
GENESIS: IT ALL STARTS HERE

THE LORD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

GENESIS 21:1-7

1 The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. 2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 And Sarah said, 'God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.' 7 And she said, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.'

INTRODUCTION

In our day, it is very common for adults to admit high levels of anxiety and depression. Such things are complicated topics, but at the core of both is the experience and/or anticipation of unmet expectations. The Bible is not silent about expectations, and God is repeatedly affirmed as superbly faithful. In fact, Abraham was blessed by God beyond measure, and God's faithfulness was on display time after time in Abraham's life. In this message we will look at a specific time when God's faithfulness took center stage, and we will consider the implications of God's promises and His fidelity for us today.

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

- (1) THE LORD DID AS HE HAD PROMISED**
- (2) WHERE IS JESUS AND THE GOSPEL IN THIS PASSAGE?**
- (3) WHAT HAS GOD PROMISED TO THOSE WHO TRUST AND LOVE CHRIST?**

EXPOSITION:

(1) THE LORD DID AS HE HAD PROMISED

“The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised” (v1).

◆ GOD HAD PROMISED!

• **Especially An Offspring**

- “**your very own son shall be your heir**” (Gen. 15:4).
- “**Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac**” (Gen. 17:19).

◆ ENOUGH TIME AND ACTIVITY HAD PASSED TO DISCOURAGE TRUST

• **The Timeline**

- Year 0 is not explicit – Abraham/Abram left Ur some time before his father, Terah, died (Gen. 11:31-32).
 - The amount of time is not specified, but this indicates that God’s initial call to Abraham/Abram was even before he left Haran.
- 5-20 years after initial call (supposing Terah was not in bad health when they set out from Ur)
 - God told Abraham/Abram to leave Haran, to set out for Canaan, when he was 75 years old (Gen. 12:4).
- 6-25 years after initial call (possibly 1-5 years to travel from Haran to Canaan, Canaan to Egypt, and back again to Canaan)
 - Some more time passed, and Abraham/Abram finally settled in Canaan (Gen. 13:12); and it was then that God made His promise more specific concerning Abraham/Abram’s “offspring” (Gen. 13:16).
 - Abraham was likely 76-80 years old by this time
- 16-31 years after initial call
 - Abraham and Sarah take matters into their own hands, and try to kick-start God’s promise through sinful means (adding Hagar to the marital mix [Gen. 16]).

- Abraham was 86 years old when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (Gen. 16:16).
 - 29-44 years after initial call
 - Abraham was 99 when God renamed Abraham (from Abram) and Sarah (from Sarai). He also reiterated, as well as specified, His promise to give Abraham an offspring through Sarah (Gen. 17:4-8, 15-16).
- **A Summary of the situation**
 - At least a quarter of a century had passed (maybe half) from the first time God has called Abraham out in order to bless him.
 - God had spoken a word of promise to Abraham 5 (maybe 7) times (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 18:1-15).
 - One might argue that God also spoke once before Abram's family was in Haran, adding 1 more (Gen. 11:31).
 - It may also be argued further that the blessing spoken by Melchizedek was also a word of promise, adding still 1 more (Gen. 14:18-20).
 - Abraham had been faithless and disobedient numerous times.
 - When a famine arose in Canaan, Abraham fled to Egypt and even lied about Sarah – calling her his sister (Gen. 12:10-14).
 - Who can forget the embarrassing episode that happened when Abraham and Sarah tried to “help God along” – mocking marriage and subjugating Hagar to polygamy (Gen. 16:3-4)
 - Abraham very likely thought that God would just pick up with Ishmael (Gen. 17:18), since God had been seemingly unable to deliver on His promise through Sarah.

◆ GOD DELIVERED ON HIS PROMISE!

• **An Offspring**

- “your very own son shall be your heir” (Gen. 15:4).
- “Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac” (Gen. 17:19).

- **“The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised”** (v1).
 - Sarah sang out with praise and wonder.
 - “Sarah said, *‘God has made laughter for me...’*” (v6). “and she [Sarah] said, *‘Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age’*” (v7).

◆ WHAT A GRACIOUS REMINDER OF GOD’S FIDELITY HERE!

• **God is Faithful, beyond any other.**

- Psalm 89:1-8 – “I will sing of the **steadfast love of the LORD**, forever;

with my mouth I will make known **your faithfulness** to all generations. For I said, *‘Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish **your faithfulness.**’*

You have said, *“I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’*

Let the heavens praise **your wonders**, O LORD, **your faithfulness** in the assembly of the holy ones! For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, a God **greatly to be feared** in the council of the holy ones, and **awesome above all** who are around him? O LORD God of hosts, who is **mighty as you are**, O LORD, with **your faithfulness all around you?**” (Ps 89:1-8).

(2) WHERE IS JESUS AND THE GOSPEL IN THIS PASSAGE?

◆ THE FULL PROMISES OF GOD TO ABRAHAM

• **A Land/Nation**

- “I will make of you a **great nation...**” (Gen. 12:2).

• **A Name**

- “I will... make **your name great**” (Gen. 12:2).

