

Friendship with the Omnipotent God

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[0:00] of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.

Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. Will I bring a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on, since you have come to your servant?

So they said, Do as you have said. And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, Quick, three saiyas of fine flour. Knead it and make cakes. And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man who prepared it quickly.

Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, Where is Sarah your wife?

And he said, She is in the tent. The Lord said, I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

[1:11] Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of woman had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, After I am worn out and my Lord is old, shall I have pleasure?

The Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh and say, Shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.

But Sarah denied it, saying, I did not laugh, for she was afraid. He said, No, but you did laugh. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Heavenly Father, we come before you yet one more time and just ask you would speak to us through this word.

Lord, this is not the words of mere mortal men. These are the words of the God for whom nothing is impossible. And we want to listen and heed these words that, as Jordan just prayed, we might become more like your son, Jesus Christ.

For your name, for your glory, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Good morning, Shoreline. We can do a little better, I think. Good morning, Shoreline. Good morning.

[2:27] Thank you. I'm thrilled to be back up here. But first, I just want to say, we were so blessed as a church. And I was so blessed, personally, with all the men that were filling this pulpit over the last couple months.

And how rich and nourishing was that for us to just be in the Psalms, hearing from other godly men that God was speaking to and through. And so I just want to say thank you.

If you were one of those men, thank you for sacrifice. And those guys are spending their nights, their weekends to study the text and to learn from it and then to bring what God's shown them up here.

And so that is a gift to this body. And so just, yeah, thank you. Thank you all. Well, I want to ask a question here. Have you ever been befriended by somebody who seemed way too important to be friends with you?

Anybody? Just think about that for a second. Has somebody just like better, cooler, higher in status befriended you? And it sort of was crazy. So one example, many people have done this for me, but one example is a man who's actually preached here before.

[3:36] His name is Rhys Besant. He is an Australian man of God, amazing. He's the president now of a seminary in Australia. He's a brilliant scholar.

He's invited to speak all over the world. He writes and publishes books. And some of us met him when we were attending Trinity Baptist Church a long time ago, but we've stayed in contact with him.

And I think a few of us had this realization. He was in town like last year and we're just hanging out with him, realizing like all of the things that he has done and sort of like, what in the world is he doing hanging out with us blokes, you know?

Now, is there somebody that you have in mind? Shoreline Youth. I just heard the name. That's funny. Shoreline Youth. Maybe you're thinking, I cannot believe that the Allen boys, they don't call you boys, that Brad and Mitch Allen would actually befriend me.

Like they're way too cool, but they're actually friends with me. Now, I want you to consider, Mitch is denying that. I want you to consider, friends, how infinitely blown away any of us should be that the infinite God, okay, for whom the distance between us and him is infinitely greater than the distance between any other man and us, okay?

[4:49] That he would befriend us. He would condescend to welcome us in. Look, that's a reality that ought to just utterly boggle and confound our minds from now into eternity.

And it should leave us like David in Psalm 139, which Pastor Zach was up here preaching on last week. It should leave us in this breathless awe and wonder. But it's actually true.

God invites us into a friendship with himself. And we get to see a snapshot of what that looks like in today's text. So if you haven't already, please turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 18.

Genesis chapter 18. We are diving back into the book of Genesis. We've been walking through it throughout the year. Took a break for the summer. And we've titled this series, The Life-Giving, Promise-Keeping God.

And we're coming back to that over and over again. And the title of today's sermon is Friendship with the Omnipotent God. Friendship with the Omnipotent God. Now last week, Pastor Zach was here preaching on Psalm 139.

[5:53] And he showed us how God is omniscient, which means all-knowing. He's omnipresent, which means all-present. He's everywhere. He taught us a new word, that God is omnificent.

I don't know why we don't use this word. It means he's all-creative. He possesses unlimited creative power. This week, we can add another big word. God is omnipotent, omnipotent, all-powerful, almighty.

And the amazing thing that this text shows us is that, we're already there, the righteous enjoy friendship with God, the omnipotent God, and experience the fulfillment of his promises.

