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Genesis

Chapter 25 - God's Preservation through Polarization God's Distinction through Similar (vs. 12-18)

Genesis 25:12-18: Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham; and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam and Mishma and Dumah and Massa, Hadad and Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes. These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.

Well, easy for you to say. You should have had those memorized by now. We've already covered some of those names before. This passage reminds us that there are consequences to our sins, and oftentimes, the sins that we commit are not blatant, but subtle. Nevertheless, they have great consequences to them. Genesis, in particular, is a book that makes reference to the consequences. It will not make reference to the Law because it's before the Law. So, as you go through the Book of Genesis, you won't see God saying, "Cain shouldn't have done that." We won't see God dealing with Abraham specifically and say, "You shouldn't have tried to pass off your wife as your sister." He won't talk to him about these things as far as the Law is concerned, because what you're dealing with is an age of conscience as well as consequence that comes upon people. And so, Cain will not be judged by his peers for killing his brother. And as you go a little bit further throughout the book, you begin to see that the different ones that commit what you would perceive to

be crimes are now dealt with according to laws, but the consequences of those crimes.

It is that which is mentioned in Romans, if you look with me in Romans 2, in which Paul will make reference specifically to judgment and standing before God. And so, as he warns those who have the law, which their boast is, "We have the Law, therefore we must be far greater than everybody else." He says, "No, once again, the one thing that the law does for you is it makes you more culpable. You actually are more guilty because you know these things."

His statement, if you drop on down to verse 11 of Chapter 2, is,

(Romans 2:11) "For there is no partiality with God.

(Romans 2:12) For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

(Romans 2:14) For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,

(Romans 2:15) in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them."

Scripture is letting us know that there was a time in which there was no Law and because of that it was the time of the conscience as well as the time of the consequences. The consequences then begin to be made reference to within the passages. For instance, Lot will actually choose to go into a land that is immoral. Law would fundamentally say, "Don't do that." But it doesn't. What you see is the death of his wife. What you see is the immorality that infiltrates his daughters. And you see the consequences that come from that particular desire. So, he suffers loss literally in everything that he has. Scripture is showing you that it's probably better for you to have a Law because the Law will warn you before you have to deal with the consequence. It's the same thing with the

church. It's better for you to come to church because the church would tell you things that could cause you to trip up or cause great harm to you. So, the purpose of the church in many respects is to warn or to keep you from greater hurt. As Paul will even say to one who was rebellious in the church in Corinthians, he says, "I've turned him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his soul may be saved." What is he talking about? "I've taken him outside the church. He's no longer under the protection of the church. Therefore, the world now has the consequences that will come upon him." And we see these consequences play themselves out and the difficult things that come because of this. Interestingly enough, as we have Abraham, we have, once again, not necessarily sins that are overt or aggressive, but we have these subtle sins that we begin to see and actually within the passages, subtle suggestions, if I can put it this way, or thoughts to consider when you sin in this way. So, when we look at Abraham, he wasn't a rebellious individual, but he did slide into things. And in particular, when you come to the end of his life, he comes into taking himself a wife by the name of Keturah. Now, Scripture doesn't really tell

us where she's from. Interestingly enough, in the ancient writings of the Hebrews, they actually tie her to the son of Ham. Which if in fact you tied her to the son of Ham, she would be a Canaanite. So, Abraham would be marrying a Canaanite where he tells his son, "I don't want you marrying Canaanite women." So, fundamentally, "Do what I say, don't do what I do." And we see also the description of Abraham within the passage in which Scripture wants us to know even before he marries Keturah, that Abraham is an old man, advanced in years. Why is Scripture wanting us to know that? I mean, he'll live over 38 years more, so why is it telling us that? And the answer seems to be that there is a tendency to start relaxing as you get older, to back off on certain things. Because that which is recorded about Abraham really demonstrates somebody that's very aggressive in his faith. But you read these last close to 40 years of his life, and I don't read anything except for the fact that he reserves his total inheritance for Isaac and that he sends the other kids away. I mean, other than that, I don't know what he did. Do you see any great feats of faith, anything

that he does? And the answer is absolutely not. So, you have a kind of complacency that settles into Abraham. Now, I've often stated that as you look at the different paragons in the Old Testament, there is one thing that they will have in common, and that is, none of them ultimately finishes well. They'll have something that comes into play that seems to throw them off base. And the question is, why would that be true? And I say the answer is, because there's only fulfillment in Christ. Only Christ can take us to the finish line. He is the great finisher, right? And the author and perfecter of our faith, right? That's the way it goes. So, He's the one that finishes the course. And so, even though we have these great examples of faith in the Old Testament, we will see the fallacy and things that enter in.

