

January 16-Genesis 16

One of the enduring lessons of the Scripture is the frailty of man, particularly in regards to his obedience before God. In the last chapter, we read about how Abram believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Abram's faith is on display in Genesis 15, but today, we read about how Abram gave in to temptation and created a major mess.

In our chapter today, Abram and Sarai have a moment of impatience and distrust. Some time has passed between God's initial promise of a descendant for Abram. Abram and Sarai are tired of waiting so they devise a plan to push God's plan along. Taking matters into their own hands, they concoct a plan totally outside of God's will and stated plan and in so doing they create a mess that still impacts the world today.

Sarai was convinced that God was not going to deliver on His promise. In verse 2 she tells Abram "Behold now, The Lord has prevented me from bearing children." This is always where impatience begins, a lack of trust in a loving God. When we begin to believe that God is purposefully withholding something from us or that He will not deliver on what He has promised, we sin and disobey. This is the story of Genesis 3 as Satan convinces Eve that God is purposefully withholding a gift that would make her happy. The first sign of our transgression is very often distrust. Sarai obviously no longer believed that God would do what He had told Abram He was going to do and so Sarai decided to convince Abram to take matters into their own hands.

The Bible says that Sarai suggested that Abram sleep with their maidservant Hagar. We read just a few verses later that Hagar conceived and then Sarai began to become jealous. Genesis says that Sarai "looked with contempt on her mistress" (v. 4). This is an amazing glimpse into the effect of sin in our lives. So often, what looks appealing at the start causes great emotional distress and frustration in the future. In fact, everything that appeals to our flesh and is contrary to the Scriptures will ultimately end in our dissatisfaction and pain. Furthermore, the consequences of sin are always more than we want to pay. Verse 10 and 12 record God's promise to Hagar saying "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude... He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." Hagar's son, Ishmael, would become the head of a line that would yield a multitude of descendants who would persecute the people of Isaac, namely God's chosen people of Israel.

The enduring lesson from this account is that our sin has immediate and long-lasting consequences. These consequences cannot be controlled by men inflicting pain not just on ourselves but on everyone around us. Sin causes us immense trouble but in Jesus Christ we have a Savior who has "overcome the world" (John 16:33). We can rejoice today in knowing that our Lord has crushed the head of Satan and in so doing has rendered him and the sin he helped usher into the world powerless over those who are in Christ. In the mean time, let us trust the plan of God believing based on His character and faithfulness in our past that His plan is better than ours!