

98-12-13b Genesis Chapter 16 verse 1-16 Attitudes or Hagar - Sarai Custom

We resume now our study in Genesis chapter 16, where we have seen that because of circumstances, Sarai has adopted a plan that backfires on her and only intensifies her unhappiness. The question we ended with in the previous session was, why does God not intervene? There are times when God will interpose himself before someone is about to make a mistake. The most obvious example that comes to mind is Balaam.

When Balak's men have come to get Balaam to curse Israel and he's on the donkey on the way to go do so, God interposes an angel that the donkey can see and Balaam cannot. Why doesn't God stop Sarai before this thing gets very far down the road? Because there are consequences. You think about the birth of Ishmael and his descendants and the existence of the Arab peoples and the relationship that they've had with Israel down through the centuries.

This could have all been averted if God had just stayed Sarai's hand in this matter. But God does not intervene at this point. There's a lot of meditating you can do about when, where, how and why God chooses to intervene in situations and there are many others where he does not.

God is going to intervene in this chapter, as we've seen, but it isn't here. And why is that? Well, we've seen the pattern in Abram's life where as his faith grows and as the outworking of his faith and obedience grows, his intimacy with God grows. And he goes from hearing the voice of the Lord to seeing the Lord face to face.

And he will eventually, before we conclude the study of his life, we will see him sitting down and eating a meal with the Lord God, which is about as intimate as you can get. And he achieves the friend of God label or status in the Old Testament Scriptures. But this is the result of perseverance in faith and growth in faith and learning from his mistakes.

Abram makes a lot of mistakes. We are looking at one right now. But this works together for good because he knows he's called and he does love God despite his failures.

And so God is free to work these things together for good. At this point, Sarai clearly, from the very first phrase in verse 1, is not looking at the Lord as her savior, her deliverer, her shield, her reward. He is distant.

He is responsible for her barrenness. And perhaps she's sort of holding this against God and she doesn't want to talk to God about it. She doesn't appeal to Him as many other godly women in the Bible did.

She instead implements her own solution to the problem. And right in that circumstance,

we have the nucleus of our own difficulty, our own failure. And the source of it is when we look at a problem, we look at a situation that seems unsolvable or that's frustrating or that is of long duration.

This has been going on for at least 10 years in the land and Sarai runs out of patience. And she takes her eyes off of the Lord, although she is aware of Him and mentions Him twice. She mentions Him in the first speech, she mentions Him in the second speech, but not in terms of His benefit, rather in terms of His responsibility for her problems in her mind.

So this is something we can observe and draw our own conclusions from. It's easy in the objective light in which we look at this to say, well, she shouldn't have done that. But when we look at ourselves, it's much harder to have that clear vision that, well, I shouldn't have done that.

I should have been patient and waited for God's resolution, God's provision, continued to claim God's promise. We've seen this over and over again in the New Testament. We are sons of God and heirs of God if we hold fast our confidence firm until the end.

You remember the horror and gloom and darkness that fell on Abram? You remember the day that he spent battling the carrion birds away from the split animal pieces? Well, God knew about that. That's a part of God's design and God's plan. And that delay has its purpose.

The period of time between the giving of a promise and its fulfillment has a purpose. And we have to continually remind ourselves that when we see a problem or a challenge and we know that God has promised provision, has promised His grace and His intervention in situations such as those, that it's God's time, God's timing that is an issue. And if He delays His coming, if He delays His intervention, if He delays the answer to our request or the fulfillment of His promise, there's a reason for the delay.

And we find ourselves challenged to not lose heart, to not fade out. Whenever I think of fading out, I think about the three-mile run that we had to do in the Marine Corps. You know, it's easy to start great.

You're kind of excited and you've got a little adrenaline going there at the beginning. All these guys are there and they blow the whistle or shoot the gun or whatever. Bing! Everybody starts off and you've got spring in your legs and you're traipsing on down the road and everything is great.

And the last place I had to do this was at Fort Sill and they had a mile-and-a-half out, mile-and-a-half back course. And it always seemed that somehow they had added hills and dips and things in that same stretch of road on the way back that weren't there when I went out. It was a lot quicker getting to the halfway mark than it was getting back

from the halfway mark to the finish.

And perceptions start to crowd into your mind. You glance at your watch and try to pace yourself and get the best time that you can because it all affects your score which goes into your record. And so when you're on the way back and suddenly your legs are sending signals and your lungs are sending signals and for some reason my shoulders would start sending me signals and all of this starts crowding into your mind and you kind of stop keeping track of your pace and you start thinking, boy, I'm huffing and puffing.

