

When Life Hits Us.....

Genesis 16:3-9, 13; 21:9-10, 15-19

Sermon Outline

A. Trouble Finds Us (16:3-9; Psalm 34:17-19; Rev. 12:9-10; Job):

1. Please go into my maid - Abram found himself between God and his wife's demands. Sarai, in her desperation, demanded her husband put aside God's Word and follow the Nuzu law provisions which allowed her to have a surrogate mother. Sarai was determined not to continually live under this embarrassment.
2. Abram listened to the voice of Sarai – Abram gave Sarai his full, undivided attention with an understanding heart, intelligently grasping everything she was saying and feeling. We know Abram was concerned about this issue because he presented an option to God, since he and Sarai were not having children (Gen. 15:1-6).
 - a) Abram consulted God (Gen. 15:2-6), and Sarai didn't (Gen. 16:3-6).
 - b) Abram had on three different occasions been divinely assured of offspring: on the last, that his heir was to be a son of his own; and he was content to wait in believing confidence in the accomplishment of the divine promise. But Sarai had never been mentioned in connection with this subject. Her hopes of giving birth to the promised seed had vanished with increasing age, and, concluding that she was not destined to enjoy that distinguished honor, she formed the purpose of reaching by proxy the happy consummation which was to all appearance denied to herself. (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft)
3. Took – By saying Sarai took Hagar, it means Sarai, on her own initiative, purposefully went and got Hagar, completely resolved to continuously do whatever it takes to resolve this issue herself. This all took place right after God renewed His commitment to bless Abram. His wife's frustration, accumulating over time (10 years passed; not like she did not wait), moved her to no longer listen to God. There are times when God seems silent while we wait. We must still learn to trust Him. It is a call to faith (Psalm 28).
 - a) An ancient custom, illustrated in Old Assyrian marriage contracts, the Code of Hammurapi and the Nuzu tablets (15:3-4), to ensure the birth of a male heir. Sarai would herself solve the problem of her barrenness - 15:3-4 – Ancient documents uncovered at Nuzu near Kirkuk on a branch of the Tigris River, as well as at other places, demonstrate that a childless man could adopt on of his own male servants to be heir and guardian of his estate. Abram apparently contemplated doing this with Eliezer, or perhaps had already done so.

- b) Sarai's sin caused the origin of the Ishmaelites, a harvest that is still being reaped. In fact Joseph, Sarai's great-grandson, was later taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelites (37:28).¹
4. Gave her to her husband – Sarai actively and with much persistence put Hagar in Abram's hands, with no intention to stop this process. Abram knew that Sarai was not going to stop until this was done. It had come to a boiling point.
- a) The Nuzu tablets, cuneiform documents dating from about 1500 b.c., shed light on why Sarah did what she did (16:1–4). Giving Hagar to Abraham was in keeping with an ancient custom that allowed a wife who was unable to bear children to give a concubine to her husband in order to gain an heir. What was missing, as noted in 16:2, was a request for the Lord's advice. Abraham's action was not rebellious, just hasty and unwise. Note the parallel between the statement, "And Abram agreed" (Gen. 16:2) and God's words to Adam, "you listened to your wife" (Gen. 3:17). Would a son by Hagar be the answer? No. But her son, Ishmael, was greatly blessed anyway.²
5. He went in to – Abram remained with Hagar until it was clear she was pregnant. God sometimes allows, in our disobedience, the results we desired to take place, or we hope would not take place. This means God does not always remove the consequences.
6. Was despised in her sight - Hagar no longer provided Sarai respect, was dismissive and argumentative in the very presence of Sarai, which is highly disrespectful, since I am sure there are other employees looking at them. This means many of the people (quite a few) who traveled with Abram saw what Hagar was doing.
- a) This disrespect continues today for Israel. Generations have suffered from this decision.
- b) Being selfish can harm many people. We become wrapped up in our feelings; our anxieties, frustrations, and all of that become our God.
7. And Sarai said to Abram – Sarai was not going to tolerate Hagar's contemptible attitude. She kept telling Abram, with no intention of stopping, all that was taking place.
8. May the wrong done to me be upon you – Singular+common, construct, masculine, suffixed – Sarai blames Abram for the injustice she is experiencing. Even though Sarai began this disobedience, Abram, as head of the household, allowed it, knowing what God had just told him (Gen. 15). This is no different than what happened in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-10).

