

03.15.26

Genesis

Chapter 20 - God's Grace Again Rationalizing Sin & Guilt (vs. 8-13)

Genesis 20:8-13: So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.” And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?” Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her,

‘This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

I guess that's where we get the saying “a brother from another mother,” huh? As we come to this passage, we have some excuses that are made. Abraham actually gives 3 main points to defend his inappropriate behavior. Proud of him. What Scripture is telling us is that we all wrestle with trying to rationalize the things that we do. I mean, you can call it an excuse, and you can call it, by perhaps reasoning, justification, but the fact of the matter is, it's just rationalization of doing wrong. You've invented a way to somehow escape, in your own mind anyway, the ramifications of the things that you've done by virtue of excusing or making excuses for the things that you do. The fact of the matter is that difficulties and troubles and disappointments, hardships, loss, all these things are a part of life. They come into our lives. But the strange thing is that we will oftentimes use those malevolent forces or calamitous events in our lives as an excuse to sin. It is

pretty interesting, isn't it? I mean, we almost think of ourselves as having a full right to sin. I mean, Job probably felt like he had every right to argue with God because he was hurting. There was a lot of pain. There was a lot of hurt. There was a lot of sorrow. There was loss. And so, "Job, you do know you're arguing with God?" "Yes, but I have good reason to do that because I'm going through all of this pain." And Noah probably felt like he had a good reason to get drunk. I mean, he was going through this sorrow, and it was an overwhelming event. And there's a good reason for everything we actually have.

I was thinking about David in particular, and David, by the time you get to 2 Samuel, loses a son, really because of his own sin. But nevertheless, a great loss on his behalf. If you follow that particular chapter to the end of the chapter, after he deals with the loss, and it almost basically says that David responds in such a way that it's kind of like, everything's okay, everything's okay. But then he goes and murders a lot of people and cuts off their heads and does all kinds of horrible things to them, and you realize, it's not over. But he probably felt in some way

justified to do it because of the anger that he had or the loss that he had to deal with. And so, it was an excuse to do something wrong. You see that clearly with Jonah. And as you go into the Book of Jonah, God just simply asked Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" And of course, Jonah's response is very clear, "I have good reason to be angry because of the fact that You're asking me to do something that is totally wrong. You're asking me to give these Assyrians a chance to repent, and they're a wicked people. I don't want to give them a chance to repent. I have good reason to be angry, and I have a good reason not to go, and I have good reason to rebel against the command that You give me." And so, he does so with, perhaps, a sense of rationalization.

The same thing is true with a person such as is so righteous like Elijah. I mean, Elijah shows pretty sporadic behavior as Jezebel begins to chase him, and of course, as he begins to deal with a sense of failure on his own part, because he's running. I don't think there's anything that's probably more distressing than, especially if you feel like you're really a very holy person, to deal with a failure of

your own. And Elijah has to do that. And God then begins to speak to Elijah and asks him a simple question, "Where are you, Elijah?" And as he begins to open up to God, he ultimately tells God what the problem is. I mean, why are you running around from place to place? Why are you running sporadically? Why are you so anxious? Why are you so upset? Why are you going into reclusive behavior? Well, Elijah has a good reason, because he's the only one that is left. Everybody else has left, and he's the only one. So, he's been abandoned. He has a good right to do everything that he does. And Scripture's actually revealing to us that even those that we would perceive to be the most holy wrestle with the same issues that we wrestle with. Because the difficulties in our life somehow, in our minds, give us some kind of license to do something wrong, to deal with the difficulty that we have that has been brought before us.

Abraham is certainly no different than everybody else. Abraham is dealing with a tremendous issue, if you consider that, well, it hadn't been too long before, that he had rescued many of these people from Sodom and

Gomorrah in this particular region. So, we know that he knew, of course, obviously he talked with the king, and the one that he was so close to, Lot, lived in that particular region. What Abraham has to deal with is the eradication of a whole people group. You have these five cities that are down there, and clearly he knew many of the people that were there and involved; to witness something like that and to see that smoke and that fire and just perhaps even hearing the screams as he's high on the mountain is something that's, I would say, pretty difficult to deal with, as well as up to this point, he doesn't even know if Lot is okay and his family. He has no idea what actually transpired, what has happened up to this point. Scripture kind of fills us in, but Abraham has no idea what's going on.

