

Genesis 16:1-6 – Bad Choice, Bad Consequences

TSK, HebrewLexicon, PASN, Calvin, Henry, Poole, Gill, Delitzsch, Pulpit, Whyttock, INT, JFB, Geneva, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: God made a covenant with Abram and verbally and visually assured Abram that he would keep that covenant. That covenant, which you saw last week, and its blessing (temporal and eternal blessings) applied to Abram's descendants as well. But a covenant always places responsibility on man – and Abram was no exception. He was required to have faith in Christ and he was required to show good works. Part of that faith and works was to wait until the child of promise came. Today we will see the doubt that entered Abram mind – his lack of faith – that resulted in poor choices... and bad consequences.

Our headings are: Aberrant畸变的,异常的 Choice of a Princess, Aberrant Choice by Abram, and Consequences of their Aberrant Choices.

Our goals are: That you will learn to trust in Jesus Christ and wait on his timing for everything in your life, knowing that God will always do what is best for his children and will do it at the right time.

Aberrant choice of a Princess

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

1. Sarai suggested one of the worst possible things a woman could ever suggest to her husband: take another wife and have a child with her. It was God's providence and plan that Sarai and Abram had no children to date. But the delay in God answering their prayers caused Sarai and Abram to doubt God's promises. Doubt is a disease that spreads rapidly.

2. Why would Sarai possibly want to do something like that?

a. Sarai did this with the hope of removing shame. Sarai realized that she was a confirmed barren woman and she did not see God's promise coming true that she would have a child from her own body – a child that would remove shame. She said: "I shall obtain children" –Banah. "Son" = ben. The root word is "Banah" to build. She wanted to build her family through sons- by becoming a mother. Sarai's goal was good, but she didn't count the cost. She acted like immature young people who want to run off and get married.

b. It was culturally acceptable. Sarai's responded with something like this: "*Abram, let us do what everyone else around us is doing in the culture of the day. We are God's children, but we have to live with the spirit of the times. We would look strange (and our children would feel out of place) if we lived this way.*" The culture of the day expected a rich man to use one of his wife's servants to bear children for her. (The child would be the mistress' child.) We can say that Sarai urged Abram to crawl through the legal/cultural loophole漏洞. In her mind, her suggestion was not so bad. They were doing what others did. Sarai was willing to ignore female jealousy-something that can be extremely strong... That is why Sarai said "perhaps I shall obtain children by her."

c. Sarai wanted to help God out. It seems that she really believed in the promise of God, she and Abram but doubted God was going to do it. He goal was good but the means was sinful. But God always ordains the end and the meant to that end.

3. Because of this things, Sarai took a dangerous pragmatic route. But pragmatism 实用主义 is the stealth bomber 隐形轰炸机 that sneaks in under cover and kills.

4. Brothers and Sisters in Christ: You must not live on the basis of cultural demands or expectations, or on pragmatic reasons. It doesn't matter if everyone does it! You have to do what is right according to God's law. Others may think you are backward 落后 in your thinking...but obeying the Lord is not backward. And don't be ashamed to wait.

5. So Sarai took her servant Hagar and gave her to Abram to be his concubine. But who was Hagar? The Jews have a tradition that she was a daughter (some say a servant) of Pharaoh, who, when he saw the wonders done for Sarai, said: “It is better that my daughter should be a handmaid in Sarai’s house, than a mistress in another.” He therefore gave her to Sarai. But we don’t know for sure.
6. Sarai was an abusive wife. Sarai used Hagar to fan the flames of Abram’s impatience. She attacked marriage and was urging a defiling 褻瀆 of the marriage bed. True love requires that you do what is good for the other person... And of course she was an abusive mistress of her servant. No Christian ever had the right to abuse the body of a servant this way. Even if a legal marriage took place after this, it was still wrong.
7. It may be a good lesson here to learn that age (Abram’s and Sarai’s) does not make one spiritually mature. Watch impatience. Impatience makes one frustrated and angry, like our child that said: “I’m eating all this broccoli but I’m not growing...” Faith and waiting is integrally 整体linked.
8. Further, from another angle, surely you won’t turn over your wife or husband to someone else, but would you do that to your children? Would you turn your children over to those who would lead them astray from the Lord and teach them lies? Be warned about your children’s teachers!

Aberrant choice by Abram

2 ... And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. 3 Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived....

