



Genesis 20:1-18

# PROVIDENCE ACCORDING TO GOD

*In this chapter, the Holy Spirit presents to us a remarkable instance, both of the weakness of man, and of the grace of God. It is a common proverb, that even fools become wise by suffering evil. But Abraham, forgetful of the great danger which had befallen him in Egypt, once more strikes his foot against the same stone... Therefore we perceive, in the example of the holy patriarch, how easily we forget both the chastisements and the favors of God. For it is impossible to excuse his gross negligence... If his wife had become the property of another man, he would have had himself alone to blame. But if we thoroughly examine ourselves scarcely any one of us will be found who will not acknowledge that he has often offended in the same way... When we thoroughly weigh all things, Abraham sinned through unbelief, by attributing less than he ought to the providence of God. Whence also, we are admonished, how dangerous a thing it is, to trust in our own notions. For Abraham's disposition is right, while fixing his attention on the promise of God; but inasmuch as he does not patiently wait for God's help but turns aside to the use of unlawful means, he is, in this respect, worthy of censure.*  
—John Calvin (1509-94)

In Genesis 18, Abraham stands as an example of humility, faith, and compassion. Abraham welcomes God into his home, intercedes for the city of Sodom, and receives the promise of the miraculous birth of Isaac. But, just as we are beginning to think that he has reached a state of complete reliance on God, we see Abraham fail again.

- A Abraham strays from God into a familiar sin (20:1-2a)
- B Abimelech takes Sarah into his harem (20:2b)
- C Dialogue: God confronts Abimelech (20:3-7)
- D Abimelech responds in obedience (20:8)**
- C Dialogue: Abimelech confronts Abraham (20:9-13)
- B Abimelech restores Sarah to Abraham (20:14-16)
- A Abraham prays to God for Abimelech (20:17-18)

## 1. Every believer should be aware of his/her sin patterns.

In Genesis 20, Abraham repeats the same sin and deception that he did in Egypt (12:10-20)... and he gets in the same kind of predicament.

- His sin emerges out of \_\_\_\_\_.
- His sin jeopardizes \_\_\_\_\_.
- His sin is \_\_\_\_\_ in his mind.
- His sin impacts future generations (cf. Gen. 26, 27, 37).

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.*  
—Hebrews 12:1-2a

*This episode is chiefly one of suspense: on the brink of Isaac's birth, here is the very Promise put in jeopardy, traded away for personal safety. If it is ever to be fulfilled, it will owe very little to man. Morally as well as physically, it will clearly have to be achieved by the grace of God.* —Derek Kidner

*The Scripture...is impartial in relating the blemishes even of its most celebrated characters.*  
—Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

*This incident makes us realize that Abraham is not such a saint as we might have concluded nor were all the inhabitants of Canaan so depraved as those who lived in Sodom.* —Gordon Wenham

*Everyone has a besetting sin to which he returns.*  
—Jean de La Fontaine (1621-95)

*All my life I have been seeking to climb out of the pit of my besetting sins and I cannot do it and I never will unless a hand is let down to draw me up.*

—Seneca (4 BC-AD 65)

When I am anxious, I tend to \_\_\_\_\_.

When I am angry, I tend to \_\_\_\_\_.

When I am depressed, I tend to \_\_\_\_\_.

When I am bored, I tend to \_\_\_\_\_.

When I am in conflict, I tend to \_\_\_\_\_.

## 2. Every person is confronted by the voice of God.

Surprisingly, in this “pagan land,” there is a king with a tender conscience and a heart that is responsive to the voice of the Lord.

- God speaks to us through creation (cf. Psalm 19; Romans 1).
- God speaks to us through \_\_\_\_\_.

*Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them. —Romans 2:14-15*

- God speaks to us through \_\_\_\_\_.
- God speaks to us through \_\_\_\_\_.

## 3. True repentance is evidenced through actions.

- True repentance acts \_\_\_\_\_.
- True repentance acts \_\_\_\_\_.
- True repentance seeks \_\_\_\_\_.
- True repentance receives \_\_\_\_\_.

## 4. God's providence governs and guides all of our lives.

- God is at work in unexpected \_\_\_\_\_.
- God is at work in unexpected \_\_\_\_\_.
- God is at work in unexpected \_\_\_\_\_.
- God is at work for His glory and our good! (Romans 8:28-30)

**Abimelech.** Heb., “my father is king.” A dynastic title not a name.

*God is speaking. Not God spoke, but God is speaking. He is by His nature continuously articulate. He fills the world with His speaking Voice. —A. W. Tozer*

**Lord.** Heb., *Adonai*, “Lord (used as a proper name of God only).”

**Integrity.** Heb., *tōm*, “completeness; innocence.” A sense of consistent honesty and moral behavior, desiring to live in complete harmony with God and others.

*These are the two points I wanted to make. First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in. —C. S. Lewis*

**Prophet.** Heb., *nabi*, “spokesman.” A true prophet proclaims the message of God and prays for others.

The Hebrew verb (*caused me to wander*) is plural. When *Elohim* refers to the one true God, accompanying predicates are usually singular. Perhaps Abraham is accommodating his speech to Abimelech’s polytheistic perspective. —NET Bible

*God’s providence is His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people.*

—Jerry Bridges