There is another thing that kind of is thrown in the mix, and I'm kind of being nice to Abraham in the sense that I'm kind of giving him more excuses. But there is another thing that comes into the mix, and that is, up to this point, it's now 25 years later, from the time that God gave Abraham a promise, he still doesn't have a child. And so, a

lot of his concern, obviously, was still on Lot as well. I'm talking specifically the child that was promised by God. So, there are these things that are probably a part of it. And what is very interesting is, we would think naturally that Abraham has already talked with God before. He's been in contact with Him. He's offered up offerings before Him. He's seen God work in rescuing him in a very miraculous way. Nevertheless, at this juncture, Abraham seems to be, I would say, somewhat disoriented because of the fact that he's chosen to deal with the issue himself. And the reason why I say that is, in Chapter 20 in particular, as you begin, you have nothing at the very beginning that says anything about him talking with God about the matter. Now, there are other texts that, as you go earlier, where Abraham comes before God and he talks to Him. So, we know that he knows that he can talk to God about these things. And he has talked to Him about the whole issue of Sodom and Gomorrah. Nevertheless, when everything happens and he has to deal with a loss issue, he doesn't call on God. Within the passage at this particular juncture, there's no communication with God, and rather, at this point, he begins to deal with the issues

in a very strange way. He goes down to Egypt, hits the border, and then you see him conflicted, and then he pops back up to the north, goes over to the western edge of the north and finds himself in the realm of the Philistines. The question is, what are you doing there? What are you doing there? And I suppose if you were to ask Abraham, he'd probably go, "I have no idea." Because we don't see God necessarily calling him, but what we see is kind of him acting in a capricious way, perhaps even on a whim, moving back and forth at particular places, because any place is better than here. And he tries to work out his situation by virtue of moving to another place. It is important to realize that peace isn't a place, it's a person. And it doesn't matter where you are. It's one of the things that Jesus was trying to convey to the woman at the well. She's saying, "We worship up here." He goes, "Well, you're really at the wrong place, but that's not what really matters. What God is looking for is those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. And it's the relationship that really matters in all this." Nevertheless, we go through our own ways of dealing with things, and he begins to run away from his problem rather than running

to God. The very simple solution, run to God, but he doesn't do that, so we find him wrestling with it.

So, if you pick up with me in verse 8, he now has to deal with the collateral damage in which he makes this wrong decision. He makes the wrong decision to try to strategically deal with the issue the way that he did before, which is interesting that oftentimes when we run from the problem, we seem to go back to old habits and to old strategies of dealing with it. And, you know, it seemed to not work before, so we'll try it again, and maybe it won't work again, but maybe it will this time. Maybe we'll get lucky. But that whole self-preservation begins to kick in, and as that begins to kick in, he begins to go back to the formula that he and his wife had worked together with. And he's going to talk to Abimelech about this, that is to say, the king, in which he lied to, well, half-lie with Abimelech. But as we come to this, what we're going to see is that Abimelech is insulted. As we've mentioned before, instead of Abraham being a blessing to those around him, he actually becomes more of a curse. It

is something to remember, that we have a responsibility as we represent Christ.

Romans 2 is very clear on this particular subject. In Romans 2, you know, if you say that you shouldn't be doing something, and you do it, you're not just like the world because you have already declared yourself a representative of God. Therefore, when you do it, the name of God is blasphemed because of you. And so, greater things are at stake here than just Abraham slipping up. Nevertheless, God is going to work this for good in His great power. Just to note, it's not a text that gives us a license to do wrong where we virtually say, "Well, God's going to fix it all." But it is a passage that reminds us of God's grace in the midst of it and how He is gracious again. Scripture will oftentimes use that phrase, "and grace upon grace," or "He gives greater grace where sin abounds." And sin is abounding really in this particular passage.

