

## **A Reckless Scheme**

Genesis 16: 1-16

As we continue to study the life of Abraham, it is increasingly apparent that he dealt with the same struggles and insecurities we all do. He had taken a leap of faith in leaving his homeland to follow the Lord. Along the way there had been victories and defeats. At times Abraham displayed great faith and courage, while at others he succumbed to doubt and despair.

Our text deals with a familiar event in Abraham's life. After following the Lord for ten years, he and Sarah have yet to receive their promised son. Apparently believing God had forgotten His promise, once again they concoct an ill-advised plan to help the Lord accomplish His plan for their lives. Through this a son will be born to Abraham, but he will not be the promised son. Their haste and lack of faith would have lasting implications on their family and the entire human race.

It is easy to become critical of Abraham and Sarah, and yet we have made ill-advised decisions as well. There are times when we know God is not pleased with our decisions, and yet we continue the path we have chosen instead of waiting on the Lord. As we examine the [realities](#) within the text, I want to preach on: [A Reckless Scheme](#).

**I. A Desperate Proposal** (1-4) – In the opening verses we discover the desperate proposal of Sarah regarding an heir to the family. Consider:

**A. The Shame** (1) – [Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.](#) Sarah and Abraham knew God had promised a son through which a great nation would come. However, He had not provided their son and they were weary of waiting. We must understand that in that culture it was shameful to be barren and unable to have children. God had proven faithful, but Sarah suffered reproach because she was unable to bear a son for Abraham. The shame and her personal desires became overwhelming. (It is easy to become consumed with our desires and the perception of others, allowing our despair to dictate our lives and decisions.)

**B. The Suggestion** (2) – [And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.](#) Assuming God had decided not to provide Abraham a son with Sarah, she devised a plan to provide a son. Following their disobedient trip to Egypt, Sarah brought an Egyptian handmaiden with her out of Egypt. Sarah suggested that Abraham take Hagar as his wife. In that culture, any child born to a handmaiden would be considered the child of

the primary wife and the man of the house. In Sarah's mind this would solve the problem of her barrenness and the shame associated with it. Unfortunately Abraham agreed with her suggestion.

- Such an arrangement may have been acceptable in that culture, but it certainly was not what God had planned or desired for them. There is much that society deems acceptable, and yet many of these practices are contrary to God's will for us. We must never be guilty of abandoning biblical principles in an effort to gain the approval of society or accomplish our own desires.

**C. The Strife** (3-4) – *And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. [4] And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.* The situation progressed just as Sarah had planned, but in the end, she was not pleased with her decision. Hagar conceived a child, but she was immediately despised by Sarah. Their culture may have approved, and it may have appeared to be a solution to their problem, but it would not provide the promised son they desired. In fact, a son would be born, but in the process they would also become a dysfunctional family. This would be a source of contention for years to come. Unescapable strife was introduced to the family because of their decision.

- Satan never shows the backside of the coin when tempting us to sin. Few ever realize the lasting implications sin often produces. Like Abraham's family, the effects of sin are often felt for generations. We never gain anything by acting contrary to God's Word and His will for our lives.

**II. A Dysfunctional Problem** (5-9) – Here we discover the problems associated with the dysfunctional situation created by their decision. Notice:

**A. The Accusation** (5) – *And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.* Originally this was Sarah's idea. She convinced Abraham to take Hagar as his wife in order to have a son. Once she conceived, Sarah immediately despised Hagar. Now unhappy with her decision and the state of affairs within the family, she lays all the blame of Abraham and Hagar. She claims that Hagar now despises her because of the unborn child. Sarah wanted to remove herself from any guilt or association with the problem they had created.

- The reaction of Sarah remains common in our day. Often when we find ourselves in a difficult situation, even if it was prompted by our actions, we seek someone else to blame. Few are willing to admit their sin and assume any responsibility. As long as we can convince ourselves

someone else is to blame, we feel a bit better about the situation. Sarah should have admitted her error and repented. We too must be willing to admit our rebellion and repent before the Lord.