And then what's really discouraging is when other people start passing you. You know, you bolted out, we're doing great, left all these people in the dust and now all of a sudden they're passing you and it gives you the perception that you're going even slower than you really are because guys are just like phew, phew, phew. And you see them disappearing around the curves and over the hills and it just makes your legs feel like lead.

And so then you have to start concentrating. Am I going to persevere? Am I going to keep up the pace that I started? Am I going to try to ignore these increasingly uncomfortable signals from my nerve endings and so forth and finish the course? And in any kind of endeavor that requires perseverance and requires effort over time, there are going to be those points where you just feel like you want to fade out. Sarah, I hit that point.

After 10 years in the land and no children showing up, probably countless other servants and families, and on this particular morning when she's sitting outside the tent, probably the latest birth in the household. You remember Abram says, well, Eliezer of Damascus was born in my household. Probably his parents were slaves from Damascus and so he was born there.

These slaves are having children all the time. Every time there's another baby born in the household, Sarah sees it and a little pain goes through and just drives that thorn a little deeper and deeper into her side. And she finally gets fed up and she says, something's got to change.

I'm going to do something even if it's wrong. And that's exactly what she does. So we want to be educated by observing the example here in her life because when she sees that she's born no children, she takes what at the outset seems to be a very legitimate commonplace solution practiced by many others.

Everybody does this. My friend back in Haran did this. My girlfriend back in Ur did this.

So why don't we do this? And rationalization isn't the goal to have a child. It doesn't really matter how it comes into the world. But it lacks that one essential element of faith.

God has no place in this process. God's glory is not reflected in any part of this process of substituting the Egyptian maid. But she doesn't think about that because God is not on her mind.

And pleasing God and being pleasing in God's sight is not uppermost in her mind. And that's the reason God does not appear to her. Jesus Christ appeared to people who weren't looking for Him and didn't care about Him and it didn't change their mind.

You would think, well, but surely if God appeared and spoke the way He's going to speak to Hagar, then it would change her mind. It would draw her up short. It would rebuke her and correct her and instruct her in righteousness and she'd get rid of this terrible plan and be back on the straight and narrow.

We can, through our own choices and attitudes, make ourselves not susceptible to the power of God or the presence of God. The rich man and Lazarus parable when Abraham in the parable is talking to the rich man. It's very interesting to study that story.

The whole dialogue after he dies and Lazarus dies and Lazarus is there with his head in Abraham's bosom and you have the rich man tormented in the flame. And he says, Abraham, send Lazarus to warn my brothers not to come to this place. And what does Abraham say? Abraham says, if they will not believe Moses and the prophets, they won't believe even if someone should rise from the dead.

And this literally took place in Israel. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and the Pharisees and others did not believe. Jesus Christ himself was raised from the dead and people in his own generation forward to this generation have not believed.

So were God to waste his time and appear to Sarah, it wouldn't do any good because she has chosen the attitude that she has. And it is going to take experience, first-hand experience of the consequences to educate her. That all boils down to the old truism.

You can either learn the easy way or the hard way. We can look at the word of God and learn and take heart and be educated and guided by it or we can make bad decisions and learn from our own experience and suffer the consequences. Sarah is in that latter category here.

So God does not appear to Sarah. She is not acting in faith. She is not looking to God.

And God says, you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. And of course we are going to see an interesting situation when God appears to Hagar when she is not looking for God either apparently. But we are not at that point yet.

So Sarah is blaming Abram just the way that Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent back in Genesis chapter 4. The Lord judge between you and me. And of course she is invoking the name of the Lord and asking Him to judge but she is not asking Him

to provide. She is not asking Him to intervene.

She is not asking Him for confirmation. Her eyes are completely in the wrong place. Abram just kind of takes a giant step backward trying to get out of the middle.

Indeed your maid is in your hand. Do to her as you please. So Sarah dealt harshly with her and she fled from her presence.

There are several threads of irony here because what has God just told Abram is going to happen? His descendants are going to be captives, strangers in a land for 400 years and they are going to be oppressed. Remember that back in Genesis chapter 15? He says in verse 13, Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs and will serve them and they will afflict them 400 years. The word for afflict there is the very same word used of Sarah's treatment of Hagar.

