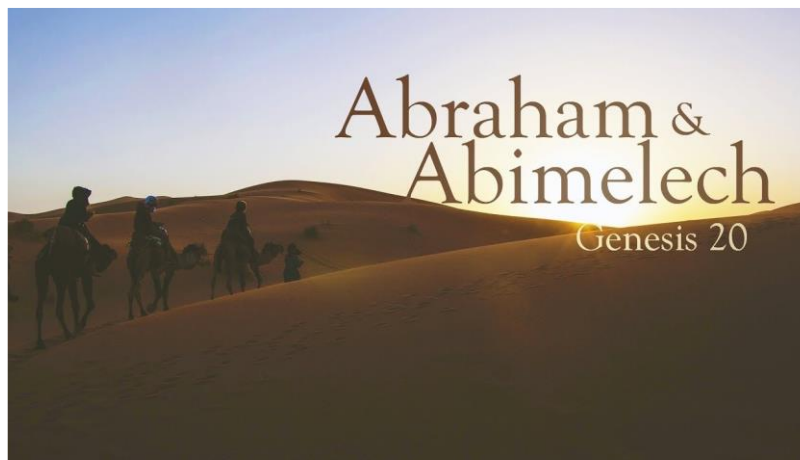


Sooke Baptist Church
 Sunday
 February 19
 2023
 10am

also on
 YouTube &
 Facebook
 Live Stream

easily
ENTANGLED

GENESIS 20



03:00

Hebrews 12:1
 "...let us throw off...
 the sin that so easily entangles..."

What was the sin
 that easily entangled Abraham?

Each of us is vulnerable
 to different kinds of sin.
 Why do you think that is?

The reason this story in Genesis 20 has a familiar sound to it, is because something very similar happened in Genesis 12... about 20+ years earlier. Because of drought and severe famine that ravaged Canaan, Abraham and Sarah and their household had gone to Egypt to live there for a while.

When they arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh's officials took note of Sarah because she was... **"a very beautiful woman..."** and approached Abraham, asking if Sarah was married.

Abraham told them – **"she is my sister..."**

And so, Abraham and Pharaoh's officials entered into negotiations that ultimately resulted in Sarah becoming Pharaoh's wife.

After the marriage, things did not go well for Pharaoh.

The LORD... **"inflicted serious diseases on him and his household..."**

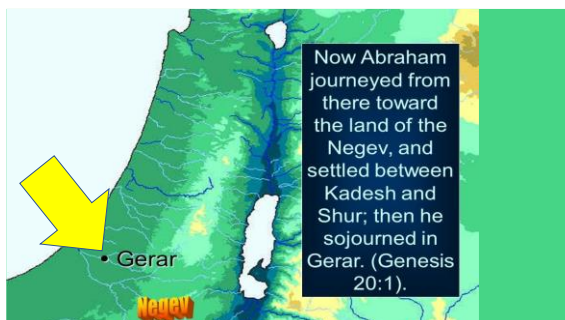
When inquiry was made as to why the things happening to Pharaoh were happening, Abraham's lie was uncovered, and Sarah was returned to Abraham and they were kicked out from Egypt.

In Genesis 20:1, we read that Abraham moved from the great trees of Mamre... into the region of the Negev... and lived between Kadesh and Shur... and then in Gerar. Why did Abraham move?



Look at Genesis 19:27-28.

I think Abraham moved because of the lingering impacts of the dense smoke like that of a furnace that rose from the valley plain.



It was when Abraham and Sarah came to Gerar that the same thing happened there... that had happened in Egypt.

King Abimelek noticed Sarah... and when he inquired whether she was married, Abraham told him, **"She is my sister..."** while resulted, after negotiations, in Sarah becoming Abimeleck's.... second wife.

As the LORD had done in Egypt, so he did in Gerar... he defended Sarah's virtue.

I remind you that it had only been weeks since the three heavenly visitors had come to the camp of Abraham and Sarah, and told Abraham... **“This time next year... Sarah your wife will have a son.”**

When Sarah, who was eavesdropping heard this news, she laughed to herself and then thought... **“After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”**

The passage notes that Abraham and Sarai were very old... and to ensure it was clear... the passage further states that Sarah was past the years of childbearing. But according to God they were going to have a baby.