¹ Ross, A. P. (1985). [Genesis](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 57). Victor Books.

² Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 16). Tyndale House Publishers.

9. Gave my maiden into your arms – Sarai implied that by Abram accepting what she told him to do, everything was now in his control, and he must fix the problem. Like in the Garden of Eden, she was right (Rom. 5:12 – sin came into the world when Adam bit the fruit). Once we violate God’s Word for either spouse, God holds us in contempt (James 4:17).
10. Gave my maiden into your arms – If we act on what our wives say, especially when it comes to violating the Word of God, God holds us accountable. The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Sapphira went along with what she knew was wrong, so it became sin to her.
11. May the Lord judge – After being dismissive about what the Lord told her husband and deciding to take matters into her own hands, Sarai calls on God to be the arbitrator in this matter. Sarai was not crying out for justice about Abram causing Hagar to be pregnant. She was crying out for Abram to lead in resolving the threat she was facing.
 - a) Sarai does not stick with God’s plan but then becomes upset when her plan backfires.
 - b) May the Lord judge between you and me: An expression of hostility or suspicion (31:53 and 31:49).
12. Abram said to Sarai – Abram continuously kept speaking to get Sarai’s attention. In reading these verses, it seems this is an argument between Abram and Sarai. Sarai wants Abram to take charge, and he is not interested. It is as if Abram is saying, “You wanted a baby well now you got one.”
13. Behold, your maid is in your hands - Abram, most likely with Hagar nearby, handed Hagar over to Sarai. In other words, Sarai placed Hagar in Abram’s hands now Abram is using his authority to turn Hagar back over to Sarai. Because he is physically, most likely publicly, handing her over to Sarai, Hagar is quiet. Sarai has now been repositioned to a position of authority.
14. Her harshly – Sarai did not do what was excellent and pleasant (meaning of the Hebrew word for good); instead, Sarai continuously, with no intent on stopping, made sure Hagar was emotionally distressed. Sarai was intentional about it.
 - a) The story has both a dark side (Sarai mistreated her maidservant) and a bright side (the Angel of the Lord communicated with Hagar in the desert). There is no problem seeing what went wrong in the dark side of the story. When the way of faith (which involves patient waiting) was abandoned and the way of human calculation was taken, Abram was caught up in a chain of causes and effects that would trouble him for years to come. (Ishmael became the ancestor of the Arabs, who are still hostile to the Jews.)³

³ Ross, A. P. (1985). [Genesis](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 56–57). Victor Books.

15. Her harshly – When issues don't turn out the way we would like them, we can become very sinful. Haggai is pregnant, technically with her child (Nuzu law), and Sarai is still creating a lot of emotional stress for her.
16. Her harshly – It is interesting how, when major problems protract, how sometimes Godly people can become so distressed they can behave like Sarai (when we allow our problems to become our God). The Bible calls Sarai a great woman of God (Hebr. 11:11; 1 Peter 3:5-6). Godly people are not perfect people. When Hagar returns, there is no reported drama until Isaac and Ishamel come into conflict (Gen. 21:8-9).
 - a) And ... Sarai dealt hardly with her - [Hebrew, *wat^a`anehaa* (OT:6031), oppressed, afflicted, or would oppress, afflict her.] The word implies that, in her violent bursts of resentment, Sarai frequently had, or threatened to have, recourse to blows, until at length Hagar, perceiving the hopelessness of maintaining the unequal strife, resolved to escape from what had become to her in reality, as well as in name, a house of bondage. (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft)
17. She fled – Sarai became so abusive that Hagar, pregnant, left abruptly with no intention of coming back.