The righteous enjoy friendship with God and experience the fulfillment of his promises. And just so there's no confusion about what I mean when I say the righteous, I mean those who have been made righteous by grace through faith in Christ, right?

Since none of us could achieve righteousness, the righteousness of God on our own. So I mean what we learned back in Genesis 15. Now these are our corporate scripture memory verses for September. It's in the email, Genesis 15, 5 and 6, when God tells Abraham to look at the stars and to number them if he can.

[7:06] And he said, so shall your offspring be. And then what did the text say? It says, and he believed God and he counted it to him as righteousness. It says faith in God.

That's how he was made righteous. And so the righteous, by faith, enjoy friendship with God and experience the fulfillment of his promises. Now because we're jumping back into Genesis after more than two months, I just want to reset the big picture context for us, okay?

So Genesis is largely two sections. Genesis 1 through 11 is primeval history. It's a history of beginnings. And we saw how God made a very good world for the flourishing of mankind, which we ruined in the fall.

We brought sin into this world and corruption, but God made a promise, right? Genesis 3, 15. He promised that one day someone from the line of Eve would bruise the serpent's head.

That means undo the curse of sin. It's that promise that the rest of Genesis and scripture traces out. But in the narrative of Genesis, we see that the corruption only multiplies all the way to the point in Genesis 6 that God needs to judge humanity.

[8:17] And he does so through a global flood. But by grace, Noah and his family are saved. But we see in Genesis 9, sin's curse remained, right? The flood didn't wipe out sin.

Wiped out sinners. But sin still exists in the heart. And that multiplies yet again. And that's epitomized in the project of Babel. Proud, self-seeking Babel, which God brings to ruin. And then history progresses at light speed again. And we go from Noah all the way to Abraham. And then it really slows down. And that's when we enter really the second part of the book of Genesis.

Patriarchal history. The patriarchs of Israel. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. This is what the rest of Genesis is about. And so in Genesis 1 through 11, consider this. 2,000 years about of history.

Genesis 1 through 11. Only about 25 in the next 11 chapters, which we've been walking through. And so in the Abraham story, we've seen God call him out from his homeland towards the promises of land and seed and blessing.

[9:19] And so what we actually see is that that Genesis 3.15 promise of a Savior from Eve's line is now being channeled in the person of Abraham and his offspring. This is significant as we walk through Scripture.

And then we've been journeying sort of with Abraham. We've seen God bring tests to grow his faith. We've seen God prove his own faithfulness in the midst of his faithlessness.

We've seen God confirm the covenant. And he's calling Abraham and Sarah to this increasing trust in him and his promises. And so that brings us to Genesis chapter 18. Now we're going to take this text today and it's two sections.

And the first thing that we're going to see is that the righteous enjoy friendship with God. The righteous enjoy friendship with God. So look with me in your Bibles at Genesis chapter 18 verse 1. This is now the third time that God has appeared to Abraham.

[10:24] The first time was back in chapter 12. The original call. Abraham was 75 years old and God said, The text says in verse 7, The second time God appears to Abraham is 24 years later.

24 years. Now that's in chapter 17. So look with me in chapter 17, the beginning. And it says, When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am God Almighty.

Walk before me and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you and may multiply you greatly. So now God appears to him yet again. And this is really soon after chapter 17, that last appearance.

Now in the first two appearances, we don't really know what form God took. How did God appear to Abraham? We don't know. We don't know. Here we're told a little bit more as we keep reading.

But before we keep reading, I want you to notice what Abraham is doing. He's still dwelling in a tent. Right? In the heat of the day.

[11:34] I think there's a link there back to Adam and Eve walking in the cool of the day. The curse remains. Abraham is sitting in the heat of the day under his tent, living by these oaks of Mamre.

We learned that these oak trees belong to the Amorites. They're not his. So Abraham continues to be a sojourner. He's continuing to live in a land that God promised to his descendants, but it does not yet belong to them.

