

God Who Sees Me

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[0 : 0 0] Well, please take your Bibles and open them up to Genesis chapter 16 this morning. We've been walking through the book of Genesis. If this is your first time with us or first time with us in a while, we've come to chapter 16.

And it's a beautiful chapter of God's care for us. And so when you found it, Genesis chapter 16, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. If you are physically able, let's stand together.

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, Behold, now the Lord has prevented me from bearing children.

Go into my servant. It may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram, her husband, as a wife.

And he went into Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, May the wrong done to me be on you.

[1 : 1 5] I gave you my servant to your embrace. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me. But Abram said to Sarai, Behold, your servant is in your power.

Do to her as you please. Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her. The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.

And he said, Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from? Where are you going? She said, I am fleeing from my mistress, Sarai. The angel of the Lord said to her, Return to your mistress and submit to her.

The angel of the Lord also said to her, I will surely multiply your offspring, so that they cannot be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said to her, Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son.

You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him.

[2 : 1 8] And he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen. So she called the name of the Lord, who spoke to her, You are a God of seeing. For she said, Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.

Therefore the well was called Be'er-le-hi-roi. It lies between Kadesh and Bered. And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael. To Abram, the grass withers and flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, we praise you for this passage, this testimony of your care for us, of your sight and your ears open to those that are weak and discarded.

Lord, we pray that as we open up this text, would you speak through the preaching of your word. Give us ears to hear. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. This morning, I want to deal with a question that I think we are all prone to ask from time to time, which is this.

Does God care about me and my trouble? Does God actually care about me and the issues that I'm going through?

[3 : 34] Does God actually care about me in my distress? And of course, we may know the answer to that intellectually, but even still, from time to time, we may not fully believe it.

And the lie that I think we're tempted to believe, especially in times of trouble, is that God does not care about me in my distress. We saw last week with Abram, that Abram wrestled with this delay over God's promise to give him an heir, and that delay, it led to doubt.

Well, this morning, we see that terrible chain of events continue on. Delay leads to doubt. Doubt leads to distress, and distress often leads to really bad decisions.

You all know football is back, right? Last Saturday was college football, this week's NFL football. Football is back in full swing. It's that time of year. We're not really much of a football family, but I do know enough to know this, that if you want the quarterback to make a mistake, what do you need to do?

You need to put some pressure on him. You need to cause him to be in a state of distress. You need to bring the blitz, put some pressure on, and in that case, if he's under enough distress, well, maybe you get lucky, and he will make a bad decision.

[4 : 51] Distress often leads to poor decisions, and of course, we know, don't we? That little truth extends beyond football and right into our daily life. Distress often leads to poor decisions.

Spiritually speaking, decisions to walk by the flesh instead of by faith. Decisions that are driven by a false belief that God won't care for me, and so I had better go and take care of myself.

And if you've ever felt this way, then I have good news for you from our passage this morning, and it's this. In your distress, God sees you. God hears you.

God knows you. God cares for you. God will do all that he's promised you in Christ. Christ. So let's take a look at our passage this morning, and what we're going to see is two scenes of distress here.

Two scenes of distress. The first is here with Abram and Sarai in verses 1 through 6, and then the second scene of distress is here with Hagar in the rest of the passage. And first, in this first scene with Abram and Sarai, what we see is our temptation in times of distress.

[6 : 06] We see first, in our distress, we may doubt God's care for us. In our distress, we are tempted to doubt God's care for us.

This is the temptation that we face, isn't it? And when things are going well, and we don't wrestle with this quite as often, do we? When we have what we think we need, when we're happy, man, God is good.

But when we don't have what we think we need, or hear, as is the case with Abram and Sarai, when God seems slow to fulfill His promise, we can be tempted to think, well, God doesn't really care about me.

God doesn't really know what I need. God isn't going to do anything about this. And so we can be tempted to take matters into our own hands and make sure we get what we think we need.

Look there with me to verse 1, chapter 16. And right away, we're reminded of the issue facing Abram and Sarai. God has promised an offspring to Abram, that he reassured him last chapter, chapter 15, that Eleazar of Damascus was not going to be the heir.

