



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

**Believing God when it is hard to
believe!**

Genesis 18:1-15

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Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Believing God when it is hard to believe!

Genesis 18:1-15

Opening Comments

- Good morning – turn to **Genesis 18**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- Life isn't always easy – have you noticed that?
- I have lived long enough to have lived through a few hard times
- The most recent one for me was my mother going to be with the Lord just over a year ago
- And then Kelly lost her step-father who we don't know if he knew the Lord
- Jesus never promised a life filled with rainbows and unicorns **John 16:33**

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

- In the midst of the hard parts of life we can have peace
- That is not easy, and it doesn't make the hard parts fun – they are hard
- As I look around the room and as I think about some of you who are faithful online viewers – I know something about your hard times
- I know about the chronic pain that has lasted years, maybe decades – sometimes with little or no help from doctors or medicine
- I know about the marriages that are struggling – sometimes with only one person trying to please God in the relationship
- I know about illnesses, disease, deaths, financial struggles, troubles with children, frustrations with jobs or loss of jobs
- And I also know that for each of those things that I know about there are probably two or three that I don't know about
- Life has been hard for a lot of people lately
- But I can also look around this room and I know people who are watching online who are not having a hard time right now
- Kelly and I are currently in between hard times
- It is not hard for us right now, but the future does not appear to be smooth sailing for us, or for anyone

- It is during the hard times that faith is tested
- It can be hard to trust God and believe when life is hard
- Doubts start to rise up in your mind
- Which Satan then uses to tear down our faith and replace faith with fear, and hopelessness, and despair
- That's where we find one of the characters in our text for today
- The Lord gently deals with her doubt and brings her back to a place of faith – the faith she will need to experience the great promises of God
- Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us how to believe when it is hard to believe
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Believing God when it is hard to believe!**
- Last time, the Lord appears to Abram, changes his name to Abraham and rehearses all the promises He made to him and institutes the covenant sign of circumcision
- God also has something for Abraham's wife Sarai **Genesis 17:15-16**
Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a *mother of nations*; kings of peoples shall be from her.
- After the Lord leaves, Abraham is quick to obey the Lord and circumcises all the males
- And then life returns to its normal routines
- **Genesis 18:1-5**
- Abraham, 99 years old, enjoying a siesta
- The sense of the text is that Abraham did not see the three men approaching – they simply appeared
- His response makes it clear that he recognized the Lord
- 99-year-old, rich, leader in his community 'ran' and 'bowed'
- Hospitality to strangers was (and still is) common in that culture
- But what he does next is more than common hospitality
- **Genesis 18:6-8**
- Notice the words 'hurried' 'ran' 'hastened'

- Instead of a ‘morsel of bread’ he serves them a kingly feast
- One of the unique aspects of this meal is that it is the only place recorded in the Old Testament of the Lord eating
- There was something special about this encounter
- The Lord had a special relationship with Abraham **James 2:23**
And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.
- All that changed when Jesus came as a man
- There are many accounts of the Lord Jesus eating
- And friendship with God was not something only one man had
- Speaking to His disciples Jesus said **Luke 12:4**
And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.
- And in John 15 Jesus said that faithful obedience was the only qualification for friendship with the Lord Jesus
- Also interesting about this encounter is that Abraham does not appear to partake in the meal
- Instead, he stands and serves
- He may have been a great man to the people around him, but he knew he was in the presence of Someone far greater than himself
- A truly great man is not diminished by humbling himself before someone greater than himself, especially before the Lord
- After the meal, the Lord deals with Sarah’s doubts
- **Genesis 18:9-10**
- This is the first time Sarah has heard this promise directly from the Lord – previously, the Lord told Abraham and he told Sarah
- **Genesis 18:11-12**
- Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 89
- They had probably been together for more than 70 years
- And she was barren – incapable of conceiving children
- And now she was post-menopausal
- If you have ever struggled with infertility, you might have an idea of what Sarah’s life might have been like
- But it was harder than we can imagine
- In that culture, an infertile woman was believed to be cursed
- She was incomplete, unfulfilled – less than a woman, not a good wife