And if we read 18 and 19 together, we realize Moses is very intentionally setting up this contrast between Abraham and his nephew Lot. Abraham is sitting under a tent in the heat of the day.

Lot in chapter 19, verse 1, is sitting in the gate of Sodom in the evening. Lot is a foil for Abraham. And this actually began, if you've been with us, this began back in chapter 13.

When they were traveling together, and do you remember, they had some feuding herdsmen fighting that was going on. And then Abraham, in this radical generosity, he told Lot, hey, you take first pick of the land.

[12:33] And so the text says, Lot lifted up his eyes and saw, okay, they're on a hillside. He looks out over the land, and he sees the green pastures of the Jordan Valley, which goes towards the direction of Sodom.

And so that's where Lot goes. He takes what looks good. And then Abraham, he stays in the land of promise, the land of Canaan. And God said to him, lift up your eyes and look.

North, south, east, west, all this land that I'm giving to you and your offspring forever. And what we saw in chapter 13 is that Abraham chose for his portion, God himself and God's promises.

Whereas Lot chose what? He chose the fleeting pleasures of this world. And so this contrast now comes to a head here in chapters 18 and 19, which we're going to walk through over the next few weeks.

Now, Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked. See that? They lifted up his eyes and looked. And behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.

[13 : 43] Let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree while I bring a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves. And after that, you may pass on since you have come to your servant.

So they said, do as you have said. Now, two burning questions that at least came to my mind when I read these verses the first time. One, does Abraham realize at that very moment that God himself is standing before him?

Second question. Are these three men the Trinity? Is this Father, Son, Spirit in some sort of human form? And my very unsatisfactory answer to you all after my studies this week is to both questions. I don't think so. But we actually don't know. Not very satisfactory. The first question. Does Abraham realize that God himself stands before them? Now, certainly by the end of today's passage, Abraham has been brought to the realization that God himself is in his midst.

But whether or not this occurs to him from the start is very unclear and very debated by scholars.

The second question. Is this the Trinity? It's tempting to see that. There's three men.

[14 : 50] As we move forward, though, one of them specifically is called the Lord. L-O-R-D, all caps. That's Yahweh. The covenant God of Israel. The other two men in chapter 19 are identified as angels who were apparently accompanying the Lord.

Now, this doesn't rule out the possibility that this is some sort of appearance of the Trinity, but it's not central to the point of the text. And so we can get distracted with these things. They're very interesting to think through.

But I just want to stick to what God's word makes clear. And so you ask, what does God's word make clear? And what we see here is a man who is generous, hospitable, humble, and has this extremely servant-hearted response.

That's what stands out. Now, literally every phrase of these verses is pointing to Abraham's humility or his hospitality. Look, he saw them. He ran.

Okay, this is an old Middle Eastern man. They generally did not run. That wasn't a thing that was, like, think about the parable of the prodigal son. The father runs to his son. And that's supposed to be kind of radical.

[15 : 53] He runs. He bows himself to the earth. He shows this warm hospitality. He goes off to get bread and to get a feast going for them.

And so we see this continue in the next set of verses. Let's keep reading with me in verse 6. Now, this is kind of funny.

So Abraham, in verse 5, he says, Hey, make yourselves at home while I go bring a morsel of bread. And then he comes back with this lavish feast. Okay? He actually pulls out all the stops.

So apparently a morsel of bread is bottomless bread and charcuterie and prime rib. Or if you prefer, it's like saying, Hey, I'm going to go get a taco or two.

And then you go get the biggest cravings box from Taco Bell that you can find. And then you bring that back. Now, some of you all are from the south. This is like southern hospitality at its best.

[17 : 06] But actually, it's really just, it's Middle Eastern hospitality. This is still a thing to this day. They're very hospitable in Middle Eastern culture. But Abraham's going, he's going above and beyond even.

And I want you to catch that last sentence. It says, So he's not only this generous host, he's also this servant-hearted waiter.

There's this, this is a really interesting dynamic going on. Like, why is this? I was wrestling. Why is this in the narrative? Like, nothing's advanced in the promises.

