

Abraham is in the land of promise and he is going to dwell in fellowship with this man of

integrity who believes in God and within being expelled there even though he has sinned against him and put disaster on him, there is forgiveness, there is potential for future relationship with Abimelech, the king of Gerar. The fascinating thing is that there is yet a third instance of this ploy. Record Genesis, if you turn over a few pages to Genesis 26.

Now we're into the life of Isaac and we have a curious mixture of the details that we've seen in Abram's two, my wife is my sister episodes. Genesis 26 verse 1, there was a famine in the land. God controls rainfall, God controls, God decides where there's going to be a famine.

So there's a famine in the land, this is Isaac's turn to show what he's made of as he dwells in the land. There's a famine in the land besides the first famine. People keep saying well this has somehow gotten mixed up in the telling and it's really the same story but Moses is clear here when he records this, this is a different famine than the one that Abraham experienced.

There was a famine in the land besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham and Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistine and Gerar. This could be the same Abimelech, I think it's probably the son of the man that Abraham dealt with because again it's a title. Notice here that Isaac doesn't go to Egypt, he's staying in the land, he goes to Gerar, goes to Abimelech, king of the Philistines and Gerar.

Then the Lord appeared to him and said do not go down to Egypt, live in the land of which I shall you dwell in this land and I will be with you and bless you. For to you and your descendants I give all these lands and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven.

I will give to your descendants all these lands and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws. He obeyed, he lived the life of faith and because of that this covenant is going to continue. The question has arisen and always arises in this regard were the promises, was the covenant to Abraham from God conditional or unconditional and in most of the theological books you go to it'll say well this was an unconditional covenant.

What does God say right here? I will do these things because Abraham obeyed my voice, because Abraham kept my charge, because Abraham kept my commandments, because Abraham kept my statutes and my laws. He had the word of God and he kept it. He eventually learned the lessons, albeit somewhat painfully, but he learned the lessons and is a man declared to be righteous because of his faith in God.

So God gives Isaac something to direct his faith at. Here's the reiteration of the promises to Abraham personally to Isaac. He has had his own appearance and communication from God, a statement of these promises to him.

And so he responds and in verse 6, Isaac to Gerar. Verse 7 though, the men of the place asked about his wife and he said, she is my sister. Why on earth? Surely he knew, surely he had heard the stories.

Abraham and Isaac and Sarah perhaps sitting around the fire at night after a big supper and laughing about their experiences in the past and boy that was a narrow escape and God delivered us and so forth. Isaac had to know and perhaps he even got the idea from the history of his parents, but he does the very same thing. He said she is my sister.

Why? He was afraid to say she is my wife, lest the man of the place kill me for Rebekah because she is beautiful to behold. Very same rationale, fear versus faith, same pattern appeared to Abraham and gave him a promise to cling to. Abraham responds just like Isaac does here.

Isaac says, okay Lord that's great, I'm going to dwell in the land. But then the pressure hits, the sun rises on the seed and we find out just how deep the soil really is. Now it came to pass, verse 8, been there a long time that Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked through a window and saw there was Isaac showing endearment to Rebekah, his wife.

Now this is embarrassing, you know, who knows what vantage point and what exactly was going on, but it was quite obvious to Abimelech that this was no brother-sister relationship and we're left to guess as to exactly explicit that scene was. But this again is a difference and it tells us that these are not the same. The manifestation and the revelation of the truth in each case.

The Egyptians figured it out because the plagues wreaking such havoc that they had to track down the source. And just like when you're troubleshooting a computer or anything else, they say, well what changed? What's the most recent thing that has happened that might be accountable? They figured out that it was the arrival of Sarah in the harem. And to Abimelech, God appeared directly to him in a dream.

Here, this Abimelech, and I think it's probably the son of the first one, looked through a window and saw, and there was Isaac showing endearment to Rebekah, his wife. Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, quite obviously she is your wife. So how could you say she is my sister? Isaac said to him, because I said lest I die on account of her.

I was afraid. I feared for my life. I didn't have confidence that God could preserve my life.

The fact that I have a beautiful wife is important to my life. And he's not functioning in faith. He's not thinking, well, if God is really going to fulfill those promises, I guess I can't die until I have children.

Abimelech said in verse 10, our familiar question, what is this you have done to us? One of the people might blame you with your wife and you would have brought guilt on us.