The child to be born to them was not supernaturally conceived, but God, nonetheless did something miraculous in the body of Sarah. Her womb and ovaries that had undergone menopause were brought back to life. Estrogen and progesterone coursed through her body... making her ready to become pregnant.

God dramatically intervened in Gerar to defend his plan of salvation. God had promised Eve the Rescuer would be a descendant of hers. God had promised Abraham, he and Sarah would have a son, through whom the nations would be blessed.

Before he created, with great wisdom the triune God had determine the family line of the Rescuer ... and it was not that of Abimelech... but of Abraham.

What did God specifically do to rescue Sarah?



He restrained Abimelech.

In what way?

Look again at what the LORD said to Abimelech in 20:6-7 –

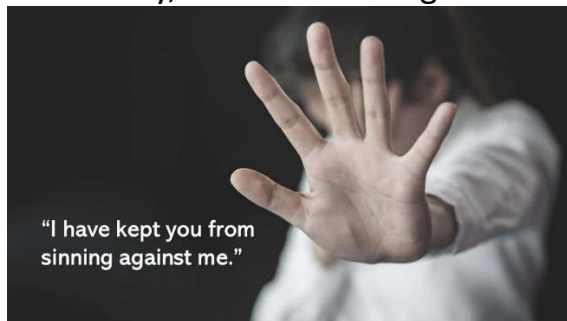
**“I have kept you from sinning against me.
That is why I did not let you touch her.
Now return the man’s wife... and you will live.
But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you
will die.”**

In protecting Sarah, it was also revealed that God mercifully protected Abimeleck.
Do you know why?

Because Abimeleck had, in his own words, married Sarah... **“with a clear
conscience and clean hands,”** ... and God knew this.

This is why God had restrained him.

This is why, and it is most significant... to hear God say to Abimeleck...



But, though Abimelek had acted with a clear conscience and clean hands, Sarah, nonetheless, was a married woman.

In the passage... what we see is that the understanding of the sanctity of marriage was stamped into the conscience of Abimelek.

This is why... early the next morning, he summoned all his officials and told them what had happened to him.

And like their king, the officials, v.8b – **were very much afraid.**

But of what or of who?

They were afraid of the LORD.

They were afraid... because Abimelek had done what God had forbidden – he had taken another man’s wife.

This realization of the sin he had committed ... coupled with the warning from God.. was what moved Abimelek to repent.

He first spoke with Abraham and asked... “why?”

Do you hear Abimelek's anguish in the questions he asked?

"What have you done to us?"

"How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom?"

Abimelek realized he was not just guilty, but that before God... his guilt was great. Abimelek described to Abraham how his lie had impacted him:

"You have done things to me that should never be done."

"You were afraid I might kill you in order to take your wife.

But your lie has made me guilty before the Judge of all the earth whose just sentence for what I have done is death.

I did not harm you, but you have harmed me greatly."

Abraham answered Abimelek's question.

But his explanation sounds hollow when spoken out loud.

"I said to myself, 'There is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'"

Abraham was wrong.

Abimelek did fear God.

Abimelek did not violate his conscience.

Abimelek was a moral man... who did not ignore the law God had written on his heart – his hands were clean.

While it may have sounded like an excuse... Abraham told Abimelek the truth about Sarah – she was his half-sister.

But as he did so, his lie was brought into the light... and his folly was exposed.

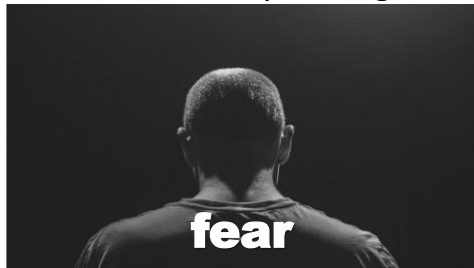
If God could guide Abraham from Ur to Canaan, which he had...

... and if God could provide for Abraham, both in the journey and then upon his arrival, which he had...

... if God could enter into a covenant with Abraham and make staggering promises to him, which he had...

... then surely... would not such a great God... preserve Abraham's life and bring to pass the promises he had made to him?

The sin that easily entangled Abraham was...