- **A Blessing**
 - “I will **bless you... in you all the families of earth shall be blessed**” (Gen. 12:2-3).
- **An Everlasting Covenant**
 - “I will **establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring** after you throughout their generations for **an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring** after you” (Gen. 17:7).

◆ THE GOSPEL TELLS OF THE ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT OF ALL OF THESE

- **A Land/Nation**
 - “I will make of you a great nation...” (Gen. 12:2).
 - Already – “**you** are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a **holy nation**, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).
- **A Name**
 - “I will... make your name great” (Gen. 12:2).
 - John tells us that Christ Himself gives all those who love and trust Him “**His name upon their heads**” (Rev. 22:4).
 - Peter also says that we should “**glorify God**” if we have been labeled with the name “**Christian**” (even if those who label us so are intending insult), for that is a name of association with Christ Himself (1 Pet. 4:16).
- **A Blessing**
 - “I will **bless you... in you all the families of earth shall be blessed**” (Gen. 12:2-3).
 - The Apostle Paul says that this “blessing” from God that would make Abraham and his offspring “blessing to the nations” was the proclamation of the Gospel to Abraham (Gal. 3:8).
 - “So then,” Paul continues in verse 9, “**those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith**” (Gal. 3:9).

- **An Everlasting Covenant**

- “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you” (Gen. 17:7).
 - The author of Hebrews said that Christ “**offered himself without blemish to God [to] purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore,**” he says “**he [Christ] is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance...**” (Heb. 9:14–15).

(3) WHAT HAS GOD PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE AND TRUST CHRIST?

- ◆ THE FOOLISH WORLDLY PROMISES

- **The World is *Vanity Fair***

- Beware: those promises that center upon you are of the world.
 - Longer/Healthier life
 - Personal Power and/or Prestige
 - Distinctive Wealth and/or Freedom for Leisure
 - Relational Success and/or Influence
 - Earthly Peace or Utopia

- **Sometimes Christians will “spiritualize” these:** My own experiences

- “God wants Christians to be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous in order to make the World attracted to Christianity...”
 - “Jesus wants you to be healthy, so He always heals.”
 - “God will bless His children, so just believe and you’ll be promoted next week.”
 - “Declare today: I’m getting stronger, healthier, and wiser. Every time you say it, you’re moving toward it.” (Osteen tweet).

◆ SO, WHAT HAS GOD REALLY PROMISED FOR THOSE WHO TRUST CHRIST?

● **He has promised some things FOR you:**

- God promised to bring salvation FOR all who believe (Rom. 1:16).
- God promised honor rather than shame FOR those who believe (1 Pet. 2:6-7).
- God promised that His righteousness comes through Christ FOR all who believe (Rom. 3:22)
- God promised eternal life FOR all who believe or trust in Christ (1 Tim. 1:16).
- God promised lasting peace and glorious rest FOR those who have believed (Heb. 4:3).
- God promised a new heaven and earth, where He will be intimately near and the curse of sin will be eradicated FOR all those who love and trust Him (Rev. 21:1-4)

● **He has promised that He will do some things IN you:**

- God promised that His Word would be at work IN you who believe (1 Thess. 2:13).
- God promised to work IN you both the willing and the doing of good works (Phil. 2:13).
- God promised that Christ Himself would be formed IN you who trust and love Him (Gal. 4:19).
- God promised that He would dwell IN you who have been born of God (1 John 4:4).
- God promised freedom from the “works of the flesh” and true spiritual fruit IN all who love and trust Christ (Gal. 5:13-23).

● **He has promised to do some things WITH you:**

- God promised, through Christ, to build His Kingdom WITH you through the task of “disciple-making” (Matt. 28:19-20).
- God promised to make His own glory and greatness known WITH your good works as you shine among this world (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15).
- God promised to shame the arrogant and expose the foolishness of the world WITH you as evidence of His power and glory (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

- God promised to display the “immeasurable riches of His grace” for all the rest of eternity, WITH you as a demonstration of such lavish doting upon utterly undeserving recipients (Eph. 2:7).

APPLICATION:

- (1) Are you missing deep peace and lasting joy?
 - a. Maybe it is because you have been expecting God to deliver on promises He did not make.
 - i. Are you looking for an earthly utopia?
 - ii. Are you waiting for God to solve all your problems?
 - iii. Are you focused on what God hasn't done for you (selfish focus)?
 - b. Maybe it is because you have come to doubt that God will actually make good on the promises He has made.
 - i. Are you overwhelmed with feelings of guilt and shame?
 - ii. Do you sometimes wonder if you will ever truly be free from the foolish desires and harmful patterns that seem to dominate you?
 - iii. Have you become doubtful that you will taste the goodness of God's glorious blessings in the life to come?
- (2) What does this passage intend to make us believe about God's faithfulness?
- (3) What is the Scripture telling us we need to change about our expectations on this side of glory?
- (4) What is this passage asking us to do with our time, treasure, and talent?

MY PRAYERS

- May God forgive us for doubting His faithfulness.
- May God help us to trust Him for what He has actually promised.
- May God make us the shining lights of His grace that He has intended us to be.