So there had been no incorporation of Sarah into the royal harem as was in the case of Pharaoh or in the case of the first Abimelech. Here, they got up and told this story, but nobody has laid any claim to Rebekah as yet, because Abimelech discovers the truth quite quickly.

One of the people might blame you with your wife and you would have brought guilt on us. So Abimelech charged all his people, he who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death. Then Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold and the Lord blessed.

So this whole thing kind of gets nipped in the bud at a much earlier stage than with Abram's two experiences. Once again, Gerar is in the land. Isaac is not expelled.

And there's no, the potential harm was great because nobody had laid claim to Rebekah to endanger the fulfillment of God's promise. But it was an action out of fear rather than faith. And Isaac gets a very quick rebuke.

So now, if you think about the comparison of these three epithets and you think about what we talked about in the first session about the parallel to Israel, when they come out of the land of Egypt and when the pressure hits, they've made the great step of then leaving to go to the land of promise, just as Abraham does. But then pressure comes. There's no water.

There's no food. There's famine. There is something in the area of depopulation or something that creates fear, creates tension.

What is the reaction? God, in each case, brings this to show the depth of the soil and to show where faith is not as strong and as consistent as it should be. Why does God not let everything unravel? Why does God preserve Isaac to such a great degree here to where it never, it doesn't even get very far. It doesn't get to the point of rebelling, engaged to someone.

She's not incorporated into the royal harem the way Sarah is. Abraham, when he goes to Egypt, God sends the place and the truth comes out and he's expelled out of the land and really sent with his tail between his legs back into the land of promise. Why is that? Why does God not just let him go to rack and ruin and say, well, I'll find another? You have another interesting parallel in the monarchy in Israel.

Who's the king of Israel? Saul. He received the same promises initially that David receives. God promised him a dynasty and a son on the throne and military victory and prosperity and that he would remain great just like he promises David.

But Saul fails and fails and fails and God evokes those promises and says, the kingdom has been taken from you and given to another. You remember the episode where Samuel comes after Saul has prematurely offered the sacrifices because the pressure

was on and he couldn't wait. He couldn't trust God and so no sooner has he offered the sacrifices in the wrong way, without authorization, without the office of prophet or anything, Samuel comes over the hill and asks that same question.

What is this you have? And Saul is down on his knees begging for forgiveness, but Samuel turns to walk away. Saul reaches out and grabs his cloak and tears it. Samuel turns and says in the same way that this has been torn, the kingdom has been torn and given to another.

Why doesn't Saul get the treatment that Abraham gets or that Isaac gets? These promises easily have been taken from Abraham and given to another, given to Lot or to some other individual. Well, we see that in Genesis chapter 13. God knows the end from the beginning.

God knows our nature. He knows our potential. He knows what we are capable of.

He knows the desire of our heart, the nature of our faith in Him. God will help us to the utmost of our potential and God can use even our failures to bring about rebuke, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The thing that is required on our part is response.

Today, there is a real lack in the area of discipline of children because people are fearful of backlash. If you discipline your child, if you train them and require of them self-control, they will lash out and rebellion and so forth. So people say, well, you don't want to give them an occasion to rebel, so just try to create an environment where they will never run up against a hard wall and have the opportunity to rebel.

So you've got a floating standard and you've got the carrot and the stick approach. You entice them and reward them for good behavior and just fail to reward them for bad behavior and they'll just naturally start behaving well because they want that carrot on the end of the stick. Of course, a lot you can say about that.

Life doesn't have a carrot on the end of every stick. People who don't learn self-control at an early age and during the time that they're at home will sooner or later encounter that reality and then they become exceedingly frustrated because they say, well, I didn't do anything bad. Where's my reward? And the reward isn't there.

So then they go out to try to grab their own reward. And so the sowing the wind, we are reaping the whirlwind even in this generation of people who have learned self-control because it's never been required of them. And you can't construct an environment around somebody all of their lives.

You can only do it in controlled circumstances and the whole thing is a phallus. But God chastened and scourges every son whom he receives. He uses our successes and our failures and works all things together for good to those who love him, to those who are

the called, who recognize their calling and function like called and pursue their calling as we've seen in Romans 8, 28.

Look what happens in chapter 13. Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had alloted with him to the Negev. Abram was very rich in livestock and silver and gold and he went on his journey from the Negev as far as Bethel.

