



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 21:1-7: Isaac, the Promised Son is Born

Lesson 44

"And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. 2 For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. 4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me." 7 She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age."

Background Notes

In Genesis 12 God had promised Abraham a line of descendants that would become a great nation. Abraham was seventy-five years old Sarah was sixty-five years old at that time, and they had no children. For the next twenty-five years, God continued to confirm his promise to Abraham and Sarah, but during that delay both Abraham and Sarah questioned God's promise, and they even tried to help God out. First they thought Abraham's servant Eliezer would be his heir (Genesis 15). Then they tried to help God out by using Hagar as a concubine for Abraham to produce an heir (Genesis 16).

God was not impressed with these lack-of-faith efforts, and He had to remind Abraham and Sarah several times that the promise would not be fulfilled by their contrived efforts, but by having their very own child. Look back at Genesis 17:19, *"Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac."*

Now here in chapter 21 that great promise is fulfilled. The promised son was finally born, and they named him Isaac. *"Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac" (v3).*

Verse 5 says that Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born to him. That means that Sarah was ninety years old. They had waited twenty-five years, but God had fulfilled his promise. Although Isaac was conceived in the natural way, it was obvious that God had worked a miracle. Sarah's body was not only rejuvenated to the point where she could bear a child at ninety years old, but she was also enabled to nurse the child. *"She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age"(v7).* She actually nursed her child Isaac. That was certainly greater than the accomplishment of any humanly devised lactation program, right? Well, so much for the background

Doctrinal Points

1. God fulfills His perfect word in His time.

"And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. 2 For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him" (v1-2).

God fulfills His perfect word in **His** time! God had promised a son and God delivered a son. What God promises, God delivers! But why did God wait so long -- twenty-five years? The answer is that God didn't wait! The promised son was born at His set time (v2), the time that God had planned all along. God fulfills His perfect word in His time. Yes, Abraham and Sarah waited, and God had them wait, but God had His reasons. We don't know all the reasons why God had Abraham and Sarah wait twenty-five years for the promised child. Certainly there was the lesson of learning to trust God, and also the lesson of learning to patiently wait on God. Another reason why God had them wait was so we could learn lessons from their lives.

God fulfills His perfect word in His time. From our perspective it may look like God is behind schedule in fulfilling His promises, but God is never behind schedule. I have even had Christians ask me, "Why did God choose to wait so long before sending Christ to die for the sins of the world?" The answer is that the Lord Jesus came **right on schedule**, in God's perfect time. Galatians 4:4 says, *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son.."*

The idea in "fullness of time" is the "right time," the "perfect time." When the time was right and full and ready, when the time for the predicted coming Messiah was perfect from God's view, the promises were fulfilled right on schedule. All of Satan's attempts to thwart God's program were to no avail. God fulfills His perfect will in His time.

The same is true in reference to God's plans and programs for your life and for my life. His plans are perfect, and they will be carried out on God's timetable. This even includes God's discipline in our lives. In God's plans and programs, that discipline will take place in God's perfect way in God's perfect time. Nothing can mess up or thwart God's sovereign plans for our lives as believers.

All of God's decrees are perfect, including His decrees about our lives as believers. What God has spoken is decreed and is perfect, and will be fulfilled in His time, whether it be in reference to the coming child for Abraham and Sarah, whether it be when and where and how the Lord Jesus came into the world, or whether it be in all the details in God's plans and programs for our lives.

I'm sure you have heard the expression, "God's delays are not denials." Well, the Bible also teaches that His delays are His decrees. It's all part of His perfect timing. Think of His perfect decrees as we have them for the believer in Philippians 1:6: *"being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.."*

God fulfills His perfect word in His time.

2. God sees our imperfect faith in His grace.

God sees our imperfect faith in His grace. In Hebrews 11:11 we read this: "*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.*"

"Wait a minute," you say! "I thought that Sarah doubted God's promise? I thought she laughed in unbelief when God said she would have a child in her old age." Yes, that's true! So how can the Bible say this here in Hebrews 11:11: "*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.*"

Is this a contradiction in the Bible? What is the answer? The answer is that Sarah changed. Her imperfect faith matured, as we see here in Genesis 21. Yes, Sarah did laugh in doubt concerning God's promise, but she did not deny God. She had a genuine faith in the true God, but it was a weak faith. It was an immature faith. It was an imperfect faith, but God in His grace not only tolerated that imperfect faith, He patiently strengthened and matured Sarah's faith. Her faith matured to the point where God Himself could inspire the writer to the Hebrews to say "**by faith** Sarah conceived and bore a son."

I find this very encouraging, don't you? In His grace, God sees and acknowledges our imperfect faith. Just this past week, I had the privilege of seeing a man in his seventies become a Christian. He had a lot of doubts and questions, but with a step of genuine faith, he trusted Christ as his Savior. Now that doesn't mean that all his questions and doubts were instantly answered and cleared up once he believed. No! At this point his faith is young, and immature, and imperfect, but it is genuine, and it will mature. That is the point! His faith is in the true God and only Savior, Jesus Christ.

Sarah's faith was imperfect -- but it was genuine. In His grace, God recognized that faith and strengthened it. How encouraging! God sees our imperfect faith in His grace.

Practical Applications

1. Remember that "your strength will equal your days."

That's a quote from Deuteronomy 33:25. It was a promise made to the tribe of Asher, but it can certainly be applied to us as well. What does it mean? It means that the Lord will give you whatever strength is necessary to do whatever He calls you to do. We see that illustrated in the life of Sarah. The Lord called Sarah to be a mother of a child when she was ninety years old, and the Lord gave her the bodily strength and stamina to carry out His will.

The Lord will do the same for you. He won't necessarily call you to have a child at ninety years old, ladies, but whatever He calls you to do, He will give you the strength to do. Many times that is the way the Lord can guide us as to whether we are doing His will or not. Is He giving us the needed strength? There should not be burn out. Whatever the Lord calls you to do, the Lord will give you the strength to do it. Remember that your strength will equal your days.

2. Let's laugh with God!

Back in Genesis 17:17 we see that Abraham laughed when God told him that Sarah would have a son. Now Abraham didn't exactly laugh at God -- it was more of a "this is too good to be true" type of laugh. But in Genesis 18:12 we saw that Sarah laughed in disbelief. In that sense, she laughed at God, and had to be rebuked for her unbelieving laughter.

But in Genesis 21 Sarah is laughing **with** God. *"And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me"(v6)*. This was the laughter of joy, this was laughing with God. When God named the child Isaac, meaning laughter, He did it on purpose! The name Isaac was to be a reminder to Abraham and Sarah that they had laughed in unbelief, but with the birth of the child there was the laughter of joy. God had fulfilled His promise!

Laughter can be wrongly directed at God in unbelief, as we see so often today in the media, in the classroom, in the office, with the people you rub shoulders with. This is mocking laughter directed at God. But Abraham and Sarah could laugh with God, and so can we. God has designed us to laugh, and we can laugh with Him. He has fulfilled His promise of a Savior for us, and we have so much about which to be joyful! When we think of all that the Lord has done for us, let's laugh with God.