



Light from the Word

The Faith of Sarah

Theme verse: *“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.”*¹

The faith of Sarah is explicitly noted only in this one verse in the letter to the Hebrews. Yet it is a powerful exhibition of faith in God. It is also a powerful exhibition of how God fulfills prophecy through human faith, which results in obedience. As a first step, Sarah received strength to do what needed to be done. With that strength, she became able to conceive. She needed to conceive in order to bear a son. She needed to bear a son for the promise of God to be fulfilled. Every step in the process must have seemed impossible to her.

What factors enable us to believe God – even when it seems impossible?

There are at least three elements in Sarah's life that appear to have contributed to her faith. She respected her husband – to the point of calling him “Lord”.² Perhaps because of that respect for Abram, she also learned to fear God. Because of her respect for God, she had the faith to act in obedience and hope – *“because she judged him faithful who had promised.”* Before we question

those elements too much, let's think it through together.

It can be easy to emphasize Sarah's initial reaction when she heard that she would have a son with Abraham. As she responded instantly and impulsively to the impossibility of the promise, she laughed within herself.³ However, when the Lord asked, *“Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the LORD?”*⁴ ... she was afraid. When she realized she was interacting with the Lord, the fear of the Lord sobered her, enabled her to think beyond the obvious, and tempered her initial reaction. Though our instinctive response to God's word may at first make us think, “That's not possible!” – faith in God and the fear of the Lord enable us to adjust our initial reaction with a more tempered response that acknowledges, *“... with God, all things are possible.”*⁵

One might wonder what respect for authority has to do with faith. John teaches us that if we don't love our brother whom we can see, how can we claim to love God whom we can't see?⁶ In similar fashion, if we don't respect, trust, and obey the authorities we can see, how can we respect, trust, and obey God whom we can't see? We have opportunity to practice this respect with parents, teachers, in

the workplace, with governmental authorities, in marriage, and in the church – anywhere we have a vertical relationship.

We have several examples of Sarah's respect for Abraham – probably the only authority in her life. In Peter's first epistle, we read that Sarah called Abraham “Lord” – a title of respect that indicates a master, or supreme authority.⁷ From the simple, everyday respect that she exhibited when Abraham asked her to quickly prepare a meal for guests, to the risk of representing herself as Abraham's sister instead of as his wife, she demonstrated a ready and willing obedience. When he asked her to represent herself as his sister (she was truly his half-sister), rather than his wife, at every new place to which they came, she could easily have dismissed her husband's request as being fearful. But instead, she honored him with her obedience. Both in Egypt and in Gerar, God delivered her out of the hand of the king – experiences that must have strengthened her faith in God.

Finally, at the advanced age of 90 years, believing that not only would she be able to conceive, but also that she would be given the strength to give birth, Sarah demonstrated her faith in God once more. Although Sarah had

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never experienced the strain and pain of giving birth, she had witnessed it firsthand when Hagar bore Ishmael “on Sarah’s knees”. She must have known that it would be extremely taxing for a woman of her age.

And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.⁸

Like Sarah, we can be prepared for the impossible by learning to trust God in the little things and by humbly fulfilling the role in which we find ourselves. Sarah found herself in the role of a wife and she acknowledged the authority that Abraham had over her, respecting him as her “Lord”.

Although it does not appear to have been her nature, she cultivated a meek and quiet spirit – which is of great price in the sight of God.⁹ Like Sarah, we can act when God calls us to action. If Sarah had not been willing to be with Abraham when God promised that she would bear a son – she would never have conceived. Her example points us to three simple truths: respect God-ordained authorities, fear and obey God even more than man, and by faith take the necessary steps – even if it seems impossible. By doing these things, we will be prepared like Sarah when asked to do the impossible. By establishing a track record of faith and obedience, we will be empowered to believe God in the big things. It is in the day to day fundamentals that we can become prepared to do great things.

Finally, what seems impossible in your life?

Have you been given a duty that seems too big or difficult to do? Have you been asked to bear a burden that seems too heavy? Do the commandments of God seem too difficult to keep? If faith and obedience are not practiced in daily life, facing such challenges with confidence is nearly impossible. Determining, like Sarah, to fulfill your calling in the routine little things of life, will enable and prepare you for the impossible that may someday be yours to do.

Do you, with Sarah, judge God to be faithful?

Endnotes:

¹ Hebrews 11:11

² 1 Peter 3:6

³ Genesis 18:12

⁴ Genesis 18:13

⁵ Matthew 19:26

⁶ 1 John 4:20

⁷ 1 Peter 3:6

⁸ Genesis 21:1-2

⁹ 1 Peter 3:4