Where has Abram gone now after this embarrassing, miserable failure down in Egypt? He's back at Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and Ai. To the place of the altar he had made there at the first and there Abram called on the name of the Lord. This failure has reminded Abram of who he is.

It's reminded him of the promise of God. It's reminded him of the certainty of the fulfillment of God's covenant. So Abram has gone back.

It doesn't say, behold the famine was over, does it? Abram got up from Egypt and went back to the land. It doesn't say whether there's a famine or not. Abram is focused, I've got to get back to the place of the altar.

I'm going to go back to the place where I pitched my tent at first where God appeared to me. This is Abram's response to the failure. This is the determining factor.

How do we respond after our failure, after God makes it painful that we have stepped out of line? What is our response? Are we going to go on to a failure and another and another? As you find in the nation of Israel, the generation that for 40 years wandered in the wilderness because every time there was a test, there's no sign of growth. They don't say, well I remember the last time we ran out of water. God provided.

Surely He'll provide us this time. They don't say, I remember the last time we were short on food, been faithful to provide us manna. God brought us meat.

God has assisted. He would not have brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. They make the same mistake time and time again and they drop in the wilderness.

You look at the 12 spies who go into the land to them said, well, the potential of the fulfillment of God's promise is great, but there are giants in the land and we're like grasshoppers in their sight. There's no way we can take it. After 40 years of experience with the provision and the grace of God, 40 years later, they still, uh, well, I'm getting ahead of myself, but when we first come to the land of promise, it's long before the 40 years.

And they've seen the provision of God and bringing them to sea, wiping out the Egyptian army, providing water, providing food and so forth. And they come up to the land. That doesn't stick with them.

They make the same mistake they made the day they came to Egypt. Moses has brought us out here to die. And so as a result of that, they're going to wander in the wilderness for 40 years.

Two men are going to survive that Caleb and Joshua, the two who recognized that the same God that had done these mighty acts would indeed take care of the next problem. This is Abram's response. Abram has a miserable failure here, but his response is to get back where he needs to be.

It does him some good. He uses this as a stepping stone to maturity and he's going to be, he's not going to even go to Egypt again. He may have some future failures, but they're going to be different.

He goes back and under this rebuke, he goes back to where he needs to be, right where he needs to be, back to the altar, back to the tents, back to the place where God appeared to him. And he does the right thing. There, Abram called on the name of the Lord.

You know, there's a significant lack of any communication between God and Abram or God in verses 10 through 20 of chapter 12. All the time in Egypt, he ever calls on the name of the Lord. God doesn't say anything to Abram, but now he's back in that place.

So why does God, why is God patient with Abram? Because God knows that it's going to bear fruit. God knows that the rebuke and the discipline and correction is going to have its work. He's going to respond in the right way and grow and learn from it.

And Abram is a man of faith and God's going to work with him. He's going to make some other mistakes in his life, but like David, these are going to be worked together for good. The discipline, even the results of failure are going to work together for good.

Abram is a friend of God. Moses makes many mistakes, but Moses is a friend of God. David will make many mistakes.

David is a man of God's own heart. It isn't the fact that we fail. It isn't the fact that we lose sight of the hope and the promise and the fellowship with God, but we are drawn up short by God who will create hostility in the end or who will speak at the appropriate time and make us recognize that we're in error.

What's our response? What are we going to do about that? God is going to be patient with us and long-suffering, especially he knows that we're going to respond in a positive manner to that correction. So he goes back and Lot and Levi went with him and had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support.

No sooner does he get back into the land of promise, then there's a new problem. It's a new conflict, a new situation that requires some sort of action. The land can't support

them so that they might dwell together.

Possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. Their prosperity has created this problem and there's strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

Odd place for that to begin, but now there's a new problem. How is Abram going to respond? Has he learned anything from his recent excursion down to Egypt? Well, that's what we'll find out next week when we return to study this story, but let's close here in prayer. Father, we thank you for your patience and your faithfulness to us.

We thank you for the fact that as a father you instruct us and rebuke and correct us when we stray. We thank you for your patience. We thank you for the fact that you create that patience and forbearance in our souls as we grow our nourished step in the Word of Truth.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enable us to see the application of these things in our lives, enable us to see the reality, promises, and the hope that we have before us that is the motivation to live a life that pleases you. We pray that we will see clearly where we have stepped out of line and that we can return and be in the very center of your will in every way. We pray these things in his name.

Amen.