If you pick up with me in Genesis 20:8, Abimelech now responds to the subterfuge, to the deception of Abraham as he begins to bring his wife into this thing. And

Abimelech does what is natural to especially that particular realm and that particular kingdom and that particular region. And that is that he takes this woman, she's attractive, he's just going to take her because that's what kings do, they take things. And so, God reveals Himself to Abimelech, and says, "You touch that woman, you're dead." And that in and of itself is extremely convincing. That would just kind of stop my behavior from 0 to 60, 60 to 0 to the second. The point is that God is beginning to deal with this man.

What is interesting and what I want to point out to you is Abraham's going to have an excuse that this is a godless area. However, we're going to be surprised at the reaction of Abimelech in the sense that he appeals to God through integrity. And you see that kind of mentioned all the way through as he ultimately comes before God, and he goes, "We're not guilty of anything here. It was this guy that was being deceptive to us." And he actually uses the word "blameless," I think, in verse 4.

And then as you go on, it says in verse 5,

(Genesis 20:5) ““Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.””

“Integrity” and “innocence” are words that we wouldn't expect to hear in this God-forsaken land.

If you look in verse 6,

(Genesis 20:6) “Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart...””

Now, God is actually a witness to this guy being full of integrity, which is to be noted, because one of Abraham's excuses, and once again, he has fundamentally three main points to defend his inappropriate behavior. One of his main points is, “I know this to be a godless place.” It's interesting, when we begin to rationalize the things that we do, fundamentally, basically, what we're trying to do is maybe convince people, and sometimes even God, that we're doing the right thing, even though we know it's the wrong thing. And I would say, just to kind of throw this out there, if you feel like you have to convince somebody about the things that you're doing, you're probably doing

the wrong thing. Because a person that's doing the right thing doesn't need to convince anybody. The Scripture will oftentimes say that his conscience bears witness. And as Romans 2 says, his conscience bears witness, ultimately perhaps accusing or not accusing. But that's what the conscience does. It does a work in that. But if in fact you feel like you have to convince somebody, there's a problem.

But if you go to verse 8, so Abimelech, because of what God said, because of the fact that God visited him and said, "You need to restore this man's wife. You need to do the right thing." Here again, if it was a godless nation, if it was a godless king in the sense that he had no fear for God or respect for God, at this point he would just take his time. Perhaps somewhere along the line he'd try to get to it, but this is not what happens.

If you look in verse 8,

(Genesis 20:8) "So Abimelech arose early in the morning..."

This is a guy that wants to take care of the problem.

“... and called all his servants...”

Now, his servants are kind of involved in this because God says, “You're dead and the people that associate with you are dead.” So, he's going to call them all in. And I appreciate the fact that he's being forthright, and I appreciate the fact that he's being transparent with all of his men, but also it seems as if he cares for their lives as well. And so, he's letting them know, “We've got to do what God tells us to do.”

And it says this,

“... and told all these things in their hearing; and the men...”

So, if we thought it was just Abimelech, but now the men are “greatly frightened”. In other words, there seems to be a degree of faith, an issue of, “This is a God that we don't want to upset.” And there is, as we would put it, a fear of God in this place. Let me just say this, too. I think that when Abraham will begin to share, “I didn't think there was fear of God in this place,” when he states that, he kind of throws out the whole issue of faith as well, because he fundamentally is saying, not only is there no

fear of God in this place, but he's basically saying God can't make that place fearful. And we know that God can bring anybody to their knees.

(Genesis 20:9) “Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you...”

“What did I ever do to you?” I can just see somebody asking these questions.

“... that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.””

Abimelech is quoting law, spiritual law. “You should not misrepresent yourself. That's a lie.” I can just hear him, “Don't you guys have something that at least through tradition, ‘thou shalt not lie’?”