So there is a reversal of roles. Egypt will be responsible for afflicting Abram's descendants in bondage but here in a sense Abram's family did it first to the Egyptians because here is the Egyptian handmaid Hagar and she suffers affliction and wrongful affliction at the hands of her maid. There is a further parallel in here that we will return to.

But she fled from her presence. Now this ends the first scene. Verses 2-6 are a scene and you have two halves of that first scene.

You have, first of all, Sarah speaking and making a proposal. She says, Abram, take my handmaid, go into her so that I may have a child with her. And by the way, just to make sure we understand what sort of viewpoint Sarah has here, she says, please go into my maid, perhaps I shall obtain children by her.

Well, the word for obtain and the word for children is not here. What it literally says is, this is from the verb bana. And if you remember in the creation story we looked at the different words.

There is bara which is often been translated create or create something from nothing. There is asa and then there is bana. Bana means to build.

And Sarah literally says, perhaps through her I shall be built up. So, she doesn't come to Abram and say, perhaps through her God's promise will be fulfilled. Perhaps through her you will have an heir.

She says, perhaps through her I will be built up. She is feeling like she is reduced and belittled by being barren. And so, by implementing this scheme, she says, perhaps I will be built up.

I will be bana. There is a play on words there because when you look at the word for son

in Hebrew, it is ben. So, you have bana and ben and there is a little bit of a word play there that through the birth of a son, through a ben, she will be banad.

But she has got her eyes on herself. She has got her eyes on the circumstance. And now she has got her eyes on people because she sees what has happened with Hagar.

So, you had her proposal in verse 2 and Abram's reply. Abram says, okay, fine. He hearkened to the voice of his wife.

Then, Sarah takes action. She gives her maid to her husband and Hagar reacts by conceiving. So, what do we have? Sarah speaks.

Abram responds. Sarah acts and something happens with Hagar. That is in verses 2 through 4. The very same pattern repeats itself because in verse 5, Sarah speaks.

Now, she has a complaint. Abram replies, the first part of verse 6. Then, Sarah acts and abuses her maid and then you have action with Hagar. She departs.

So, these two halves, there is a symmetry here that makes this a scene. It marks it off as a scene. And that is where we have Sarah's encounter with subjectivity.

But now, we have Hagar's encounter with the Lord. Because in verse 7, as a result of this abuse, she had fled from the presence of Sarai. Now, the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness.

This is not accidental. You think about a spring of water in the wilderness. The wilderness is barren, uninhabited, inhospitable.

But in the wilderness, she has found a spring of water. And that is where she has stopped, a place of refuge. And this is where the angel of the Lord appears to her.

But she does not know yet that it is the angel of the Lord. As is frequent in these encounters, people initially do not know with whom they are speaking. And no matter how many different ones of these you want to look at, you can see that many times people are not initially aware that this is a messenger from the Lord.

We tend to think angels have white robes and great big wings like the Christmas angels. And as soon as you see one, you say, oh, it is an angel. But many times they have the appearance of a man.

A few chapters hence, when you get to Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah, you are going to find that the two men look like men. And all the homosexuals in Sodom want to get a hold of them. So when Hagar first hears this voice, we know that it is the angel of the Lord, but she does not.

She does not react in surprise. She does not fall on her face. She does not make any sort

of utterance.

She just encounters someone at the spring. So the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. Why does it tell us this? Because if you trace a line here going from Hebron where she started out down through Shur, she is headed back to Egypt.

She is trying to go home. And she is well south now of where she started. But the angel of the Lord said, Hagar, Sarah's maid, where have you come from and where are you going? Well now, this wakes her up to who this might be because how does this man know her name? How does this man know to whom she belongs? And you have, remember back in Genesis 4, when the Lord comes to the garden and walks in the cool of the day after the woman has taken and given to her husband and he partakes, what is the first thing the Lord says? Where are you? What is the first thing that the Lord says to Cain after the murder of Abel? Where is your brother? God often begins these personal encounters with a question having to do with whereabouts.

Where are you? Where have you come from? Where are you going? Do you think the angel of the Lord knows where she has come from and where she is going? Of course he does. He knows her name. He knows her relationship to Sarai.

Where have you come from and where are you going? This is the question we ought to ask ourselves. If we want to avoid the Sarai mistake, if we want to pry ourselves out of unconscious subjectivity, if sometimes we're not aware that we've slipped into eyes on people, eyes on self, self-pity and worrying about circumstances, this is a good question to ask ourselves. Where have we come from? Where are we going? This is what Paul does in the New Testament.