Like, what are we supposed to see? And I think there's a couple things going on here. We're unsure that Abraham actually is aware that God is among him. But we see his overflowing humility, his hospitality.

And that is a beautiful example of the kind of people that God wants his children to be. And at the same time, we're sitting there thinking, okay, but this is God.

[18 : 03] Like, God has come down to earth to be with Abraham. I mean, this is incredible, right? And why does God do this? Why does he come down and, I guess, take on the form of a man?

God gives an announcement in the next set of verses. He didn't need to come down to do that. He could have just, he could have spoken from heaven. And then Rob's going to preach next week on the dialogue that goes on between God and Abraham.

And again, that could have been by an audible word. Like, there didn't need to be an appearance. Why does God come down? Why does he manifest his presence in physical form? I think what we're supposed to see is this mind-blowing reality that God delights to befriend the people that he created in his image.

And so, therefore, the righteous, right, those who have been made righteous by faith in God, the righteous have the unthinkable privilege of enjoying friendship with the living God.

Friendship with the living God. Friends, this is the gospel. This is the heart of the gospel. That you and I have been welcomed into a relationship with the God who made us, and yet we had rebelled against.

[19:21] He's welcomed us into relationship with him. And that through the blood of Jesus Christ, right, Christ made a way for us to be reconciled to God the Father.

God's befriended us in Jesus. He's opened up his heart to us. He's welcomed us in. This is not just southern hospitality. This is not just Middle Eastern hospitality. This is divine hospitality of epic proportion.

God inviting his enemies into intimate friendship with him. And so, friends, my first application point today is simply receive.

Receive his friendship. And that is welcome in the one who has welcomed you. Now, the welcome of God comes first. We would never, never know God if he did not move towards us first in love. And that was made possible by the cross work of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, we would have no chance of relationship with him. But God calls us to respond, to reciprocate his welcome by welcoming him into our hearts and lives.

[20:24] Now, I want you to consider these words from the risen Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 3, verse 20. Jesus says, and this is not just to the, I forget which church it was, Laodicea, I don't remember which one it was.

But this is not just words to them then. These are words for you today. Okay? Jesus Christ is speaking to you today. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, this is the risen Lord Jesus Christ, wields all power in the universe, made the heavens and the earth.

He says, I stand at the door and knock. If you open up the door, I will come in and eat with you and you with me. He's saying, I've already done all the work.

I've died on your behalf to save you from your sins, which you can never save yourself from. I've done the work and now I'm standing right here at the threshold, knocking, saying, are you going to let me in?

I've already done the work. Just let me in. Friends, Jesus is making to you that offer today. Will you let him in? Will you welcome in the one who has welcomed you?

[21:37] Talk to me if you want to ask questions about that. Here's the second thing. Saints, this is for us. Cultivate his friendship. Cultivate his friendship. Keep welcoming him.

Now, look, if you're a child of God, if you're a brother and sister in Christ, if you have faith in him, then you are already. We have been made friends of God. And the call here is to keep welcoming him.

In other words, keep cultivating friendship with God, the one who has already welcomed you into his divine fellowship. And as we think about this point, I want you to just ask this question.

Parents, would your kids describe you as a friend of God? When they look at your life, the way you organize your time, the things that you invest yourself in, would they describe you as a friend of God?

This is a friend of Jesus. That's a question for all of us, saints. Would your neighbors, would your coworkers look at your life and say, I don't believe in God, but they do and they're clearly friends with Christ?

[22:50] You know, we might answer that differently in varying seasons of our life. The call for us is to be cultivating friendship with God. So how do we do that? How do we cultivate friendship with God?

Well, I want to point to one other example real quick. We have Abraham. He is described as a friend of God in other parts of Scripture. Another man of Scripture, the only other man in Scripture described that way is Moses.

Do you remember Moses? Moses would go to Exodus. I didn't write down the reference. I think it's Exodus 33. And the text says, thus the Lord. So Moses would go to the tent of meeting. And he would face to face, he would talk to the Lord.