(Genesis 20:10) “And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?””

“Do you have a good excuse for this?” And that just kind of opens the door for Abraham, “Yeah, I think I do. Three

main points,” and he gets out his board and he starts circling them.

It says in verse 11,

(Genesis 20:11) “Abraham said, “Because I thought...””

Now, he's actually going to start off with what we would call a presupposition. That is to say that in a presumptuous way, he has imagined how everything was. I can tell you that in a number of occasions, I have done the wrong thing based on presuppositions; that I said to myself, “I know the way this is going to turn out, so what I'm going to do is this.” And the fact of the matter is, you don't know how it's going to turn out. And the second thing is that you shouldn't make decisions based on your own imagination. Nevertheless, on a presupposition, and that's one of his main points, “I had a presupposition...”

“... I thought, surely...”

And you can underline the word “surely” because it's that simple Hebrew word *“raq,”* which means “in truth”.

That's bizarre. Here you have Abraham, who's kind of deceitful, and now he's thinking about truth. “And where

did you get your truth from, Abraham?" "My imagination. It was a presupposition." "So, you know this to be true?" "Oh yeah, I know that to be true." So, how many times have you done that?

So, Abimelech asked him, and he said,

"... "Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife."

Now, once again, his presupposition has already been proven false. Nevertheless, strangely enough, he doesn't drop his guard down, and he doesn't back away from it. You know how you think through a plan? I mean, it's laid out really neat. So, maybe it starts crumbling over here and crumbling over here. But you go through with the plan anyway, because you can't think of anything else to do. So, he's going to go through the presupposition as well, "I thought there wasn't any fear of God, but Perhaps maybe I was wrong, I don't know. They will kill me."

And then, I like the way that verse 12 begins, don't you? (Genesis 20:12) "Besides..."

It's kind of like "There is partial truth to what I say."

““Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.”

“So, she was my sister first,” if you understand the order here that he's doing. “She was my sister first, then later on she became my wife.” So, I'm just giving you the order. And so that's all I'm doing. I'm going, “Wow, this guy's pretty good. He's doing a great job.”

(Genesis 20:13) “And...”

Oh, there's more? Yeah, there's more.

“And it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house...”

What does he do in that text? He's blaming God. He's a victim. “God pushed me into this. I don't even know what I'm doing here. I don't even know how I got here. I'm just an innocent guy. God kind of pushed me into this.”

It was interesting, I was looking at a guy by the name of Benjamin Mendelson's studies on victim typology. They actually have victim typology, especially in criminology. And this was actually used. It was kind of developed in

1930, 1940. And let me just read it to you. There are actually six different kinds of victims. Did you know that? Six different kinds.

1) The innocent victim, in which the person is innocent.

2) There's a victim with minor guilt. They're mainly a victim, but they have a little bit of guilt in it.

3) There is a voluntary victim. They actually volunteer to become a victim.

4) There is a victim who provokes or induces the crime. In other words, they kind of made it happen that they were a victim in the crime.

5) There is the guilty victim, which is probably the case of most of them.

6) There's an imaginary victim, where the guy perceives in his own head that he's a victim.

I would sort of put Abraham in the imaginary victim category, perhaps, voluntary victim category, and perhaps a victim with minor guilt category. I'd kind of put them in all of those in which he would seem to kind of fit in this.

“And it came about, when God caused me...”

Underline the word “caused” there within the text. “*Tā’â*” is used. Usually, that particular word “caused” is used to describe something negative and will often be translated in the sense of somebody causing somebody to wander away; somebody causing somebody to be misled; somebody causing somebody to be deceived. In other words, “God deceived me by pushing me into this. So, I had to do the best I could with what I was handed, the cards that were given to me. And He deceived me. He actually pulled me out of...”

If you look in the text, in particular, verse 13,

“...from my father's house...”

