

Challenged (Doubt?)

Genesis 17:16-18; 18:11-14; Luke 1:37

Sermon Outline

A. Facing Overwhelming Circumstances; Faith Required (Genesis 17:16-18):

1. I will bless her – God promises Sarah (princes) that He would provide her His divine favor because He is committed to bestow good-will towards her. This is a decision that has already been made and will continue indefinitely.
2. I will give you – God's favor is put in place as a permanent gift to Sarah.
3. I will bless her – God commits to completely provide His divine favor and good-will to Sarah for being the mother of His nation.
4. Shall be the mother –God's favor is a completed decision that will never change.
5. Will come from her –This gift is forever. No one can change this because it is God's decision and it is God who will execute His plan.
6. The Abraham fell on his face – Abraham falling to the ground face down is something he never intended to stop doing. This creates a concern about his faith when compared to Romans 4:19-20 and Hebrews 11:11-12.
7. Before the Lord – Abraham did not move away from the Lord and laugh. He fell on his face in the presence of the Lord (most people believe it is Christ – 'Lord of Host') and laugh.
8. Laugh - Abraham's laughter was continuous as if he did not plan to stop laughing.
9. Said in his heart – Abraham verbally expressed in his inner person how he felt about what was being said emotionally.
10. Said in his heart – This has been a painful process for Abraham and Sarah so, his response comes the depths of his emotions.

B. Facing Overwhelming Situations with Doubt (Genesis 18:11-14):

1. Though somewhat speculative, this line of thinking would explain why the announcement that Sarah would bear a child is introduced by a question concerning Sarah's whereabouts. Leading the somewhat embarrassed Abraham to offer the euphemistic explanation that she is "in the tent" as a way of explaining that she is indisposed (note our modern euphemism, "it's that time of the month"). One could almost imagine a

transitional, “Indeed, and that is just the beginning....” It would have constituted a remarkable sign of the resumption of her fertility.^[1]

2. She laughed – Sarah’s laugh was continuous as if she is not planning on stopping. It dramatizes Sarah’s unbelief.
3. Said – Sarah spoke loudly. She was not quiet about what she felt.
4. After I have become old – She viewed her age as completely canceling any possibility of having a child.
5. Pleasure – At her age Sarah does not expect sensual pleasure or the joy of motherhood.

C. The Challenge (Genesis 18:13-14; Luke 1:37):

1. The Lord said – The One who has all power, authority and sincerely desires to have a relationship with Abraham continuously with no desire to stop talking verbalizes His thoughts of Sarah’s laughter.
2. Why did Sarah laugh - Sarah’s laugh was recognized as taking place in the past and sets forth an action of disbelief that continues into the future. With the Lord telling them what He plans to do the question is rhetorical.
3. Is anything too difficult for the Lord – The Lord, who has always powerfully moved for Abraham, asked a rhetorical question as to whether or not any circumstance that exist maybe beyond man’s ability can ever be above His ability.
4. Appointed time I will return – The tense here signifies that the Lord’s leaving is a continual process that underscores His every intent to fulfill His promise to Abraham and Sarah. Everything the Lord does from this point to His return is focused on fulfilling this pre-determined time.
5. Nothing – Nothing here means, absolutely nothing. It is an emphatic nothing.
6. Impossible – Emphatically, absolutely nothing is beyond God’s ability to be in control of all circumstances.
7. Impossible –No matter how extremely impossible these circumstances may be for humans, absolutely nothing can be impossible for God to accomplish.

^[1] Walton, J. H. (2009). [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary \(Old Testament\): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 91). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.