

IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?

Genesis 18:1-14

TEXT: *The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way--now that you have come to your servant." "Very well," they answered, "do as you say." So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread." Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree. "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?" Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

She showed up one day interested in enrolling her children in our school. She took instructions and joined the congregation. Later, her husband took instructions and joined. But raising children is a difficult challenge for anyone. Other issues in their life strained the marriage. The pastor could see it coming. First they pulled their children from our school, and their church attendance dropped dramatically. The pastor felt helpless as he tried to get them together for marriage counseling while it became apparent that they were choosing a direction away from the fellowship and God's Word.

They left the church, but years later, after their children had grown up and gone their own ways, they suddenly returned. They asked to be reinstated as members and were. But soon, their worship attendance suddenly stopped. When their pastor spoke to them about it, they said that they have all kinds of problems in their life and God doesn't seem to help. They came back to church, but nothing changed.

This is a true story. And since these people are still alive, it's not over. It's my prayer that before they pass from this life they learn the lesson that is before us in today's Old Testament Lesson: **IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?** I. Yes. It's impossible for Him to go against His Word; therefore, II. How important it is to know His Word!

I. No one would ever suggest that there is anything too hard for the Almighty. To think that there is would be to deny that there is an almighty god. Some people will give up on the Lord when the hardships of life seem to overwhelm them. They become

overcome with anger and bitterness, and finally declare that either there is no God or that He has no concern for them. They quit going to church because if there is a God, they will punish Him by staying away from those who love to worship the Lord.

There was a touch of this sinful thinking working on the heart of Sarah whose waiting for the birth of a son as she was now approaching the age of 90 years had forced her into a sort of defensive mode. She was tired of hoping and hoping and always being disappointed. Once, way back when she was 65 and childless, she had come to grips with the reality of the fact that her womb was barren. Then the Lord had told her husband that he would have an heir, a son, through whom all peoples on earth would be blessed. She also believed that this referred to the Promise that God's Savior would come through Abraham. But once already she had weakened and even persuaded her husband to raise up an heir from her handmaid, Hagar. That was a miserable plan and contrary to what God had said. And now, this man talking to her husband outside the tent is saying that within the next year this promised son will be born?

The Bible says: *Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"* Sarah's cynicism is restrained and she laughs with a cynical snicker in her heart. But outside the tent stands the Lord himself: *Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD?* Of course not! God is almighty. With God nothing is impossible. That's what the angel Gabriel would say to the virgin Mary 2000 years later when Mary would ask: *How can this be since I am a virgin?* Gabriel would say: *With God, nothing is impossible.*

And yet there is indeed one thing that is impossible for God, and that is to deny Himself and to go back on His Word. Scripture says: *... if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.* 2 Ti 2 Even when our Lord Jesus was on earth and was being tempted by Satan, the Bible says that Jesus' own response, again and again, to the devil's temptations was: *It is written...* God cannot be anyone but who He is: God over all.

I may doubt, I may give up, I may become cynical and bitter about life and how the Lord seems to be treating me, but all that is so foolish. That is saying, There is no God, and the Bible declares: *The fool says in his heart, there is not God.* Ps 14 Sarah was being foolish to think as she was thinking, for the Lord had given His Word and she had let the doubts and fears, the realities of this life, weigh her down.

That is the only thing that God cannot do: go against Himself and His Word. For that reason, the height of wisdom is to know and to trust and to hold on to God's Word! II. We can't just pick on Sarah. The Lord also had to come to her husband with a gentle reminder of His Promise. In Genesis 15 the Bible says: *After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? ... You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.* Life had gotten to Abraham so that he was weighed down with the fear that perhaps that Lord had chosen someone else to be his heir. But the Lord cannot deny Himself, so the Bible says:

*Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Ge 15 Then is revealed the greatest blessing of faith in God's Word: **Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.***

How many of us are able to handle life as the Lord allows it to come to us? We have been given the same promises, even in greater abundance! We have Christmas, Good Friday and Easter. We have the Ascension, but fewer and fewer people are learning to appreciate the power of that special day when Jesus returns to his glory, filling the entire universe, both true God and true man... Filling the wafers and wine with his body and blood so that we are made certain that this God/Man is truly present with us. Not only does our Lord and His Holy Spirit come to us through these blessed promises, but the very same truth applies to us as it did to both Abraham and Sarah: ***Without weakening in his faith, (Abraham) faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-since he was about a hundred years old-and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness-for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*** Ro 4

Sarah would laugh again. In nine months at the age of 90 she would bear that promised son and name him Isaac, which means laughter. No doubt she not only named him that because of her joy, but remembering how her cynical laughter of unbelief was now overshadowed by joy. Don't let the hardships, disappointments, struggles, doubts, worries and anxieties of this life make you cynical and bitter. Know that God does not go back on one word of His promises. They are written for us to know and to trust so that we never forsake Him who is our only hope of life and salvation.

For there is one thing that sets apart every true Christian and those who are not: We know that there is only one thing that is impossible for God to do: break His Word and Promise that are written for our comfort and assurance. Amen.