“We were all just one big happy family. We were getting along well together. So, I said to her, ‘Okay, you're my sister. I'll marry you. I'll take care of you, but you have to promise if we get in any trouble, you're going to stick up for me. And this is what you're going to do. You're going to say you're my sister. Because I know that there are these places that, I mean, they'll kill me for you. So, because I've kind of been forced into this, and you are my

sister, and I felt kind of obligated to take care of you, you owe me this, and so, this is your part.”

So, it says,

“... ‘This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

I mean, I'm not convinced. And that's the problem when you think about it. The harder we try to convince people, the arguments that we begin to throw out there, you begin to see just how ludicrous they are, how ridiculous they are. However, when we were starting to think about it, they sounded good at the beginning. You know, it sounded like something that would actually work or cause somebody to think that we were innocent. How strange it is that we see the difficulties of our life and begin to actually draw difficulties, I would say even accentuate difficulties in our lives, to excuse the sin that we then begin to invent to deal with the issues of our life instead of just simply going to God. I don't think that at this juncture he even thought about just confessing his sin. And I say this again, to me, this is, in a strange, bizarre way, a comfort. Because I realized that the very things

that Abraham goes through, the very things that I've gone through, the very things that you wrestle with, and once again, God is basically fundamentally saying, "This is not an excuse. I'm just letting you know how you do things." The way that David would put it, "I know that we're but dust." And God says, "Yeah, that's pretty well the way things work." And how frail we are and how prone to fail we are. So, Abraham needs to deal with the issue.

How should he deal with the issue? Well, there are a number of passages that we can deal with, and certainly, to me, one of the first is Psalm 32. And I oftentimes go to Psalm 32, or the Psalms, because of the fact that the Psalms are those emotional events in which somebody is working through the difficulties in their life, whether it be David or whoever. You have the different ones that are dealing with particular issues. Psalm 32 starts off with a fundamental point. And the fundamental point is that you're not going to have happiness or peace when you're being deceptive about your sin. It's not going to go away. You can suppress it. You can rationalize it. It's not going

away. One of the Psalms says, as you go a little bit further, “I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away.”

So, Psalm 32:1 starts off this way,

“How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered!”

(Psalm 32:2) How blessed is the man to whom the LORD
does not impute iniquity...”

And the last phrase in this verse is really the key phrase, I think, of the verse,

“... And in whose spirit there is no deceit!”

The fundamental point of the beginning of this chapter is you can't lie about your sin. You can't rationalize it. You can't excuse it. You can't justify it. You have to be forthright about your sin. Happiness is not going to come. Freedom is not going to come until you just admit it. And John will deal with this in 1 John 1 as well, “If you say you haven't sinned, you're just lying.” If you want to have a relationship with God, it's got to be on the terms of you've got to admit that you have sinned. You've just got

to come clean about this. If in fact you do that, according to verse 2, happiness is going to come.

And it goes on and says in verse 3,

(Psalm 32:3) “When I kept silent about my sin...”

Once again, the thought is, “Well, maybe I can just ignore it. Maybe I just don't say anything. Maybe Abraham would have been better just not to have said anything.”

That wouldn't have done it either.

“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.

(Psalm 32:4) For day and night Your hand was heavy upon
me;

My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of
summer.

(Psalm 32:5) I acknowledged my sin to You...”

Well, there's the simplicity of it. I just said, “I sinned.”
How hard is that?

“... And my iniquity I did not hide...”

That would be a cover-up, right? That would be maybe rationalizing.

“... I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”;
And You forgave the guilt of my sin.”

Whoa. I almost feel like there should be about five other paragraphs right in the middle, but it just goes, “I confessed my sin and He forgave it.”

(Psalm 32:6) “Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You...”

Now, he's not talking about a person that never sins, is he? So, why is he calling them godly? Because a godly person is one who has reverence for God. There is no reverence for God when you deny your sin. And the reason for that is that you fundamentally say to God, “You don't know nothing. You can't see my heart. You don't see what's true. You don't have a standard.” I mean, that's fundamentally what you're saying, isn't it? But you come before God, and you say, “I believe You are who You say You are. Therefore, I confess my sin.”

“Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found;
Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.

(Psalm 32:7) You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance.”

If you look with me in Psalm 31, which is right before this particular Psalm, actually we pull out of verse 5 that declaration of Christ on the cross, right? “Into Your hand I commit my spirit.” This particular Psalm is actually defining how you take refuge in Him. It's not through making excuses, it's not through rationalizing, but it's through coming before God, and saying, “I'm going to trust You. I'm going to confess my sin. I'm just going to trust You for everything.” Ultimately, you'll see this being shared throughout, “I'm going to come to God.”

(Psalm 31:9) “Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;

My eye is wasted away from grief...”

It seems like it's been quite a while.

(Psalm 31:10) “For my life is spent with sorrow

And my years with sighing;

My strength has failed...”

It seems like it's been a long time. Nevertheless, there is an admitting that a lot of the problems have come because of their sins.

His statement is,

“My strength has failed because of my iniquity...”

And I think a lot of times, and probably to this point with Abraham, perhaps in many ways he felt like he had failed. Perhaps he had felt like he had failed with Lot. So, that whole destruction thing had probably something to do with him, because he seems to be a very responsible individual. There's no doubt about that. And so, as he looks back on this, he's probably feeling, “I can't talk to God. I'm the one that messed this up. I was supposed to be a blessing. I was supposed to bring blessing. And it seems like now everything I've touched, I mean, I had the problem with Hagar. I had the problem with, you know, Ishmael. Now, I'm dealing with Lot. And I thought Lot was going to work out. I shouldn't have taken him to begin with. I brought him into a place of temptation. Maybe I should have talked to him longer. Maybe I shouldn't have

given him the choice to even look at the region of Sodom and Gomorrah. It's my fault. I can't talk to God.”

But the statement is,

“... My strength has failed because of my iniquity, And my body has wasted away.”

If you look in verse 12, he feels forgotten.

But finally, you feel in verse 14 that there's a turn.

And verse 14 reads,

(Psalm 31:14) “But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD...”

(Psalm 31:15) “My times are in Your hand...”

(Psalm 31:16) “Make Your face to shine upon Your servant...”

“I felt like I was cut off from You.” And I would say, sometimes we feel that way because of the things that we have done; we feel like we were cut off from God.

It reads this way in verse 22,

(Psalm 31:22) “As for me, I said in my alarm,

“I am cut off from before Your eyes”;

Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried to You.”

Sometimes it surprises us that God would even want to listen to us after we have made such a mess of things.

(Psalm 31:23) “O love the LORD, all you His godly ones!

The LORD preserves the faithful

And fully recompenses the proud doer.

(Psalm 31:24) Be strong and let your heart take courage,

All you who hope in the LORD.”

There's a transition, “You need to take courage. God's got this.” And I think as we'll go on to the end of this in Genesis, we begin to see the faithfulness of God, the grace of God again, and how God longs to be gracious to us if we'll just humble ourselves and confess our sins.

Psalm 130, if you turn there with me, will give you another great example. And like I said, Scripture's just chock full of these great examples that the Bible gives us.

This particular Psalm starts off this way,

(Psalm 130:1) “Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD.

(Psalm 130:2) Lord, hear my voice!

Let Your ears be attentive

To the voice of my supplications.”

Once again, the emphasis of the voice is the emphasis of the emotions, “Hear the emotion and the intensity in which I come before You.”

(Psalm 130:3) “If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?”

And that's kind of a good place to start, “You shouldn't be listening to any of us.”

(Psalm 130:4) “But there is forgiveness with You,
That You may be feared.”

And “revered,” I would put within that particular passage.

(Psalm 130:5) “I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait,
And in His word do I hope.”