The question is, and we put them in this category, do small sins really matter? That basically is the question, isn't it? So, if I just get a little relaxed and perhaps a little bit complacent, perhaps by virtue of my age, so what? I deserve it. I worked hard all my life. I deserve to have a little bit of rest. It is interesting that not only in this

particular case, but also in the case of Aaron, also in the case of Eli, and also in the case of Samuel, you have their sons who really clearly rejected God and rejected a sense of decorum, rejected a sense of respect for God and the things of God. I would say this, that when complacency comes into a life, especially in leadership, then you give birth to something. And what you give birth to is trouble; because you let people get away with things that shouldn't be getting away. You don't take stands that you should be taking. And when that begins to happen, people begin to get emboldened. Where does this emboldened attitude come from? So, as you read in Scripture in particular about Aaron's sons, Aaron was slack. We know Aaron's in his 80s at this particular juncture and he just lets his sons go and they do what they do. And God just takes them, you know, in the midst of their sacrifice. Eli, it actually says, "And Eli was very old." And then it goes on and says what his sons were doing and the immorality of his sons and the fact that they were disdainful towards the offerings of God is being revealed in that particular passage. And you would think that Samuel would have learned from this. And Samuel

has the same problems. And one of the reasons why God allows Israel to have a king is because the sons of Samuel were not following in line with the father. But it does say, "And Samuel was old." So, what it's telling us is that there's a tendency to have complacency come in and before long you just let things go, and that actually breeds a kind of rebelliousness.

And once again, as you see the description of Abraham's sons that come from Keturah, you see sons that are defined "to strife," sons that are defined as "to pluck" or to get things for themselves. And they are a group of people that necessarily you wouldn't want to have around with you. So, he actually sends them away from Isaac so that they would not mingle in any way with him, knowing their reputations, as well as the fact that you would mingle in. So, in this respect, he knows that it is a necessity to separate them from those that are wanting to follow the Lord, in this particular case, Isaac.

When you come down to the passage that we're looking at, when we're now dealing with Ishmael and his generations. So, we were dealing with the wife Keturah

and her sons and how complacency came in. You have Ishmael who grew up with Isaac in some respect for a short time anyway, but had the same father, had the same benefits. In fact, all through basically his childhood, he was with his father Abraham. So, he had the benefits of being with his father. He had the benefits of the same attention, the same kind of training. We have an individual who literally had a kind of attachment to his father because by the time Abraham dies, if you look in verse 10,

(Genesis 25:10) "the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried..."

Now, the question is, who buried him? And back up, and it says Isaac and Ishmael did. So, you see the tie still with their father. I would have to ask, "Well, where's Keturah's kids?" They're not there. So, there was no attachment there. But growing up, Abraham in his zeal, there was an attachment that was formed.

Now, I was talking to you about these subtle things that are moved in Scripture.

So, you have Genesis 25:1,

(Genesis 25:1) "Now Abraham took another wife..."

And once again, that's just Scripture making reference to this. But Scripture won't actually affirm her to be a wife.

By the time you come to Chronicles, she would be a concubine, she wouldn't be made reference to as a wife.

But what's interesting is, if you drop on down to verse 10,

(Genesis 25:10) "the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife."

It's very interesting that it would make reference to it that way. And then when you see Hagar and of course the birth of Ishmael through Hagar, in verse 12,

(Genesis 25:12) "Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar..."

"His wife?" No, it doesn't say that.

"... whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham."

Now, once again, Scripture's not throwing out laws. It's just saying, "But this is who they were. And this is what he got." He didn't really get a wife. He was pursuing these

things, but that's not what he got. Nevertheless, there was a son born and his name was Ishmael. And then, of course, you see the sons of Ishmael in this. And there are so many things that are **similar**. Once again, the fact that they both have the same undivided attention by their father, both will feel attached to their father in this particular passage. And ultimately, they both have 12 tribes. Isaac will have the 12 tribes through Jacob, his son, and he'll have 12 sons, but the fact of the matter is there will be 12 tribes through them. And as you look through this, you see the 12 tribes that are in the family of Ishmael that are made reference to.