B. Don't Run (vs. 7-10; 16:10-14; Acts 14:19-20):

1. Angel of the Lord – Abram's lack of leadership in the home required God's intervention. God did not send any angel to Hagar. Jesus Christ came and met Hagar to convince her to return. Angel of the Lord means 'You are the God who sees me.'
 - a) In desperation Hagar fled in the direction of her homeland, Egypt. She was still legally a slave and had no right to run away. Her situation, however, had become unbearable, and flight seemed to present the only relief. She probably thought she might find peace, rest, and life in her old home country. When she reached Shur (*the wall*), she paused before crossing the border. Here the Egyptians maintained a wall or strong line of forts to protect Egypt from invaders from the east. It is mentioned in Egyptian records as early as 2000 B.C.⁴
2. Angel of the Lord – Abram, knowing Hagar was pregnant, did not try to intervene to prevent this from taking place. Like in the Garden of Eden, he was the passive head of the house.
 - a) "The angel of the Lord" (מלאך יהוה) is mentioned fifty-eight times in the OT, "the angel of God" eleven times. Angels of the Lord appear either singly as here or in

⁴ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). [*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*](#) (Ge 16:7). Moody Press.

groups. When first seen, they are usually taken to be men, but by the end of the encounter one of them is realized to be God (18:2, 22; Judg 6:11–22; 13:3–22).⁵

3. Found her - I love how God responds in this. Hagar faithfully served Sarai. She was Sarai's maiden, meaning she was right next to her. There was no trouble before this. She trusted this dilemma. God, seeing everything, loved her despite the fact she was not in His covenant promises. God is the God of grace and mercy.
4. Where are you going – The Lord repeatedly asked a rhetorical question because Hagar had nowhere to go. Egyptians did not like Semites (descendants of Abram), and she was now pregnant with their child. She cannot go back to Egypt, and she does not want to go back to Sarai. How many times in our effort to run from a problem do we end up disillusioned, more distressed, and aimless?
5. Said, fleeing from Sarai – Hagar continuously communicated with the Lord, telling Him the truth. She did not act surprised that the Lord was speaking to her and therefore communicated with the Lord. Don't know if she had a good understanding of God's relationship with Abram and Sarai since she was close to Sarai.
6. Said, fleeing from Sarai – We may experience difficult circumstances that make us want to run, but when the Lord speaks to us, no matter how hard the circumstances may be that He requires of us, listen to the Lord and submit to His way. His blessings are sure.

a) Hagar listens to God while Sarai listens to her feelings.

7. Angel of the Lord said to her – It is interesting that the Lord initially does not command her to return but keeps talking to her continuously to return. The Lord Jesus was speaking very persuasively to Hagar, with no intention of stopping. This was the best thing for her, and therefore it is what she must do.
8. Return to your mistress - Return to what would be a good question; she is returning to a man that does not love her (Abram), a woman (Sarai) who threatens her harshly, to have a child that is technically not her child; the child belongs to Abram and Sarai.

a) "Return to your mistress and submit." Note how the angel reaffirms that Sarai is still Hagar's mistress. This harsh and uncompromising command seems callous, the more so when it is realized that "submit" (hithpa'el of ענה) comes from the same root as "humiliate" (v 6) and "oppress" (15:13). Hagar is being told to submit not just to her mistress' authority but to suffering at her hand. The reason for this surprising injunction begins to emerge in the subsequent promises.⁶

9. Submit yourself to her authority – This word defines that the Lord knowingly was commanding Hagar to put herself in self-inflicted pain. This seems so ridiculous.

⁵ Wenham, G. J. (1994). [Genesis 16–50](#) (Vol. 2, p. 9). Word, Incorporated.

⁶ Wenham, G. J. (1994). [Genesis 16–50](#) (Vol. 2, p. 10). Word, Incorporated.