We're seeing this in Colossians. He's reminding the believers in Colossae. Remember where you have come from.

As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord through faith, through hearing the word and receiving it as truth, so walk. Where did you come from? Paul reminds them that they came out of a pagan life. They were in bondage to sin and so forth.

God set them free. That's where they came from. Where are you going? You're going to get there the same way.

Where have you come from? Where are you going? God often asks this question in the Bible and he asks it of us. Where have we come from and where are we going? Is our destination consistent with our point of origin? Are we on the road that started at salvation and that leads through the narrow gate to life? Where are we going? Oftentimes when God asks this question, he doesn't get a direct answer. People kind of maneuver around.

Am I my brother's keeper? Well, when I heard your voice in the garden, I knew I was naked and I hid myself. Adam doesn't just speak up and say, Oh, Lord, I ate the fruit. There's sort of rationalization and maneuvering.

But Hagar is very straightforward. The angel of the Lord asks her, Where have you come from? Where are you going? She said, I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai. In that day, as in this, there is danger attached to being identified as a runaway slave.

But she doesn't hesitate. She volunteers this information. She says, I am a slave and I have run away from my mistress.

The angel of the Lord said to her in verse 9, Return to your mistress and submit yourself under her hand. And this phrase, submit yourself, says return to oppression under her hand. This is not just be obedient.

This is go back and suffer. It's from the same root that we had earlier when Sarah was abusing her. The angel of the Lord says, Go back and return to the abuse.

Go back and return to the suffering. Submit yourself under her hand. Then the angel of the Lord said to her, I will multiply your descendants exceedingly so that they shall not be counted for multitude.

It isn't explicitly stated here, but there is a condition for this promise to be fulfilled. Remember what God said to Abram way back? Get thee up out of thy kindred and so forth and go to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation.

There is a condition of obedience followed by promise. Here, the angel of the Lord says, You return and submit under the oppressive hand of your mistress. I will multiply your descendants exceedingly.

You get the idea that Hagar has a choice here. She can continue south to Egypt and this promise is not going to apply. The fulfillment of the promise is conditioned on her believing that promise and in faith obeying.

It's not just obedience, but it's faith that there's a reason to obey, that God's promise will be fulfilled. And Hagar is a believer. She believes the promise of God.

She goes back to a situation that was so bad, she fled and made herself a runaway slave and was making a very arduous journey alone as a woman all the way back down to Egypt. That's how bad it was. But when the angel of the Lord speaks and says, Return and I will fulfill a great promise to you.

She believes it and she returns. Her faith is a rebuke to the lack of faith of Sarai, her mistress. The one who is abusing her is doing so in lack of faith.

She is going to return and take that abuse in faith. And this is the reason that the angel of the Lord appears to Hagar because she is one who will respond. God doesn't waste his time.

He reveals himself to those who will respond. He does not reveal himself to those who don't. He says, I will have mercy upon those upon whom I have had mercy.

And when Moses asks to see the glory of God, God says, because I have spoken with you, because you have sought me, I will do this. There is an accounting. There is an estimation.

There is a watching that goes on for each of us. God knows how receptive we are. He knows how interested we are.

He knows the level to which we are seeking. And he will meet the level of our desire with his level of revelation. And when you go back to Proverbs chapter 2 and the parallel passages in the Bible that say, If you seek, you will find.

If you incline your ear, if you lift up your heart, you will understand, you will find. Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find.

Knock and the door will be opened to you. And to those who are of a receptive heart, sometimes God will anticipate. And even before we call, he will answer.

And before we cry out, he will hear. And that's the case with Hagar. Hagar, in the household of Abram, she knows about God.

She knows, as we're going to see, she recognizes the angel of Yahweh when he appears. It's repeated here, for emphasis, four times. Look at verse 7. The angel of the Lord found her.

Verse 9. The angel of the Lord said to her. Verse 10. The angel of the Lord said to her.

Verse 11. The angel of the Lord said to her. This is in marked contrast to no appearance, no speech to Sarai, who is the grand, you know, she's the mother of Isaac and the grandmother of the nation of Israel and everything else.

But she gets no personal visit. She gets no direct word from God at this point because she needs refining. She's not, at this point, looking and listening.

God, however, is watching. So the angel says in verse 9. Return and submit. He says in verse 10.

I will multiply your descendants exceedingly so that they shall not be counted from multitude. A promise that is a re-expression of what God has said to Abram himself. Verse 11.