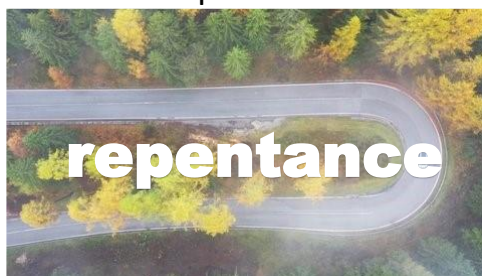
And we know because of Hebrews 12:1... it was a sin that God would have Abraham throw off,

In this passage we see God at work, not only in the life of Abimelek... bringing him to repentance... and not only in the life of Sarah... defending her virtue... but also in the life of Abraham.... spiritually pruning his life.



God was patiently at work in Abraham...forging in him a godly character that testified to the glory of God... who credits righteousness to all who believe in him... and who displays in those he saves... the power of his grace to transform a sinner into a saint.

Once he spoke with Abraham, Abimelek then immediately did what God told him to do... he repented.



Abimelek gave goods and money to Abraham as compensation. Abimelek didn't blame his actions on Abraham's deception. He accepted God's assessment of his behavior... for the sin that it was. He returned Sarah to Abraham... and welcomed Abraham and Sarah to live anywhere within his land.

Once he repented and made things right, Abraham prayed for Abimelek's healing, and for the healing of the women in his household... and his prayer was answered. Do you see the irony of what God did?

The LORD answered Abraham's prayer for the women of Abimelek's household. But the LORD had not yet answered Abraham's prayer... regarding his own wife, Sarah.

Why did God delay?

It was not because Sarah's situation was beyond God's ability.

God's delay had everything to do with his glory.

The child to be born to Abraham and Sarah would serve...



... as a signpost...

The child to be born to them would...

... mark in that specific moment, the goodness, the wisdom and power of God... for whom nothing is impossible...

...point to the past... to the promise made to Eve long ago...

...and point to the future... of an even greater miracle to be realized.... when the promised Rescuer would come into the world ... in the fullness of time... born of a virgin.

This chapter puts before us important truths we need to think up and live within.

I found it troubling that Abraham in chapter 20 would repeat the same sin he had committed in chapter 12.

I thought to myself... seriously... twenty plus years have gone by.

How are you still so vulnerable to fear?

How are you so selfish towards your wife?

How are you so foolish as to not trust the LORD to protect you?

I found it troubling until... I saw the same pattern within myself.

For I too have sins that easily entangle me... as do each one of you.

I think it is important to remind ourselves this morning that **there are three aspects to the salvation of the LORD.**

We talked about the first one when we studied the life of Lot, so I will quickly summarize it for you.

1. Justification

Those whom God searches after; those whom he draws to himself; those to whom he reveals the beauty and sufficiency of Jesus; those who believe in and receive Jesus... are justified.

Romans 8:1 explains what happens to those who believe in Jesus...

1. Justification

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Why is there no condemnation?

Because the goodness of Jesus... is credited by God... as a free gift... to those who believe in and who receive Jesus.

Hebrews 10:10 confirms...

1. Justification

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Hebrews 10:10

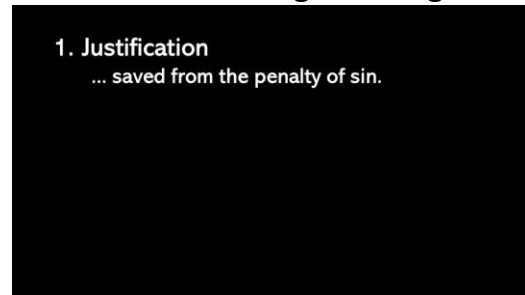
... we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Justification is based upon... the one-time sacrifice of Jesus... upon a Roman cross... at a hill outside of Jerusalem called Golgotha.

There... God the Father placed upon Jesus humanity's sin.
On that cross... as his life was offered in sacrifice... Jesus paid in full... our sin debt.

The proof that Jesus' death was sufficient... is his resurrection from the dead.
But Jesus did more than pay our sin debt.
He took our sin... in order to give to those who believe in and receive him...
...his righteousness.

