

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
April 3, 2022

Title: Sarah's Faith

Subject: Faith, Sarah, Abraham, Unbelief, God's Promise, Spiritual descendants, The Lord, Jesus Christ, The Word of God, God's Faithfulness, Grace

Theme Text: Hebrews 11:11-12 (ESV) ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

Theme Illustration: Throughout Scripture, a God-given faith, exercised in response to God's promises, has overcome what science says is impossible. Today's text concerns faith exercised by an aged frail woman, whose initial unbelief hindered her ability to cling to the promises of God. But in the end, standing upon God's promises to both her and her husband, she believed and became the mother of all believers. God's promises to Abraham and Sarah, or the order of impossible, astounding, unfathomable. God's word to Abraham, that he would father a family not from his steward Eliezer of Damascus, but his son, **Genesis 15:5 (ESV)** ⁵ **And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." For Sarah to even envision having a son at her age boggled her mind, much less believing she will be the mother of God's people.**

When God repeated the promise to Abraham within Sarah's hearing, she laughed, not out loud, but in her mind and heart. God rebuked her laughter, thus speaking to her personally, and her absent faith came alive in Genesis 18.

Read: Hebrews 11:11-12

Introduction: Only the Lord Jesus Christ lived the life of perfect faith. Like all the other spiritual graces, faith is subject to growth, **2 Thessalonians 1:3 (ESV)** ³ **We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.** Coming to mature faith in this life is a process. Faith is not always active. Nor can we command faith activities. He who bestows faith must also renew our faith. The faith of every saint falters at times, as evidenced in the life of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and the apostles. The flesh is still within us. Thus, our human reasonings and work are ready to oppose faith's actions.

Having spoken of Abraham's faith, we now engage Sarah's faith. We can observe what a blessing it is when a husband and wife are both pulling the yoke together. It is a great encouragement when our closest companions in our lives, our fellow travelers on the same path.

Transition: I see three important elements and lessons we gain from this text. We notice in the first clause of verse 11:

1. Faith's Obstacles: Hebrews 11:11-12 (ESV) ¹¹ **By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age** since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

At first, we notice to God's word to both Abraham and Sarah was given in the face of an incredible obstacle. Sarah was beyond childbearing potential. We all can agree that this was a formidable problem to faith and fulfillment and thus fueled Sarah's original unbelief.

It is helpful to consider obstacles to faith. The realization of the promises of God required faith from both Abraham and Sarah. Her faith was then presented to the church as an example, **1 Peter 3:5-6 (ESV)** ⁵ **For this is**

how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

In Galatians 4:22-23 (ESV) ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. ²³ But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. This reminds us that Isaac was born out of this promise. Thus, Sarah is the free woman from whom God's family came.

We know that she had not produced any children during her normal time of fertility. Sarah Moore, Abraham, no children, **Genesis 16:1 (ESV) ¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar.** The natural order of things fed their unbelief.

In Genesis 18, three men appeared to Abraham as he was sitting at the entrance to his tent. Sarah was inside listening. One of those who spoke was the Lord who declared that they and she would have a son. Her response was to laugh, **Genesis 18:12 (ESV) ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" Please notice Sarah's words, I am worn out. She cannot envision conceiving a child, much less carrying that child to term.**

Her laugh was an inward immediate response of unbelief and was to the ear inaudible. However, the present Lord sees and hears all things. Thus, the Lord reviewed books. Her unbelief at once. She even denies her laugh. Sarah covered her unbelief with a lie.

Since she did not witness the exchange, she like women can hear from a distance or within the tent. When God called her on her laugh, she realized immediately that this was no ordinary traveler, but the Lord himself. At that

point. Real faith was granted to her, and it took residence in her heart. God had spoken and she heard him.

We must remember that sometimes the word is like a delayed fuse bomb exploding when the fuse timer reaches its appointed moment. It is when the Lord repeated the promise in Genesis 18:14, that her faith took hold of her.

Saints, let us take note again that faith is a gift enabled by the hearing of the word, Romans 10:18. We must also understand that faith grows and is sustained by God and His word. We are incapable of sustaining saving faith on our own. Before faith is established, often its birth is opposed by logic, tradition, and deception.

We might ask why God did not deal with Sarah as he does later with Zachariah when told that Elizabeth would bear a son in her old age. We need to understand how often God overlooks our defects. God did not rebuke Rahab's lie, nor did he review Job's impatience, while dealing strongly with Jonah.

Sarah's dead womb was enabled when, in response, she received the ability to conceive. So God did for her what He did for Abraham who became the father of many nations, **Romans 4:17 (ESV)**¹⁷ as it is written, **"I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.** Thus, Sarah became the mother of all who believe by grace through faith.

Transition: We see that this strength was not limited to conception, but by God's strength, she was able to carry and deliver the child. This is an example of:

2. Faith's Endurance: Hebrews 11:11-12 (ESV)¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, **since she considered him faithful who had promised.**¹² Therefore from one man,

and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

At her age, being able to sustain a growing child within her and surviving the birth, is evidence of God's supplied strength which enabled her to endure. Thus, it was by faith that she was able to deliver.

The Bible is clear, it is the Lord who opens and closes the womb, first Samuel 1:5. There was no miscarriage, she trusted God to the end. This instructs us that faith is necessary for the believer in the everyday affairs of life and not just in this exercise of worship.

We are to eat, drink, work, and sleep, in faith. True faith not only appropriates the promise but continues resting upon the promise until it is accomplished, **Hebrews 10:36 (ESV)** ³⁶ **For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.** What does the Lord say about these obstacles, **Matthew 21:21 (ESV)** ²¹ **And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen.**

To believe the promises of God is to rest upon them until they are fulfilled. Martin Luther famously said, "if you want to trust God, you must learn to crucify the question, how." It is up to God to determine the means of fulfillment.

God is not hamstrung by the order of nature. What was then the foundation of her confidence, was it not that she considered Him faithful to His promises?

Transition: God used Sarah's faith as a means far beyond her own comprehension. This is the character of:

3. Faith's Fruit: Hebrews 11:11-12 (ESV) ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² **Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.**

God used Sarah's faith to not only give her a son. But give her an entire nation of people. That is the character of real faith. Real faith has the potential to bear fruit, way beyond the immediate horizon. Sarah became the mother of this multitude, **Revelation 7:9 (ESV)** ⁹ **After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.** This figurative language is given to emphasize the enormous fruit. God used, it to bless Abraham and Sarah, and those far beyond their comprehension.

The reference to the stars in the sand of the sea calls attention to the twofold seed, the earthly and the heavenly seed, the natural and the spiritual, thus true Israel.

Conclusion: Through the means of God's grace to Abraham and Sarah, there came Isaac and from him Jesus Christ. Who can tell how many lives may be affected for good, even in two generations yet to come through your faith? Should this not because each one of us to cry out to the Lord, increase my faith to the praise of the glory of your grace?

How many of you here today, worshiping God as a believer, may be, the fruit of someone who prayed in generations past? How might your prayers and your faith this day produce fruit in generations to come? What might you say, the Lord is coming, were not even going to be here? What might God do through the means of faith in and by even the smallest of faithful churches? Do we believe in faith that God through us will make disciples of all nations? Nothing is impossible for those who believe in the promises and the faithfulness of our God.