- And then her husband, Abraham is hearing from God that he will be the father of a great nation
- Her barrenness was bad enough, but then the pressure to do her part to fulfill God's promise was unbearable
- For twenty-five years, Sarah has tried everything humanly possible to give Abraham the son God promised
- She had already passed through all the stages of grief and was now hopeless
- 'shall I have pleasure' – being intimate with her husband wasn't even pleasurable anymore
- Her response is not surprising – as much as she might want it to be true, she can't imagine how it could be possible

- **Genesis 18:13**

- In the last chapter Abraham laughed out loud, Sarah laughed within herself

- She was out of sight in the tent behind the Lord

- We can't ever hide anything from the Lord **Psalm 139:1-4**

O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

- The Lord is omniscient or all-knowing
- The Lord calls Sarah to stop doubting and believe

- **Genesis 18:14**

- 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' = rhetorical question **Jeremiah 32:17**

Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.

- It was by God's omnipotence that He created everything that exists

John Walvoord

"Is a child from a dead womb too marvelous for the One who called all things into existence?"

- During all the hard times of our lives, the Lord's question and Jeremiah's response ought to be at the forefront of our mind

- 'Is anything too hard...Nothing is too hard!'

- Sarah tries to deny it

- **Genesis 18:15**

- This is a rebuke but a very gentle one
 - The Lord is on His way to Sodom and Gomorrah
 - He stops off to deal with Sarah (princess) to help her to believe
 - To give her hope
 - We are not told what is going on in Sarah's heart after this, but we do know that within a couple of months she is pregnant
 - The next time we hear from Sarah will be Isaac is born **Genesis 21:6** **And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me."**
 - Doubt is replaced by joy
 - Life can be hard, and faith can be hard when life is hard, especially if it is hard for a long time
 - How do we believe when it is hard to believe?
 - There are three hurdles we have to get over to believe during the hard times
 - Before we look at the first one, we begin by admitting we are having a hard time believing God – Sarah laughed – denied it – admit it
 - First hurdle – **Is God able?**
 - We have already talked about that – Yes, God is able!
 - To get over this hurdle you need to be more specific than simply saying God is able
 - What is it that you need God to be able to do?
 - Heal your marriage? What needs to be healed in your marriage?
 - Forgiveness for past mistakes? Is God able to bring forgiveness into my marriage?
 - That's what is going on with the father of the child being tormented by demons in **Mark 9:23-24**
- Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"**
- In essence, the father is saying, I believe ALL things are possible, but I am struggling to believe THIS thing is possible
 - The more specific you are about what you believe God is able to do, the more your faith will grow
 - The second hurdle is a little harder – **Is God willing?**
 - That was what the leper in **Mark 1:40** was dealing with
- Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."**

- He believed Jesus was able to do it, not sure He was willing to do it
- The best way to get over this hurdle is to know what God said in His Word, the Bible
- Jesus told His disciples **Matthew 10:8**
Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.
- When you are struggling to get over the hurdle of God's willingness, remind yourself of what He said in His Word
- For example: Is God willing to help me get out of debt? **Romans 13:8**
Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.
- God has proven Himself able and willing on that one to Kelly and I
- The third hurdle may be the hardest – **When will God do it?**
- God promised to make Abraham into a great nation and then waited 25 years to open Sarah's womb
- Why did He wait so long? For His glory? She was already barren!
- Opening her womb 25 years earlier would have been a miracle
- As far as I can tell God doesn't explain why He waited 25 years
- And God may not explain it to you either
- As you wait for God to act, seek Him with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength – learn how to love Him more
- Grow in your understanding of His nature and character
- His love, grace, joy, power
- Remind yourself that He is with you and knows every thought you think, every pain you feel, every tear you shed – He knows how hard it is for you
- During the hard times of life – trust in the God who is able to do what you need Him to do
- Trust that he is willing to act on your behalf
- And trust that when the time is right, He will do something, maybe even something miraculous – wouldn't that be radical?
- **Pray!**