And he would walk out of the tent of meeting glowing. The people couldn't even look at him because he was with God. And it says, thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friends. What was Moses doing?

He was placing himself in the place where God speaks. So how do we cultivate friendship with God? We put ourselves in the place where God speaks.

[23:49] Where is that? His word. This is where God speaks. Through his word, you place yourself there. In his word, every day, you do it here. You place yourself in the church.

And you're all here this morning. This is the place where God speaks. He's promised that. He does so through his word, through his church, by his spirit. Okay, here's another thing that we do. This is what Moses did.

Moses is known as the humblest man in all the earth. We humble our, and we see this in Abraham's story as well. Abraham is humbling himself, bowing himself. We humble ourselves in God's presence.

This is how we cultivate friendship with God. Psalm 25 verse 14 says, The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him. Okay, to fear in scripture is to acknowledge God's rightful place, to stand in awe of it, and to bow in worship.

That's fearing the Lord. So we're acknowledging who God is, who we are. And we're practicing repentance. Because inevitably when you do that, your sin comes to light. You repent of that.

[24:51] Like David in Psalm 51. So place yourself where God speaks. Humble yourself in God's presence. Here's the third thing that we do. We disclose to him the contents of our heart in prayer.

Disclose to him the contents. That just means make yourself, talk to God about what's going on in here. Disclose the contents of your heart to God. This is what we do as friends, isn't it? Think about the best friend that you have.

You talk to them about whatever's going on in the heart. You don't hide stuff from them. This is what we're called to do. If you want to be a friend of God, you're telling God what's going on.

He already knows. But that's part of the relational growth. The intimacy is disclosing the contents of your heart to the Lord in prayer. And here's just one more principle here. Recognize that cultivating friendship takes time and intentionality.

It takes time and intentionality. Now, I've heard this many, many times. I think at some point in adulthood, I've heard a lot of people lament that they wish they had friendships like they had back then.

[25:58] You think about a friendship you had in high school, a friendship you had in college. And a lot of times we had these really close friendships growing up that just seemed to come so naturally. And the reality is, though, those friendships took time to develop.

We spent a lot of time together. Maybe there were circumstances that made it more natural. And now as adults with responsibilities, there's a little bit more intentionality that has to be there. But friendship always, it takes time.

It takes intentionality. And if you want to be friends with God in an increasing depth, you've got to put time into it. You've got to be intentional about it. And so just one more little practical tip here.

Because I think about, man, I can be so distracted. I'm the pastor. I get distracted. My mind can wander off into all kinds of other things. I wake up and instantly I'm thinking about something, something I have to do, something on the task list, something related to the family.

I don't know if anyone else relates to me. Already going. I don't have to do anything. Mine's just, it's running away. And I want to encourage you, take those thoughts, whatever you're thinking about, to God.

[27:08] Right? Don't try to suppress them. That's what I'm saying. Don't try to suppress those thoughts. Take them to the Lord. Bring them Godward. And I want to encourage you guys, just as a practical tip, if you're about to sit down and read the word, and you're easily distracted, spend two minutes, just quietly, and think about, okay, where is my mind going?

Where is my heart right now? What's my body doing right now? Take that to the Lord. Talk to him about it. Let him deal with it. Say, Lord, I'm giving these things over to you. I'm feeling these weights, these anxieties, these concerns.

I'm giving them over to you because I know that you speak to me through your word, and you've got those. Okay? Now, one more thing here. Why should we cultivate friendship with God?

So I've just told you just some practical things for how. Why should we cultivate friendship with God? We've been talking all about it throughout the service. We were made, first of all, we were made for the purpose of knowing him and loving him, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

That is your purpose in life. So you'll be fulfilling your purpose if you cultivate friendship with God. Matt read for us Psalm 16 before. Why? Because he alone is the source of contentment and joy and delight.

[28:20] In your presence, there is fullness of joy. At your right hand, our pleasures forevermore. And then third, only in friendship with God are we formed increasingly into the image of Christ.