I oftentimes think of Saul in 1 Samuel 13. You remember that particular instant where Samuel was supposed to come to him to offer a sacrifice before God to get God's favor on any war event? In this particular setting, in Samuel, the Philistines had started gathering. And they'd

gathered to such a degree that they had so outnumbered the Israelites that they started running. In fact, it says that the Israelites started hiding in caves and hiding under the rocks. And then it says that some crossed the Jordan, went into another territory. It's like, "We're just giving up our land. You can take it. We're out of here." Samuel had fundamentally said to Saul, "Seven days, I'll be there." Appointed time, here it is. But as the clock starts ticking, it's now seven days. He hasn't shown up. The Philistines are getting bigger, more strategic, and there's hardly anybody with Saul at this time. Saul's thinking to himself, "I've got to get the favor of God. I've got to get it now. I'm going to have to give the offering. I'm going to have to do it. I'm going to pull up the bootstraps. I'm going to do it." And I can just hear the voice, "You're supposed to wait." But he's not going to wait. So, he offers the sacrifice. And then, right while he's doing that, Samuel appears. He goes, "What are you doing?" And the list of excuses begin to come. I mean, "Okay, you didn't come when you were supposed to. And I saw the army just getting bigger, and our men started running. And besides, I thought I could do this to get the favor of God." The point of the matter is

that instead of waiting, he initiated the things that he knew that he wasn't supposed to do. And once again, that's what we do. Waiting is probably the hardest thing that we have to do. I mean, Isaiah 40 tells us, if you wait upon the Lord, you renew your strength, right? You'll be like eagles. But nevertheless, waiting, we just don't like doing that.

“I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait,
And in His word do I hope.

(Psalm 130:6) My soul waits for the Lord
More than the watchmen for the morning;
Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.

(Psalm 130:7) O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.”

Deliverance, release from any kind of debt. “God, you're the one that's going to do it.”

I mean, you can't read a passage like this without thinking of Matthew 11:28, where Christ is very clear in the subject, “Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy

laden, and I will give you rest.” Instead of you trying to work it out, we should be coming to Christ. What does it look like? Well, one, it looks like waiting. And waiting, never in Scripture is you twiddling your thumbs, but always with a sense of confident expectation, “I’m going to wait on the Lord.” And let me say this, too, that I have found that when I resolve to wait on the Lord, that the Lord then directs me in a very clear and concise way. It’s ambiguous if, in fact, my faith is vacillating. So, like when I come to the Lord and I say, “I’m waiting on You, but let me think through another plan while You’re thinking about coming.” I began to somehow connect my strategy with His coming. And when I do that, I never get clarity. But I can tell you this, that when I just come before the Lord and say, “I’m not moving till I know that You want me to do this,” every time I’ve gotten clarity. And that’s why Scripture repeats and emphasizes, “Wait on the Lord. Hope in Him. This is where your strength and confidence are going to come from.” You’re going to have to be sure about this. And God is gracious. Those who trust in God will not be disappointed. You just won’t be. But you have to believe. And as James 1 would say, you can’t be fickle

about this. I mean, don't think that you're going to expect anything from the Lord if you're double-minded. You're just plain unstable in all your ways. He's not going to talk to you. But there is clarity when you are. Abraham, I've so appreciated this life because, I mean, this is the father of faith. And he struggles with the same things that I do, which is telling me that God is working in my life.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we give You thanks for these examples, not in failure, but examples of Your grace, examples of which You will not leave us nor forsake us. And even in our faithlessness, You show Yourself faithful. Lord, we come before You at this time with the difficulties of our life. Quite frankly, there are often times that we begin to make excuses for the things that we do because in some way they are a kind of relief,

they're a kind of release. They are a reason for us to do something wrong. We find ourselves taking wrong turns, but in that we find ourselves confused, disoriented, and quite frankly living in deception. There is collateral damage that begins to happen in the lives of those around us, and we find ourselves once again in a mess. But Lord, You tell us if we'll just come before You today and confess and say, "This day we're going to trust in You," things change. You change things. We come before You today.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. That's what we're simply asking you to do. Take God at His word. Live by faith, not by the "seat of your pants."