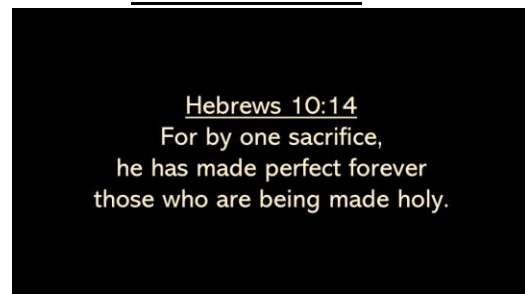
There is no exchange more glorious.



Justification saves us from the penalty of sin.

This leads to the second aspect of salvation.

Look at **Hebrews 10:14**



Justification declares a believer to be righteous, that is, to be perfect in God's eyes.

But the rest of this verse describes the Christian life after... one believes in and receives Jesus... and until... they pass from this life into the next or Jesus returns.

God who makes us perfect... is actively making us holy.
Being made holy is what the Bible calls... sanctification.

1. Justification
... saved from the penalty of sin.
2. Sanctification

Being sanctified, that is, being made holy... is a lifelong process... whereby a follower of Jesus becomes in practice what God declared them to be.

Being made holy is how we are saved from...

1. Justification
... saved from the penalty of sin.
2. Sanctification
... saved from the practice and power of sin.

... the practice and power of sin.

Ephesians 1-3 teaches we are saved from **the penalty of our sin**.

Ephesians 4-6 teaches we are **being made holy**, by the presence of God's Spirit within us and the power from heaven that he mediates to us... that enables us to obey God, rather than our sinful desires.

The NT teaches that the Spirit of God is the primary agent of sanctification.

2 Corinthian 3:17-18
Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is freedom.
And we all, who with unveiled faces
contemplate the Lord's glory,
are being transformed into his image
with ever-increasing glory,
which comes from the Lord,
who is the Spirit.

Through the Spirit Jesus works within us.

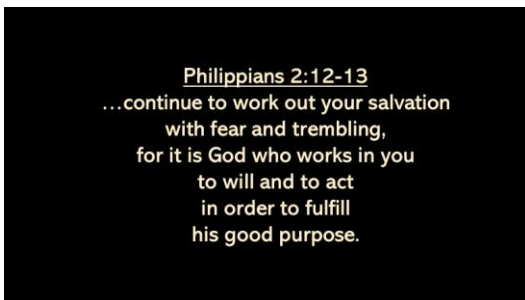
What is it that he is doing?

He is transforming us into his image.



He is making us into a masterpiece of grace.

While justification is all of God, sanctification require the involvement of the follower of Jesus... to work out their salvation.

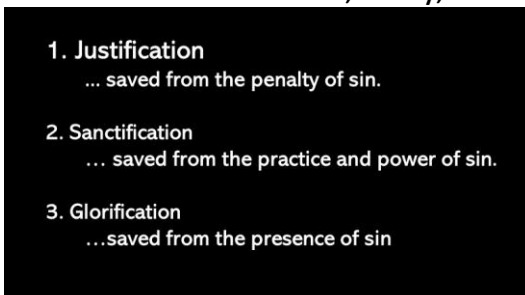


Being made holy... demands of us effort... as we learn to say yes to God... and no to sin... with the realization that we are cooperating with God who himself is at work in us.

This is where Abraham was.

In Genesis 20 we see him as a man who was being transformed... a man who was being taught to trust the LORD and to act in righteousness in the face of fear. And this is where all of us who follow Jesus are... a not yet completed masterpiece of grace.

The third aspect of salvation... is its completion – at the return of Jesus, when his followers will be saved, body, soul and spirit from the presence of sin.



When Jesus returns his followers will be changed into holy immortals...
...in the twinkling of an eye.

At Jesus' return that which is perishable... will become imperishable.
 At his return all things will be made new.

So I ask... **why is it important that we understand the three aspects of salvation?**

Because it makes sense of this present time... and the Christian life.

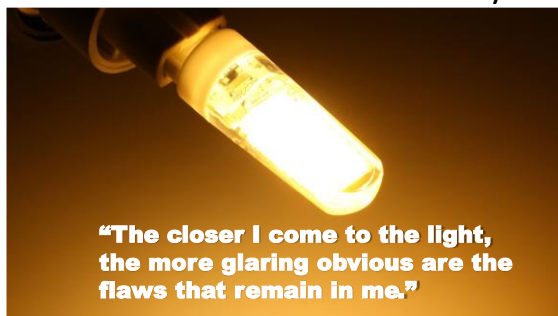
It reveals us to the great wisdom of God... and how he works... and it grows our confidence in the LORD.