- a) The “angel’s” heartening word to Hagar was that she should go back to the hard situation she had left, take up her burden, wait for the fulfillment of the divine plan, and look for the day when her son, Ishmael, should become the head of an important tribe.⁷
10. Submit yourself to her authority – The reason why the Lord would state this is that it is better to with the promises of God literally than to be on our own. I would rather be in a Lion’s Den than knowingly sin against God. If abiding in God’s purposes creates suffering, we must remember that *“the sufferings of this present time don’t compare to the glory to be revealed.”* (Romans 8:18; James 1:12; Rev. 3:21) God has seven thousand promises in the Bible, and He is faithful to accomplish them all. She was more blessed in a bad situation to do what the Lord said than to be outside His will, isolated from His blessings.
11. Angel of the Lord said to her (vs. 10-12) – Without Hagar agreeing or disagreeing, the Lord continuously kept directly communicating His desire for Hagar not to run.
12. Angel of the Lord said to her (vs. 10-12) – God called her to return to a difficult situation but gave her hope (Hebrews 11:1) for a great future. The substance of faith is hope. What gives us strength and the inner ability to trust God in the worst circumstances is trusting Him to do what He said He will do (Eph. 3:20-21). The Angel of the Lord promised Hagar:
- a) Greatly multiply (vs. 10-12) – Being in the will of God can be messy (Psalm 34:17-19). There are lots of examples, including Christ’s life on earth. God blesses those who endure to the end (Hebrews 10:36 – *“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”* Rev. 2:10). If we don’t grow weary God will bless us with a great season of much fruit (Gal. 6:9; John 15:1-10).
- b) Too many to count – Life can take us in all kinds of directions, but because of God’s faithfulness to His promises, *“all things work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes.”* (Rom. 8:28) She became a mother of a great nation rather than remain a handmaiden. It worked out for her good because when we place ourselves in the hands of God, who is powerful, perfect, and loving, there is no way we will not become blessed.
- c) Behold – The Angel of the Lord, knowing she was homeless, demanded her attention to explain to her that He is watching over her.
- Single and parenting are burdensome; Hagar and Ishmael were homeless and hopeless:
 - Hagar had the burden of feeding and caring for her son without any support (Gen. 21:14) -- lack of provision.
 - Hagar had no place to go (Gen. 21:14) -- lack of direction.
 - Hagar was afraid (21:17) -- lack of protection.

⁷Pfeiffer, Charles F.: *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary : Old Testament*. Chicago : Moody Press, 1962, S. Ge 16:9

- d) The Lord has given heed – The Lord, who is always in control and has authority over all things, told Hagar that He knows about everything she is going through.
- e) Affliction – The Lord was not just aware of Hagar and her son; He was also aware of her emotional pain and physical punishment. God’s silence during her pain did not mean He was absent.
- f) A wild donkey, people will be against Him – God knows what He has in store for us, how He will protect us and bless us.

God’s silence does not represent His absence.

C. God Cares (21:15-19):

1. Then she called the name of the Lord – Hagar responds to the Lord by shouting the name of the Lord loudly.
It is as if she is acknowledging that the Lord has His authority based on His reputation to make things come through. Hagar so acknowledges the Lord’s power and authority that she returns to Sarai. This shows us how strongly she believes in who the Lord is.
 - a) This is a common Semitic name meaning “El [God] has heard” (the parents) and given them a son, or “May El [God] hear” (the boy) and help him. The particular interpretation given here is closest to the first, “The Lord has noticed [lit. ‘heard’] your oppression.”
2. You are a God who sees – Hagar was exposed to many gods in Egypt (we would see this in the time of Moses). Now, hearing from the Lord God, who tells her about her son, explains her future, and provides her His promise to care for her, she becomes convinced that the Lord God has eyes through which He can clearly see and understand all that is taking place.
 - a) God’s eyes do not just see the present circumstances; He sees the future and can guarantee it will take place.
 - b) Hagar was overjoyed to recognize God in the experience, and to see Him to be a gracious, kindly, thoughtful observer of a poor individual in dire need. She responded with reverent faith. The well or spring was named Beer-lahai-roi. This name has been variously translated and amended. Perhaps as good a rendering as any is The well of the living one who seeth me. Hagar was moved mightily by the realization that she had been in the very presence of the mighty God and that she was still alive. Perhaps the well was in the vicinity of Kadesh (cf. 16:14), about fifty miles south of Beer-sheba. The boy was born, and the name Ishmael was given to him by Abram, then eighty-six years old. Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament (Ge 16:13). Moody Press).