The angel of the Lord said to her. Behold, you are with child and you shall bear a son. Very similar to what the angel Gabriel is going to tell Mary.

We're so much aware of it Christmas time here. You are with child and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has heard your affliction.

The Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man. His hand shall be against every man.

This phrase in verse 12. He shall be a wild man. This is the noun Parah.

You have the wilderness of Paran. Parah has two meanings in Hebrew. One is the wild ass.

There was a Latin name somebody wrote down someplace. It just says it looks more like a horse than anything else. But it's the wild ass that dwells out in the wilderness.

It's also used for the steppes, like the Russian steppes. Only this is the steppe country, the canyon and hill country, the rough country in that region. And so some have thought that this says he's going to be a wild man of the wilderness or of the steppe country or a wild ass of a man.

The Adam here is the word used for man. And it's a description of his unfettered nature. He's wild and free, so to speak.

His hand shall be against every man and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. This in the presence of literally means upon the face of.

And it's an idiom in Hebrew that means opposite of or against or across from. And it has the sense in many biblical passages of the direction east. And this is in fact where the descendants of Ishmael are going to settle relative to Israel.

P'nei al is the Hebrew phrase here and it means opposite of and often to the eastward of. So why is this detail given about the son and his nature? It's not immediately apparent, but I will offer you a thought which is perhaps at a little bit of distance from the perspective of the Old Testament. But in our view, here you have promise given to Abram and Sarai that they will have a son, that they will have fulfillment of covenant promises through that son, promises that have come from God.

Sarai through lack of faith tries to bring about the fulfillment of that promise on her own. She does not wait on the Lord. Because of that, an outsider, an Egyptian woman winds up bearing the first son and obtaining the personal promise of God for a separate destiny, a destiny that is separate and distinct from that promised to Abram and his progeny, but yet is an outgrowth of it.

Well, where else have we seen that in God's plan? The nation of Israel, who has been given the covenant promises of God, but through lack of faith tries to bring about the fulfillment of those promises in human strength, trying to keep the law, trying to bring in the kingdom through human means. And because of that, turns away from divine provision, and yet in that turning away, through that falling away, remember in Romans, because of the breaking off of the branches, other branches are grafted in. And we as the Gentiles, we as church age believers, find ourselves included in God's plan and we wind up bearing the first fruits because the nation of Israel still awaits the promise and the fulfillment of the promise in the millennial kingdom, in the return of Jesus Christ.

There has been a delay because Israel lost perspective and didn't persevere in faith. The promises of God were not mixed with faith in them that heard it. And because of that, even though that is a failure, God works it together for good.

Sarai's failure works together for good to Hagar. And it's such an irony that the interchange between Israel and Egypt is pictured here. Israel is first to persecute Egypt in the form of Sarai persecuting Hagar.

Hagar is going to return the favor. Egypt will persecute Israel. And yet through the Messiah to Israel, Egypt and the nations are going to become the heirs of salvation.

And God weaves this tapestry and the constant theme is God watches and God hears and those who will respond to Him, it doesn't matter if they're in the household of Abraham or not. If they're responsive, He will hear, He will promise, and He will deliver. God hears and God sees.

And to her credit, Hagar figures this out. Look at what she says in verse 13. She called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You are the God who sees.

It didn't occur to her. She believed in God, but she didn't consider herself to be significant enough for God's... Abram is the one that had the vision. Abram is the one that had the torch and the smoking pot passed between the pieces.

Abram is the one where God moves and God deals and I'm just a handmaid in the household. And it isn't that she lacks appreciation for God or lacks faith in God. She didn't think it applied to her.

And the great revelation to her is God does see. God cares even about me, an Egyptian slave, the least in the household. He cares about me.

And so after this encounter and these promises to her, she calls the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You are the God who sees. Or she said, I have seen the one who sees me. There's some wrinkles in the Hebrew here and dead seas of ink have been spilled, but basically what she says is, I have seen the God who sees me.

I knew that He saw everything, but I didn't think I would ever see Him. But He has seen. He has heard my cry.

He has seen my affliction. And I have seen Him. And that greatly impressed her.

And what does she do? She believes the promise that's communicated and she returns. She goes back into the awful environment that Sarai has created. And you will recall that in the early days of the church, what happened? When God blessed the church, who were the great persecutors of the church? It was the Jewish establishment who made life difficult.

And that has turned about. And in many parts of church history, you have the church persecuting the Jews. You have the Inquisition and that kind of thing.