So those are just a few reasons. Saints, let's be cultivating friendship with God this year like never before. Okay, here's the third thing. And we see this in Moses, or in Abraham's example here. Extend his friendship. I.e., welcome in the stranger. Now look, God's desire is not only that we would be welcoming him continually, but also that we would manifest his same befriending, welcoming love to all of those around us, okay?

Certainly in the household of God right here, and also to those outside of here. J.D. Greer wrote a book called *Everyday Revolutionary*, and he has a whole chapter on hospitality, loud hospitality. We went through it in the men's study. And he says this, leading people to friendship with Jesus starts with friendship with us, and that usually happens around our tables. And he quotes another author who writes, I may not be able to solve the great systemic injustices of our time, but I can cook some of the best pizza you've ever had.

[29:36] And then Greer adds, as they eat your pizza, you can model for them the warmth of the kingdom, and most certainly opportunities will arise for you to testify to them about your hope in Jesus. This is the hospitality that God calls us to.

Now look, hospitality though, we've talked about this over the course of the last few years, it's not just having people around dinner tables, right? It goes beyond that. It's embodying Romans 15, 7, and therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God.

So it's opening up your heart, it's opening up your home, it's opening up your time, opening up your lives to others. Watching your kids play on a playground together, and then having conversation, right?

Just opening up the window of your life. It's attending other people's sports events, other kids' sports events, and then having intentional conversation. It's visiting people in the hospital when they're sick, writing notes of, like all of these are ways, and so many more.

Or it's doing the cadet sponsor a family program, right? That's welcoming in the stranger. You know, why do I use the term stranger here? Well, the author of Hebrews, probably alluding back to this very story in Genesis 18, writes, Hebrews 13, 1 and 2, let brotherly love continue.

[30:47] Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Man, if an angel were here on some covert mission, and we neglected to show them hospitality.

That's an unfortunate report that's going back to the Lord, right? Like, let's open up our hearts wide to others. Let's give them our little morsels of bread, and what is the goal, really?

That they would find a seat at the table of Christ that we're going to partake in later today. The righteous enjoy friendship with God. Okay, we'll spend a little bit less time on the second half here. The righteous experience the fulfillment of God's promises. The righteous experience the fulfillment of God's promises. So, okay, back in the story. These three divine visitors, they're eating under a tree, Abraham standing over them, and then they said to him, where is Sarah, your wife?

And he said, she is in the tent. The Lord said, I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah, your wife, shall have a son.

[31:51] Now, this was a promise that God had given just in the last chapter. God said this to Abraham. Do you remember how Abraham responded when God said this to him? Look in chapter 17, verse 17.

Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, shall a child be born to an ancient man? Paraphrase. And then what did God say?

He's like, no, but Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac, which means he laughs, right? Now, it's important for us to remember that situation that just happened as we think about this interaction.

How does Sarah respond to the same promise? Now, it's funny because Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him, right? Classic. Sarah is eavesdropping on her spouse's conversation.

Now, listen, listen, listen. In light of the company, in light of the company, I would be doing the same thing, okay? I think any of us would be doing the same thing. Now, then Moses gives us a little bit of commentary here.

[32:52] Now, Abraham and Sarah were old. Thanks, Moses, right? Now, Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. Yes, at almost 90 years old, menopause has set in, okay?

Now, on top of that, we've already been told Sarah's barren. She has born no child, and now she's 90 years old. Okay, so from a human perspective, this is a biological and physical impossibility, what God is saying.

And if you remember, so Rob preached back on Genesis 16. This is why Abraham and Sarah devised a plan, because they saw no way for God's promise to be fulfilled. So Sarah says, hey, why don't you sleep with my maidservant, Hagar?

They bore a son, but it did not advance God's promise, did it, right? And so their attempt was fruitless. It didn't do anything. And so here God is, he's reconfirming the promise of his son through Sarah.

And now we see, how does Sarah actually respond? So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, after I am worn out and my Lord is old, shall I have pleasure? A little snarky of a response there.

[34:02] Her response reveals this persisting lack of faith. Her response is not that different from Abraham's in the prior chapter. But I think what the difference is, is the promise has already been given to Abraham.