3. She said – Hagar is completely convinced that the only reason she is alive is that she met with the God who sees, and He is a true God.
 - a) This meeting did not take place because of anything Hagar did. It took place because God, on His own initiative, chose to serve her needs.
4. When she saw – God is faithful to serve us in our worst times and provide us hope for a great future if we continue to listen to Him. REST ON ONE THING, ARE WE WILLING TO LISTEN?
5. When the water in the skin was used up; finished – Despite being provided provisions by Abram (vs. 14), in a dry, hot climate, Hagar and Ishmael were completely out of water with no possibility of being able to refill their skin. Their situation was hopeless.
6. She went - Hagar could not bear to see her son die, so they kept walking away from him with no intention of being near him.
7. She said she did not want to see – She was completely committed to being nowhere near her son and verbally spoke out loud that she did not want to accept the thought that her son was going to die.
8. Lifted up her voice and wept – She raised her voice, complaining loudly, highly emotional, totally distressed, and endlessly weeping.
9. God heard the lad crying – Hagar complained (after all, she went back and remained with Abram and Sarai for years – Ishmael was not 16 years old) and wept, Ishmael cried, God clearly understood all that they felt and was right where they needed Him to be without Him having to look for them.
 - a) Note how Ishmael is here called “the child,” twice, emphasizing the bond between him and his mother, rather than the potential independence that the word “lad” evokes.
 - b) Then she had learned that the LORD knows what is going on in the world wherever it happens. Here the angel states that God can see a child lying under a bush and respond to his prayers.⁸
10. God heard the lad crying – Life can take us to our wits’ end, but God is always present. When we have nowhere to go and nothing left emotionally or mentally, once we walk in His ways, He promises to abide with us (John 15:1-13).
11. God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her – Even though Hagar is not a Jew, she is a handmaiden of a historic person, Sarai, God talks to her directly. We have full access to the throne of grace through Jesus, our mediator (Hebrews 8:1-2). If we choose to abide in Him, He grants us what we ask for (John 15:7). She was once a servant of Sarai; now she is a servant of God.

⁸Wenham, Gordon J.: *Word Biblical Commentary : Genesis 16-50*. Dallas : Word, Incorporated, 2002 (Word Biblical Commentary 2), S. 85

12. Do not fear – God instructs Hagar that she never has a reason to be in a state of great distress or pain because He had already promised to provide her His blessings (Gen. 16:10-12).
13. Do not fear – God provided us seven thousand promises in the Bible and instructed us not to fear (Psalm 34:7-9; Prov. 29:25; Lk 12:32).
14. Rise, lift up the lad – God told Hagar to be courageous, be convinced that His Words will sustain her. This mindset provides her with strength and allows her to remain steadfast in caring for Ishmael.
15. Rise, lift up the lad – No matter how extremely uncertain her circumstances may seem, the Lord's promises do not fail.
16. Hold him by his hand – Hagar needs to take control of her emotions, her son's emotions, trust God, function with authority, and take control of the circumstances they were experiencing. God was not going to do this for her. God's promise to Abram (Gen. 21:12-13), which moved Abram to put the raising of Ishmael on her back, is being fulfilled.
 - a) God told Hagar, as He had told Abraham, that from Ishmael would come a great nation (21:18; cf. v. 13). Ishmael lived in the desert . . . became an archer (v. 20; cf. 16:12), and married an Egyptian (21:21). The Desert of Paran is in the northeast portion of the Sinai peninsula.⁹
17. Hold him by his hand – Even though she did not set up these circumstances, God commands her to take control as a single parent and lead the process forward.
 - a) The expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael and their subsequent life in the desert of Paran would require them to acquire survival skills. As a skilled archer, Ishmael could provide food for his family and perhaps could find occupation as a mercenary (Is. 21:17 for reference to the bowmen of Kedar, Ishmael's son).
18. Hold him by his hand – God's Word is our confidence, our hope, and our strength.
19. God opened her eyes - She was willing this time and the last time (when she returned to Sarai) to obey God no matter what the circumstances were. From this point forward, Hagar would see through God's eyes because God proved to be attentive and aware, not passive and uninvolved.
20. She saw a well of water - When the Lord opened her eyes, the well that was always there, she can now see it clearly. "*God is our present help in a time of need*" (Ps. 46:1).
21. She saw a well of water - Even though she heard God's promises and went back to Sarai and faithfully served her for years, Hagar doubted God, and she was blinded by her anxiety, and emotional distress so she did not see the well that was right before her. God's Word is full of hope, but many times we doubt Him, and it increases our hopelessness into despair.
22. Fill the skin with water and gave it to her lad - Hagar immediately, continuously, completely filled up her and her son's skin and continuously brought it to her son.

cf. *confer*, compare

⁹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

Because she had moved a distance from her son and the well was near her, she did the work. This means they were now fully prepared for her journey to ensure she would never experience this again.

23. Fill the skin with water and gave it to her lad - She listened to God, believed the Angel of the Lord, now seeing through His eyes, God's promises are now her reality.