Justification	Progressive Sanctification
Instantly declared righteous	Gradually made righteous
Objective, judicial (non-experiential): legal, forensic position	Subjective, experiential : daily experience
External: outside the believer	Internal: inside the believer
Christ's righteousness imputed , received judicially	Christ's righteousness imparted , worked out experientially
Instantly removes sin's guilt and penalty	Gradually removes sin's pollution and power
Does not change character	Gradually transforms character
All Christians share the same legal standing	Christians are at different stages of growth
A single, instantaneous completed act: once-for-all-time, never repeated	A continuing process: gradual, maturing, lifelong

Fred Zaspel: The Doctrine of Sanctification

The LORD in his wisdom has purposed... to prepare you and me... for the new heaven and the new earth, by a process of character transformation.

Until Jesus returns... or we pass from this life, we all are... a work in progress.
 While we breathe, God's grace is transforming us even as we struggle with sin.
 Consider this statement made by George Whitefield ..



In this lifetime, the followers of Jesus will never become perfect. But it matters to the Lord that we cooperate with the Spirit of God, that we are learning to say yes to him in his renovation of our character.

God's work of making us holy... demonstrates to his own people, but also to a watching world... both the outcome and beauty of repentance, and the marvel and power and patience of God's grace.

Why is it important that we understand these three aspects of salvation?

Trevin Wax writes... because it makes sense of why God gathers his followers into local communities...



...who in following Jesus... walk together, to encourage, and to urge one another on in being conformed to the image of Christ.

Each of us is prone to deceive ourselves...to not recognize our selfishness or the lingering sins that are yet within us.

Each of us is prone to think of ourselves... too highly... as being more spiritual than we really are... or too lowly... constantly frustrated and discouraged by the sin that remains in us and the slowness of our growth in grace.

We need our brothers and sisters in Christ.

God uses our interaction with each other to reveal things about ourselves that we would have ignored or overlooked or never considered.

God uses our sisters and brothers to speak truth to us.

God uses our brothers and sisters to speak hope into our hearts – that in Christ, there is no condemnation.



Hebrews 11 is sometimes called the HALL OF FAITH or the HEROES OF THE FAITH chapter.

Do you know what is interesting about this chapter.

When the faith of Abraham is described... his failure in Egypt and Gerar is not mentioned.

Do you know why?

Because Abraham's sin was not held against him.

God had removed its penalty, not because Abraham eventually did more good things than bad, but simply because he believed God.

That said, Abraham did grow in the practice of righteousness.

When he breathed his last breath, at 175 years of age, he was not the same man who had left Ur, a hundred years earlier.

He had become the father of all who would believe.

He became a man who so believed in God that he was willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac, in obedience to God's command, because by faith he reckoned that God could raise the dead.

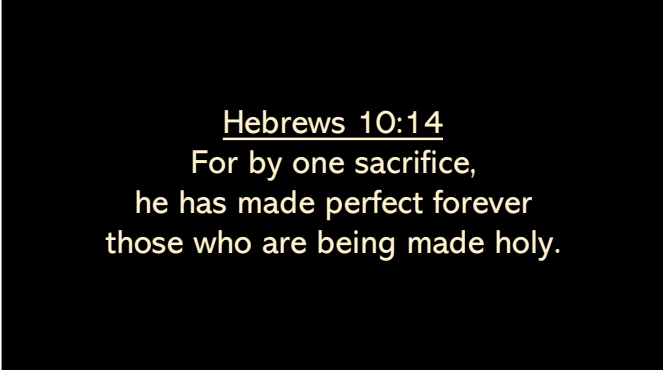
The same God who worked in Abraham is patiently at work in us.

The church is not a place of perfection, but a...



As God, for his glory, invests himself in our transformation, we, for God's glory, invest our lives into one another, to become not just a masterpiece of grace, but in this lifetime... to be a conduit of grace.

We have been made perfect by the sacrifice of Jesus.



Hebrews 10:14
For by one sacrifice,
he has made perfect forever
those who are being made holy.

And by that same sacrifice, in this present time, we are being made holy.
Praise God for the blessing of his grace!