**B. The Indiscretion (6a)** – *But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee.* Following Sarah's accusation, Abraham made a hasty decision and neglected all responsibility in the matter. He had agreed to take Hagar as his wife; she was carrying his unborn child, and yet Abraham agreed to allow Sarah to do what she would with Hagar. He too was at fault in this mess, and yet he refused to accept any responsibility.

- Ignoring our problems and neglecting our responsibilities will never bring about acceptable resolutions. Abraham should have repented of his sin and been willing to deal with the consequences it produced. Walking away from difficult situations we have created will not make them disappear. We must be willing to repent of our sin, deal with the consequences, and seek the Lord's wisdom to discern a solution that pleases Him.

**C. The Isolation (6b-9)** – *And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.* <sup>[7]</sup> *And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.* <sup>[8]</sup> *And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.* <sup>[9]</sup> *And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.* Here we see the ruthless behavior of Sarah toward Hagar, and Abraham's refusal to step in and provide a solution. While God was not pleased with their initial decision, He was not pleased with their treatment of Hagar either. Hagar responded the same way many do when faced with adversity – she fled. Upon meeting the angel of the LORD in the wilderness, he commanded Hagar to return unto Sarah and submit unto her.

- There are a couple important lessons for us in these verses. First of all we must not immediately flee from conflict and adversity. Running from our problems will never produce a desired solution. Many today are quick to flee instead of seeking a resolution. Second, we must be willing to humble ourselves before the aggressor. While I am not advocating Hagar was perfect, she was taken advantage of in this situation. Human nature would resist such submission and humility. We must be willing to humble ourselves before others as we seek to resolve issues. Christ our Lord was innocent of all charges, and yet He humbled Himself to the death of the cross.

**III. A Divine Provision (10-16)** – While this entire situation was contrary to God's plan for Abraham, He intervened for Hagar and promised to provide for her. Consider:

**A. The Revelation** (10-12) – God promised Hagar that she would deliver a son, and he too would become a great nation. She was instructed to name the child Ishmael. God revealed that Ishmael would live a difficult life. He would be a wild man, and be forced to fight against other men. He would dwell among the sons of Abraham.

- While God would allow Ishmael to prosper, the fact remained that he was conceived in rebellion. Like we have discussed already, sin has consequences that often exceed the initial parties. Ishmael, Israel, and the entire human race would be forced to deal with the end result of Abraham's disobedience.

**B. The Recognition** (13-14) – Hagar was an Egyptian handmaiden, and yet she recognized the Lord. In her moment of desperation she called out unto Him. She rejoiced that God was aware of her need and had shown compassion, providing for her.

- Again we find a timeless truth revealed through a mistreated Egyptian handmaiden. In our times of difficulty and distress, we must look to God and recognize His ability to provide for us. We are unable to overcome in ourselves. We are often tempted to blame God or abandon the faith when facing adversity. In the difficulties of life, we should draw closer to Him instead of growing bitter and distancing ourselves from Him.

**C. The Culmination** (15-16) – At eighty six years of age, Abraham had a son born unto him, Ishmael. This was not the promised son, nor was it in God's plan for Abraham, but his rebellion had produced a son. The decision will follow Abraham the rest of his life. It will continue to produce conflict within the family and produce suffering for thousands of years to come. We continue to deal with the impatient decision of Abraham today.

- It is easy to look at this and only see the difficulty it produced. Some would even question the sovereignty of God in all of this. While this was not God's plan, He did allow it to happen. God would use the birth of Ishmael for His glory. Abraham's sons took very different paths in life, but they both prospered, being the father of mighty nations. These two nations will remain until the Lord returns. Even then, God will be glorified and recognized as the Sovereign Lord. God will use this difficult situation, brought about by Abraham's sin, to fulfill His plan in the end.

**Conclusion:** As I considered this passage I was reminded of the realities of sin. We do not sin in a bubble, and quite often our sin has implications in the lives of others. While sin brings consequences that we must deal with, we do not have to leave our sin unconfessed. We must be willing to admit our sin, repenting of it as we seek forgiveness and restoration in fellowship. If there

are needs in your life, particularly unconfessed sin, bring it before the Lord today. If you are yet unsaved, respond to the offer of grace through faith and repentance!