In fact, verse 16,

(Genesis 25:16) "These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes."

12 tribes. So, there's a lot of commonality within the passage. However, the subtlety is that they're worlds apart. And the perception is, with Keturah, "Well, maybe complacency isn't a big deal." And God says, "No, it's a big deal. It'll actually separate everything. It'll blow

everything." You say, "Well, with Ishmael, what's the lesson?" And clearly, what we know is that with Ishmael and Hagar, the whole interplay with Sarah and "Take my maid and you'll have a child through Hagar," was just highly manipulative. And the best description to give it is it was a lesson in pragmatism. In other words, your thought is that "I don't have a kid, so how do I have a kid?" Well, here's a woman that can have children. Her name's Hagar, she's a maid of Sarah, "Let's do it that way. It only makes sense, right?" And so, the question is, what happens when you think in those terms? Pragmatism isn't bad in and of itself, but it is bad when it reigns. In other words, when you make your decisions based on that. We make our decisions based on faith. We make our decisions based on obedience. And oftentimes when God tells you to do something, it doesn't look pragmatic. That's the argument really of Hebrews 11, that those that are walking by faith... I mean, how pragmatic does it look to build an ark in the middle of a place that there's no rain? I mean, why would you do such a thing? And why would you go into a foreign land, a place that you don't know anything about? Why would you do that? And why

would you offer up your son? Nothing about any of this makes any sense if you were just thinking what works in that particular realm. So, it's not one of those crimes that we would perceive to be a big crime. "I'm just trying to make it work." That's basically what we say. But the question is, what did you give birth to? And so, the lineage of this is actually what this gave birth to. In other words, pragmatism and all the things that come along with it. And really, when you see the description of Ishmael's lineage, you begin to realize that these were pretty obstinate people. In fact, one of the ancient writings actually described them as pragmatists. And the way that they saw their religion was not on a basis of something to worship, but something to manipulate, to use. So, your initial thought is, "Just this little manipulation, just this little bit of pragmatism in my life, to allow that to make the calls isn't going to hurt anything." But what it begins to do is spread like gangrene. And it spreads throughout these people called Arabians. One of the names of the princes is Kedar. You'll see them in the Psalms. They have black tents that would describe them. In fact, the Song of Songs would describe

the eyes or their hair like dark tents of Kedar. And they would have these goat skins that are black, and they would do their tents. But it was actually a picture of who they were. And they were extremely vengeful people. They were those kinds of people that "You cross me, I'll kill you" type people. So, they were a vicious kind of people.

That's why this particular passage ends in the way that it does. And if you just read with me. If some of you have a King James Version, you're going to be saying, "What in the world is he reading?" But if you read it with me in the New American Standard, it will read this way in verse 18, (Genesis 25:18) "They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives."

Now, the way that it comes out in the King James is, "in death". It actually uses the word "death" there instead of "defiance". And it's interesting because the word that's used there is not "death" at all. It doesn't use the Hebrew word "*mavet*" in the passage. The word that's used is a sense of falling away; or more specifically, pushing away

in the realm of force. And so, you have this force that is coming. What the passage is saying is that they became a forceful people and defiant in the fact that... You know that bumper sticker, "I don't get mad, I just get even"? That would just kind of define who these people were. If you cross them, they were going to come after you. And they really didn't think in terms of afterlife, but if they have a religion, it was only to bring success. And so, they begin to manipulate their faith based on what they wanted to accomplish or what they wanted to do. It just is that which is born out of pragmatism. And a family that's raised in that particular realm will begin to live in that particular realm. So, they settled in this particular area. And of course, we know that's Arabia that it's making mention of. And so, that becomes their land. Galatians will make mention of this. Paul will make mention of this in particular when he talks about Isaac and Ishmael.

And if you look with me in Galatians 4, you'll see this. And there is a reason why I bring this up. Galatians 4, he begins to show the difference between Ishmael and Isaac. And so, his statement is,

(Galatians 4:21) "Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?

(Galatians 4:22) For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman..."

That would be Ishmael, right?

"... and one by the free woman."

