

"The Walk of Faith"

Part 11

11:1-40

Introduction: We are currently looking at the life of Abraham in our study of the book of Hebrews and tonight the writer is going to take a moment and point to the life of Sarah and then he will go back to Abraham again.

It is the writer's desire that his readers learn from the lives of the Old Testament saints how to LIVE by faith. At the end of chapter 10 the writer pointed back to the Old Testament book of Habakkuk and he quoted the words "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH". We must keep in mind the Hebrews believers who received this letter were struggling with the trials and the tests which they were facing. They were under persecution due to their faith in Jesus Christ. Judaism had been a big part of their lives and now that they had come to Christ the writer made it clear they were no longer under the Old Covenant. There was a New Covenant and it was far superior to the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant had become obsolete. The writer desired for these believers to surrender themselves COMPLETELY over to following Jesus Christ.

But in the minds of the Hebrews there were many questions. How were they to survive if they surrendered over to Jesus for this would bring upon them even more persecution? How were they to provide for their families? What if they were pushed out of their communities, then where would they go? What if their faith cost them all they had? I am sure there were many other questions also.

So in this chapter the writer is showing them the importance of faith and how without faith it is impossible to please God. He therefore uses the Old Testament saints to show how God honors those who are willing to walk by faith. He has showed them Able, Enoch, and Noah from the pre-flood era. He then moves to the Patriarchs to one whom they would have known very well and that is Abraham.

We have followed Abraham from his call out of Ur of the Chaldees to Haran and then on to the land of Canaan. We were able to see how strong Abraham's faith was in God and we were able to see the lessons for our lives. Tonight we shall see more as the writer brings Sarah and her situation into view.

I. The Examples of Faith

Part 8

"Abraham"

Part 3

Notice Hebrews 11:11

There is much to consider from this verse.

First of all God had promised to Abraham that from him would come a great nation.

Genesis 12:1-2

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

² *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:*

³ *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

⁴ *So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*

This promise was made when Abraham was 75 years old and at this time Sarah was 65 and she is barren.

Genesis 11:29-30

²⁹ *And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.*

³⁰ *But Sarai was barren; she had no child.*

It was years later that God refreshed the promise to Abraham.

Genesis 15:5

⁵ *And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

As Abraham's age continued to increase he and Sarah began to look at THEIR ability to fulfill God's promise. After Abraham and Sarah were in the land of Canaan for 10 years

they both came to believe that the promise of God depended upon their planning. This is when Ishmael was conceived.

Genesis 16:3

³ *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.*

At this time Abraham is 85 and Sarah is 75. This attempt to "assist" God in fulfilling His promise was NOT faith and it carried some very serious consequences with it. One of the consequences was that from Ishmael would be born the Arab nations. We are dealing with the consequences of Abraham's choice to "assist" God today, for it is from Ishmael that the majority of the terrorist cells have been born.

There was also another consequence which Abraham faced due to his lack of faith.

Genesis 16:15-16

¹⁵ *And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.*

¹⁶ *And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.*

At the end of chapter 16 Abraham is 86 years old. Now let us notice the first verse of chapter 17.

Genesis 17:1

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

Here we see Abraham is 99 years old so there are 13 between chapter 16 and 17 which tells us that Abraham experienced 13 years of silence. When God broke the silence He gave Abraham more details of the promise.

Genesis 17:15-19

¹⁵ *And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.*

¹⁶ *And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.*

¹⁷ Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

¹⁸ And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

¹⁹ And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

The Lord then made this known to Sarah in chapter 18.

Genesis 18:1a, 9-15

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre:

⁹ And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

¹⁰ And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

¹³ And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

¹⁴ Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

¹⁵ Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

Here we see that Sarah was beyond the child bearing years for she is 89 at this time. We also see that when the Lord made the announcement that she laughed (in disbelief) at the promise.

Now let us get back to Hebrews.

Notice Hebrews 11:11 again.

When we read this verse we see no mention of Sarah's lack of faith but we see here that through faith she was able to conceive. How can we harmonize Genesis 18 and Hebrews 11:11? It seems that after the Lord rebuked her she had a change of heart. But the interesting point to be made here is that God never mentions her lack of faith. Let me tell you why that is. When Jesus died He paid for and took away all sin and that included the sin of Sarah. Let me remind you of the New Covenant promise.

Hebrews 10:16-17

¹⁶ *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;*

¹⁷ *And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

The sins of the Old Testament saints are forgiven and forgotten and the very same is true for us.

Let us now consider Sarah and what we can learn from her about living by faith.

Lesson #1

As we live by faith we must remember that God has a set time for everything.

Genesis 18:1a, 9-10, 14

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre:

⁹ *And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.*

¹⁰ *And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.*

¹⁴ *Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.*

There was an appointed time for Isaac to be born and God would fulfill His promise at the appointed time. There was not one person who could hasten the time. God would allow Sarah to conceive and it would be at His appointed time. Now the reason why God waited so long was because Isaac needed to be a MIRACLE child because he would also be a type of Jesus Christ.

Application:

We also must understand that in our lives and with all the situations which we face God has an appointed time for everything. I remember years ago that Pastor Ritchey taught two important points to us at Bedford Bible:

1. God's timing is always perfect.
2. God's grace is always sufficient.

There are times in our lives when we look at a situation and we want to declare that God has showed up too late. But that is never the case. Let me show you a passage from the Gospel of John.

John 11:1-6

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

² *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)*

³ *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

⁴ *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

⁵ *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*

⁶ *When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

When word reached Jesus that Lazarus was sick Jesus intentionally stayed where He was for 2 days. The reason is seen in verse 4 and it was so that God the Father and the Son would be glorified through the raising of Lazarus.

In the lives of His children God often waits until the situation is beyond our ability to "fix it" and then He steps in and when this happens we can take NO glory in what He has done. The point being, God has an appointed time for everything, He is never late and His grace will carry us through as we patiently wait upon Him.

Lesson #2

God's power is not limited by our ability.

This is one of the major keys of walking and living by faith. We have come to believe that we must have the ability to "fix" the situation before He will work. But the Truth is the very opposite of that is True.

Genesis 18:10-11

⁰ And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 when Isaac was born so we know that the fulfillment of the promise did not depend upon their ability. They had no ability.

Notice Hebrews 11:12

John Phillips says, "This verse tells of the poverty of the soil which God had to work with." He also goes on to say, "*But it is the poverty of the soil which brings glory to God.*"

Conclusion:

If you are facing a major test in your life and the future looks very dark and dismal because you have not the ability to change it, let me encourage you by pointing to Sarah and Abraham to remind you that God is not limited because of your inability.