I'm sure that Abraham relayed that conversation in chapter 17 to Sarah, and relayed how God had responded and confirmed the promise, but she's still persisting, and this is impossible, this is not happening.

God had rebuked Abraham a little bit, and he rebuked Sarah a little bit more harshly, I think. Then the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh and say, shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old?

He was gracious in paraphrasing what she said. Now the funny thing is, the joke's on Sarah, right? She was eavesdropping on the ultimate eavesdropper. Or like, she overheard his conversation, and he overheard her private under the breath muttering.

Now David knew this when he wrote, even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. And this sets the stage though. I'm grateful for Sarah's response, because look at this.

[35:11] Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time, I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.

Okay, reality check, Sarah. You used your breath to question my word. I used my breath to summon planets and stars and the earth into existence. I am, God is saying, I'm the God of creation.

I spoke all the seas that you see, the mountains that you see, the God of all flesh. That's who I am. I'm giving you your life. I'm sustaining your life right now. I will take your life when I want, at my will. Is anything too hard for me? God is saying. And he's also saying, your lack of faith is actually not going to prevent what I've ordained. But Sarah denied it, saying, I did not laugh, for she was afraid. And he said, I love this line, no, but you did laugh. We got to start talking like that. That's just, that's funny stuff. Sarah tries to hide from the guilt, and that's, of course, just, it's more foolishness.

[36:19] You can't, you can't hide from this. She should have immediately just repented. But notice, God has the final word. He, mic drop moment, he ends the conversation and walks out.

So I imagine, like, that conversation is left ringing in her ears. Now, what do we do with this story? Like, what do we do with this? Now, I want to suggest three things. Okay, here's the first thing.

Make your faith your own. Okay, it's clear that Abraham's faith, Sarah's faith, they influence each other, but they are two distinct entities. Now, I'm not suggesting Sarah did not possess saving faith. I think we read the hall of faith in Hebrews 11. She had faith that needed to grow. But my point here is simply, if she's going to enjoy the friendship with God that Abraham enjoys, this has to come through her own faith.

And this is going to become a theme. The God of Abraham must become the God of Isaac, must become the God of Jacob. You know, the same is true for us today. So Alex and Judy Lusa, my parents, they had a profound impact on my walk with the Lord.

[37 : 25] But at some point, I had to reach a point at which the things that I learned, like with Timothy and 1 Timothy, the things that I learned, I became fully convinced of. Had to become my faith, not Alex Lusa's faith.

And so each one of you here, you need to make an individual choice to welcome in the one who has welcomed you. Kids, kids, listen, your parents' faith won't do.

Be thankful that you're being raised with parents who have an abiding friendship with God, but their friendship with God is not your friendship with God. Spouses, your spouse's faith won't do. Your shoreline youth leader's faith won't do.

Your pastor's faith won't do. Matthew 16, 13 to 15, we read this. Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that the son of man is? They said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, others, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. He said to them, but who do you say that I am? And that is the single greatest question in the world that any of us will ever answer.

[38 : 30] Who do you say that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is? Who do you say that he is? Now, scripture also teaches that the way that we identify publicly, that we align ourselves with Jesus, is through baptism.

So that's a beautiful and necessary part of making our faith our own. Right? Aligning ourselves with Christ before God, before the church, declaring our allegiance to him. And so if you're here, and you believe in Jesus Christ, and you feel the Lord prompting you to take that important step of obedience, please come talk to me.

Please come talk to Jordan, or one of the other elders here. Secondly, have eyes to, so make your faith your own. Second, have eyes to see the present fulfillment of God's promises.

God had already worked in Abraham and Sarah's story in a whole bunch of ways. He had been confirming the promises, but also beginning to fulfill them. Okay? Specifically, we've seen God blessing Abraham and Sarah, and then being a blessing through them, even to the nations.

That was what God promised in Genesis 12. And so, saints, God is fulfilling, has been fulfilling his promises. And the thing is, as we see that, and give attention to that, that gives us faith in the promises that are to come.