1. Father Abram, a man of great faith, to whom God had just reaffirmed his promise on oath by walking through the animal sacrifices, did not survive this temptation presented to him by his wife. (See how even the strong can fall – so learn to guard yourself.) Abram chose to walk by sight, and not by faith. In doing this, he denied God’s promise. And see how the Devil will use even those close to you to tempt you to sin.
2. One of the common reasons for this kind of falling is when you are not daily refreshed with God’s promise. It is true that Abram did not have the Holy Scriptures, but what excuse do you have for not reaffirming God’s promises everyday? Faith requires assurance from God’s Word – daily. Notice how when you are tempted and give in it is often because you are not reading God’s love letter.
3. So Abram followed the foolish advice of his wife Sarai and accepted what she offered – Sarai’s maidservant. It was foolish behavior from a man about 86 years old. (Old men can do foolish thing too.) He did not even discuss this with this wife. He did not properly consider if this advice were supported God’s law. He just went along. Lesson: Not everything that seems to make sense is sensible. Abram still had to learn the right lesson later.
Hebrew 6:15 – And so after waiting patiently, Abram received what was promised...
4. So Abram offered his body to the things of this world ignoring what was right. Instead Paul reminded you:
Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Consequences of their Aberrant Choices

4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

1. Sarai, the originator of the plan was the first to face the consequences of hers and Abram’s sinful foolish action: Hagar, who became pregnant, started to despise Sarai. No Christian likes to be hated or have bad things spoken about them. And this must have bothered Sarai. “Despised” literally means “to curse.”

2. Why did Hagar despise Sarai? Hagar saw that she was blessed with a child and her barren mistress would take her child and call him her own. But notice also that Hagar's life was now basically ruined. She would not have another husband – or a real husband, and the one who took her as a concubine had a main wife that held no affection for her. So she spoke bad things about Sarai to her...or to other people about her. Maybe she even asked God to curse Sarai.
- 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me."
3. In unbelievable fashion, Sarai blamed her husband for her sins and her resulting guilt. Isn't this what our society does so commonly today? We blame everyone but ourselves. Like Adam...and Eve...and Bob...and Tom...
This is often what happens when. You sin and then you attack another person to avoid personal accountability.
4. Sarai then wanted the curses that Hagar pronounced upon her to come upon Abram – as if he alone did wrong to Hagar. John Calvin: "*Blind is the assault of anger.*" And look how Sarai calls Jehovah – covenant God – to condemn Abram for what happened to her. That was an abuse of God's name. Yet, to some degree, Abram, the covenant head, failed to fulfill his duty to protect his wife. His sin exposed his wife to hatred. How quickly he fell. Just recently he was deeply concerned about his children and other descendants that he asked God for an oath to confirm his promises to them, and now he totally abandoned the protection of his wife by this sin. Can you imagine how many times Abram then wished he had not taken Hagar as a concubine as he had to listen to the constant complaints of his wife?
- 6 So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.
5. Abram committed more wrongs to cover his adulterous action by giving Sarai full power to act. We can say that Abram abdicated放弃 his leadership of his new wife. He abandoned his new wife, failing to protect her, and turning her over to the authority of his 1st wife. Will you abdicate the responsibility of the family...by refusing to properly instruct your wife and ignoring the discipline of your children?
6. So Sarai treated the woman Hagar cruelly. This lady - a princess of God...who had seen God's miraculous神奇 provisions ...who had faith in the coming Christ...put all of those things out of her head and dealt harshly with Hagar. You can imagine telling others not to talk to her...not giving her enough food...in general, making her life very uncomfortable.
7. As a result of this Abram lost his child...and the mother of his child. How hard it must have been for a father – a good and godly father –to turn out the pregnant mother of his child because of the perennial complaining of his wife. Hagar fled with is Ishmael still in her womb, Abram's first and only child to that time. The name "Hagar" means "flight." And even from purely a human standpoint, who would allow any pregnant woman to head out into the desert. She would have been extremely vulnerable脆弱 there.

Conclusion

Sarai had good intentions – she wanted to do good for her family. But she made some bad choices and connived纵容 to get her husband and another woman involved in her scheme. Her cover was: Everyone is doing it...it is common in our culture, we're doing it to help God out, and we're doing it to remove shame from me. Abram also made a bad choice and he lived by the flesh...He doubted God was going to do what he said and confirmed by oath. He saw a new woman. He saw another means to an end. He knew that his salvation came from God at God's time, but he couldn't wait. His impatience made his do this dastardly deed...and even ruined the life of another woman. Then they both saw the consequences. Hagar had to flee. Sarai felt insecure. Abram disobeyed God. And the wars in the Middle East (among other things)...is the consequence...More than that, however, is that Abram and Sarai could have interrupted the line of promise from which Christ would come. God had to intervene to keep that line open.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Men try to please God in all kinds of ways to find salvation– Good works, giving money to charity, going to church, digging wells in Africa, sending vaccines to the native Indians in Peru, helping in Christian education, and making good political laws... But these all fall short of God's high demands. Learn to look to Christ alone for your salvation. As you see from our text, Abram was not good enough to save you. But Abram's Son, Jesus Christ, perfectly obeyed and suffered for you. So your future is secured with everything you need. Jesus Christ did not grab hold of the promises from the Devil when the Devil offered him but he waited to die for the world – he took no shortcuts... As a result of Christ work, you can learn to walk by faith, not by sight. You know that everything in your life is governed by his Divine promises and providence. Rejoice.

Finally, if you have tried in vain to find salvation, ask God to count Christ work – his life and his death- as your own. Then you will faithfully learn to patiently wait upon him to receive the completion of your salvation.