That would be Isaac.

(Galatians 4:23) "But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh..."

That is to say, pragmatism. It just makes sense.

"Obviously, God is not going to be able to handle this request through Sarah, so we'll just make it happen."

"... and the son by the free woman through the promise.

(Galatians 4:24) This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

(Galatians 4:25) Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children."

In other words, she's in bondage. Why? Well, how does the family of Ishmael think? Well, they think in terms of, "We've got to make it work. Every man for himself." And that's the way Law is. "We're going to earn our way to be successful." It's the law of self-preservation. It's the law of, "But we're going to do it according to law. And we'll use the law in any way we want to." And of course, that's the way the Jews would do. They would use the law to their advantage. And they became pragmatists of the law, great lawyers, Pharisees.

"Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

(Galatians 4:26) But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

(Galatians 4:27) For it is written, "REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND."

In other words, you think that it's not going to happen, but rejoice, it's going to happen because faith is going to win every time. The question is, are you going to walk by faith or are you going to walk by what you can make happen? And we usually kind of see that as, "Okay, maybe I messed up a little bit on this, but God says it has great consequences." So, the great consequences come out of this.

What's interesting is, in Galatians, I don't know why I didn't keep my finger there, but in Galatians 1, Paul tells us that he didn't receive the word of God from man, but he received it from God. But what's interesting is where God takes him.

And if you drop on down to verse 15, Paul will say, (Galatians 1:15) "But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

(Galatians 1:16) to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

(Galatians 1:17) nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia..."

Why did God take him to Arabia? Very easy. It's like God turns to Paul, and He goes, "You sure you want to go by the Law?" All you have to do is go live next to people that are aggressively hostile and use the Law for their own benefit to realize, "I don't think I want to go by the Law." That's all you have to do. And him just spending some time out there with those "wonderful" Arabians. I mean, here's Paul so immersed in the Law, and he's thinking, "This is the way to go." And God says, "Let Me show you the end result of this." And so, He takes him there and lets him see. And of course, that's what begins to motivate. That's why Paul, when he comes to the Galatians, he goes, "You want to live by the Law? Are you sure? You want to go that route?"

We see the interesting contrast in these particular passages of the difference between these two and how Arabia comes into play. The point of the matter is that these subtle missed turns, if you want to put them that way, can cause a tremendous amount of consequences.

And once again, the Old Testament, in particular Genesis, is going to come from the perspective of conscience and consequences. And if your conscience isn't motivating you to do the right thing, then the consequences will come, and Genesis just plays them out. Now, you have Jacob who is a supplanter. And God says, "Okay, watch what supplanting does." And so, once again, He doesn't condemn Jacob from being a supplanter, from trying to grab somebody's heel and take his place. He just sets him with Laban, and He goes, "This is what it looks like." And so, after a few years, probably longer than he wanted, he finds out, "This is not what I want at all." The difference between these two individuals is one is trying to produce his blessing as Abraham tried to do. The other is believing God to bring the blessing. Now, why is this so much more important? The answer is pretty clear; that by you turning to God, first of all, you begin to have a relationship with God. Which when we talk about the blessings of God, it's obvious that you have somebody like Ishmael who is going to be powerful, going to be mighty. It's a mighty nation. God actually predicted that.

In fact, if you back up into Genesis 16, remember when the angel was talking to Hagar? And of course, she's thinking, "It's all lost and my son's going to be a nobody." And the angel of the Lord turns to her in Genesis 16:9, and says,

(Genesis 16:9) "Then the angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."

(Genesis 16:10) Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count."

(Genesis 16:11) The angel of the LORD said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael..."

That is to say, "God hears you."

"... Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.

(Genesis 16:12) He will be a wild donkey of a man..."

Okay. So, he's not going to be easy to tame, right? But why is God telling her this? Because she's worried he's

going to get stepped on. God says, "Don't worry, he's not going to get stepped on."

"... His hand will be against everyone..."

So, as we were reading the passage in Genesis 25, he moved there in, what? Defiance. Well, that kind of matches the text, doesn't it?

"... His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him..."

In other words, he's not going to take anything from anybody and he's always going to be in fights. And so, you're always concerned about the Arabians coming after you and they were always looking for the advantage and they are always looking for that which benefited them the most. And He goes, "That's the way your son's going to be. Don't worry about him living. He's not only going to live, but he's also going to conquer people. And that's the way he is."