[39 : 49] Do you have eyes to see God at work? Do you have eyes to see the Lord, and his power, and his faithfulness on display? My dad used to call these God sightings. He had a journal of God sightings that he would write.

You might call it a gratitude journal, but listen, whether you write it down or not, though I encourage you to write it down, take time every day. Take time every day. This is part of cultivating friendship with the Lord.

Take time every day to stop, and to reflect, and to notice, and to appreciate the ways that God is at work. And I could, we're low on time.

There's all kinds of ways that God is at work, but here's the last point of application here. Have faith to believe in the future fulfillment of all God's promises. Now again, I don't think this was a salvation moment for Sarah.

I just think, like Abraham, she possessed a faith that needed to continue to grow. And all of us Christians can relate to this, can we not? We trust in God for our salvation.

[40 : 48] We trust what Christ has done, but there's promises that he's given us in his word, and they lay far beyond my human logic and reasoning. That's what faith takes hold of those promises.

I mean, does human wisdom train our hearts to believe that Christ is coming again? I mean, I haven't seen, have you seen Jesus in the flesh? He's coming again. Does human wisdom tell me that that's true?

Does human wisdom tell me that God is going to eradicate evil and make this world new and bring all the saints to be with him forever? Right? Faith lays hold of these promises.

And what does God point to in verse 14 as a reason for Sarah and the reason for us to trust in his word? The fact that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

That's what God points to. He points to his own omnipotence, his limitless power, his infinite ability to accomplish whatever he wants.

[41:51] And so we today, as believers in Jesus Christ, we have far more reason than Sarah did then to believe in the all-powerful God because we've seen God's power. Part of the Red Sea, right? That was part of Israel's story.

We've seen God's power. He's not just the God of creation. He's the God of the cross. The cross shows us God-wielding, limitless power to orchestrate all of history to this climactic moment when Jesus Christ was put to death and then raised from the dead.

That's unlimited power on display. We have every reason to trust in the promises of God that yet await. He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or imagine.

Now I just want to close with one story of a man who I think embodied this. Adoniram Judson. Okay, he was a missionary, first American missionary that went to Burma, which is now Myanmar, back in the late 1700s.

Now when he went there, he saw about seven years of zero fruit, like no converts. And as soon as some fruit began to be produced, he was imprisoned. And he was there in a death prison for about 19 months where he thought, for sure, I'm going to die.

[43:02] New Testament remains to be, he was working on a New Testament translation that almost got taken and then it got preserved in his pillowcase in prison. And then he was taken on a death march where this guy, Pack and Woon, was leading the prisoners to their death.

And then God intervened and Pack and Woon was actually executed for treason and they were all freed. And then there was a season of great fruit that the Lord brought about through Judson, which continues today, which thousands of believers there.

Now, I tell you all that just to bring you to this. He reflecting back on his time in prison. He's speaking here to those who would elevate him to this hero status that he adamantly rejected.

Now listen to this. This is sort of modernized, so it's not his exact words, but a paraphrase. Judson says, I was not remarkable. I was frightened. I was lonely. I was in pain for 19 months.

I wept. I doubted. I wondered whether God had forgotten Burma, whether he had forgotten me.

There was nothing heroic about the feelings I felt in that prison. The only thing that was not ordinary was the object of my faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had never abandoned anyone he had ever called and who was not going to start with me.

[44:15] See, what Judson came to believe in a far deeper way through his dark experience was that God's befriending love remained in the worst of circumstances.

And that love, that friendship was enough. It was more than enough. He came to see how God was indeed fulfilling his good purposes for him and for Burma and for the world in his own sovereign timing.

Now that led Judson, as he goes on, I would encourage you to listen to his story. He lays all on the line, great cost to himself, great inconvenience to himself to extend that same befriending love to strangers, people he had never met.

And God worked mightily through him. And so, saints, may we likewise, in abiding faith, in abiding friendship with Christ, may we do similarly. Heavenly Father, we thank you.