So this constant interchange and interplay is a part of God's plan. What are we to make of all of this? What difference does it make to us? Well, there are two primary things that we can see right on the surface of what can be a very deep study. The first is God sees individual believers.

It doesn't matter what our standing is. We tend to look and we see the Abrams and the Isaacs and the Jacobs and we think, well, God is dealing on the grand scale and I'm not pivotal. I'm not at the center of God's plan.

That is not true. Each of us is equally important in God's sight. God sees and God hears.

This is the thing that Hagar learns. And it strikes her so much that she gives God a name in her own mind. She is now going to think about God in different terms.

She says, He's not just El. He's El Roy. He is the God who sees.

And He's the God who sees me. Ro is the part of the word that means to see. But there's an E on the end.

I've told you before that when you want to say something pertains to me or something, in Hebrew you just put a little yod, a little tiny crook of a letter after the word. And that means me. And she says, El God Roy.

God sees me. And this has an effect in her mind and it gives her the confidence to go back and suffer at Sarai's hand because God has given her promise. And she realizes God sees me.

God knows my affliction. God has appeared to me just like He did to Abram. And so she gives him a name of the Lord who spoke to her.

God sees, God hears, and God speaks in this passage, doesn't He? The angel of the Lord says, The Lord has heard your affliction in verse 11. She says, You are the God who sees

in verse 13. The Lord who spoke to her in verse 13.

For she said, I have seen here the one who sees me. So that's the first thing is to remember that God is concerned with us as individuals. We're not in a backwater or a tiny detail of the painting that doesn't really count.

The second thing is, God honors those who honor Him. Obedience springs from faith. True obedience.

The obedience that James talks about. The obedience that counts is the result of faith. God spoke to Abram in Ur and Abram responded.

And because Abram responded in faith to the word of the Lord and worked that faith out in obedience, God was able to bless him. He has his ups and downs, but Abram is everything God said he would be. Hagar is the same way.

God speaks to Hagar and she responds and she obeys because she trusts God. She doesn't obey because she thinks it's going to be an exchange of obligation. I'll do this for God.

God will do this for me. She functions because she trusts. And that's our second point of observation and application for ourselves.

Once we recognize and accept the fact that God does see us and God does hear us and God does speak to us through His word, we know that we have a responsibility for active faith. Abram is kind of sitting on his hands here. And when Sarai comes up with his game, he hearkens to the voice of his wife and says, okay, fine.

He has a responsibility to continue an active faith and a faith that works itself out in obedience. And because he's gone passive, he's let Sarai seize the initiative. Everybody in this chapter is having initiative except Abram.

Abram is the head of the household. Abram is the heir of the promise. Abram needs to be saying, no, Sarai, we're going to wait on the Lord.

Wait on the Lord. Remember over in Psalms, there are several places you can go, but especially Psalm 27, 14 where twice David says, wait, I say, on the Lord. Wait on the Lord.

Be of good cheer. He shall strengthen thy heart. We can't fade in the stretch like Sarai did.

If we remember that God sees and God hears, we remember that we're important in His plan, we can have the confidence to let God work things out in His timing and continue to claim promises, continue to trust in His provision, no matter how futile or how seemingly immovable the situation is. We may have to wait the 10 years. Because of

this, they're going to have to wait about another 14 years before Isaac is born.

We don't know how much sooner he might have been born if it weren't for this failure. We know that it cost the Israelites 40 years in the wilderness when they didn't trust the Lord when the time came. But it's our opportunity to learn by observation rather than learning by experience to not fade in the stretch, to remember that we are the heirs of God, heirs according to promise, if we hold fast our confidence and we don't lose heart.

Even if we do, and even if we have in the past, you know that things turn out right in the end. Sarai does have a son. God's promises are fulfilled.

But she has to go through a lot of grief and she causes suffering to others in the process. We'd like to cut that part of the process out and go straight from hearing the promise of God to claiming it and being the blessing and the light to the Gentiles that Abram and Sarah will become. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the wonderful food for our souls that you provide for us in your word, for the interesting and challenging ways that you present it to us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will take these things and reinforce and strengthen our hearts and remind us of the perspective of our lives that we should have, which is the perspective from where you sit, that the timing and the fulfillment of your purpose and your promises is completely in your hands and there is a reason for every day. There is a reason for the timing and the implementation of each and every one of your promises in our lives.

We pray that as we go forth and experience the holiday season that we will remember always where we stand before you and that in all of our thoughts and actions our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be glorified. We ask these things in his name. Amen.