However, Isaac is going to live a very different way. And we're not going to see tribes of armies that are going to come from him. We're going to see tribes of shepherds

that will come from him. And the way that he lives is going to be very different. In fact, he's going to put his trust in God for everything. And so, the blessings that God is going to give is that he's going to know God in a personal way and God's going to supply his needs, whereas man in his realm may be successful, but it's by virtue of taking; it's by virtue of oppression; it's by virtue of treachery. So, the things man does to get something, you go, "Well, he's a very successful man." Well, he's successful in that way, but he's not blessed because the blessings come from the Lord. It's the blessings of the Lord that make rich; there's no sorrow to that. And so, God is the One that gives these wonderful blessings. And as Paul puts it in Romans, "And if God is for us, who could be against us?" So, you have the blessings of not only knowing God, but you have the blessing of knowing that He's for you and He's the One that's going to watch your back, which the world doesn't have that blessing. They have to watch their backs. They're always afraid and always in hostility. But we can rest in peace and live in that peace. These are all part of the blessings of God that are going to be passed on down to not only Isaac but

Jacob will wrestle for this. It'll be the blessings of God that will make rich in which God will supply all of his needs according to His riches in glory. And you're going to see that all the way through.

Proverbs 3, we oftentimes quote verses 5 and 6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding...." The fact that God is going to direct all of our ways and all of our paths is that we trust in Him. It's a whole different way of living. And it's a whole different kind of peace that we have.

And so, what Paul will do in Galatians 4 is give the difference. And he goes, "I know they all look alike, but 'similar' does not mean the same as 'same'." And so, what you have is worlds apart, though so many things that are similar.

Hebrews 6 says that there are people that come to church, and they have the same benefits as so many people. They might even sit right next to you. And God says, "I know they look similar, but they're not the same." Scripture says the Lord knows those who are His, and He sees the heart and He sees those that are walking by

faith, and He sees those that are trying to make it happen by their own desires and by their own manipulation and by their own strategy. And there are a lot of people out there thinking that way. And they call it Christianity. But the “just will live by faith.” And it is that walking by faith that really separates us, not easily distinguished.

In fact, let me show you something in the Gospel of Luke where we are in Chapter 13. Jesus will make a statement here, and He's talking, of course, to many of those who are Jews. He says, "The time is coming when many are going to strive to enter the kingdom of heaven, and they're not going to be able to come in." You're going to go, "Why?"

His statement is, if you look in Chapter 13,

(Luke 13:26) "Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’."

In other words, "We are very familiar with You." Ishmael could easily say, "I had Abraham as my father." This is why the argument with Jesus when the Jews go, "Abraham's our father," He goes, "Well, don't think that has anything

to do with it. I mean, if he was your father, you would act like him."

But it goes on and says in verse 27,

(Luke 13:27) "and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.'

(Luke 13:28) In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out."

"How could that be? We ate at the same table. We had the same benefit. I heard the same conversation."

(Luke 13:30) "And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last."

The passage is clearly giving a description of the fact that they're going to be those that come from the perspective of, "We had all the benefits that were the same." And God goes, "Well, the fact that you lived a similar life has nothing to do with you being the same." And so, the lessons that we're learning in the subtle differences that

come from the bad turns that we make and the consequences that come in that, as well as the paths that people take that can oftentimes look like they're good, but they're not. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof is death." And so, Scripture will purposely put these two guys together, and say, "So what? You're Abraham's son, so what?"

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we ask You to examine our hearts. Lord, You know that there are things that people do that are oftentimes very similar to the things that Christians do, but they're worlds apart. Because You tell us that the just live by faith and that we're not trying to make things happen, we're not trying to manipulate, we're not trying to strategize. We're literally walking by our faith and trust in You. We live by trusting and obeying. They live by that which works for them. You have separated us from them, and You tell us, "Don't walk that way." You have made a distinction

between the two. Now, Lord, You want us to make that distinction.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. What I'm asking you is to examine yourself. Scripture tells you to examine yourself, whether it's in 1 Corinthians 11 or towards the end of 2 Corinthians. Test yourself to see if you're of the faith. You may be an Ishmael. You talk to the Lord.