[7 : 15] Rather, an offspring from his own flesh was going to be his heir. He promised this to Abram. He reassures him of this. He seals that promise with a covenant. But the problem remains that from a purely physical standpoint, from a purely physical perspective, that promise is not possible, is it?

Verse 1 reminds us, Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And we know the reason why is because she is barren. She cannot have children physically.

And on top of that, you see verse 3, it has been 10 years since God first called Abram to go into the land of Canaan. Just think about that. 10 years is a long time, isn't it?

And my oldest son is almost 10 years old, which means it's been a little over 10 years since we first saw that pregnancy test and found out, oh man, we're having a kid. Right?

Could you imagine waiting from that announcement of a coming child to 10 years later and still no child? That's a long time. 10 years living in Canaan, still no offspring.

[8 : 26] And of course, over those 10 years, guess what happened with Abram and Sarai? They are now 10 years older, aren't they? And they were already old for childbearing standards.

Right? Not old. Old for childbearing standards. He was 75 years old when God called him to the land of Canaan, which now, quick math, would mean he is 85 years old. And by the end of chapter 16, you look at verse 16, it says he's now 86 years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

We get these little ticks on the clock, don't we? Tick, tick, tick. These little indicators that time is passing by. They're not getting any younger and still no offspring.

From a purely physical standpoint, this promise is getting more and more and more impossible by the day. And ask yourself, why would God do this? Why would he put Abram Abram and Sarai through this excruciating process of just waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting?

Ask yourself, why in the world would God choose an old pagan man and an old pagan wife and a barren one at that and then wait until they're older to bring about the promised child?

[9 : 44] There can only be one reason. Do you know what it is? God wants to make it absolutely clear to anyone, to everyone who will hear of it, that this child is the work of God alone and no one else.

There is no physical way that this could happen. God wants to make absolutely certain there is no way that anybody could attribute this birth to anything other than a work of God.

God will get the glory. Here's the point. God's promises by design cannot be achieved by human effort.

I'll say that again. By design, God's promises cannot be achieved by human effort. But unfortunately, Sarai, like many of us, she has to learn this the hard way, doesn't she?

She comes up with this bright idea. Verse 1 says, Sarai, she had no child, but what did she have? She had a female servant whose name was Hagar. Sarai comes up with this plan and says to Abram, behold, now the Lord has prevented me from bearing children and so go into my servant that it may be that I shall obtain children by her.

[11 : 02] And what does Abram do? Abram listened to the voice of Sarai, his wife. And so, after 10 years of living in Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar, her servant, gave her to Abram.

Abram went into Hagar and guess what? She conceives a child. Do you see this chain of events happening here? And clearly, Sarai is distressed. Why?

Because she has not yet received a child. This thing that she so desperately wants. There's been this delay. She's now 75 years old. She's 10 years younger than Abram. And that maternal instinct is kicking in full gear.

She wants that baby. And she knows full well the promise that God's made to Abram, doesn't she? And she's been waiting on this too. She's waiting on the fulfillment of the promise as well.

But there's this delay. 10 years of waiting. So that delay leads to doubt. Does God really actually care about me? Does God really know my needs?

[12 : 03] Will God actually do what He's promised to do? Look what she says in verse 2. It's subtle. Look what she says.

The Lord has prevented me from bearing children. The Lord has kept this from me which as people who believe in the sovereignty of God in light of God's sovereignty she's not wrong is she?

This is true. The Lord has in fact prevented her from bearing children but there is a right way and a wrong way to think about our trials in light of God's sovereignty.

The right way would sound something like this. God is delaying His promise. She's not wrong. God is delaying His promise. God has not yet permitted me to have a child.

And the response of faith would say God I trust you even though I wish it were happening today. God I trust you in your goodness and your complete control over my situation.

[13 : 08] I trust you to work this out according to your plan, your will, your ways. That's faith. The wrong way is what Sarai does here. God has kept this from me.

God is holding out on me. God is withholding good from me. He is harming me by withholding a good thing from me and I'm done waiting on it.

You see that lack of faith that causes distress. So she makes the decision to go and get that child by any means necessary. Take Hagar my servant go have a child with her then I'll have my child you'll have your promise we'll all be happy right?

Church how often do we make decisions in exactly the same way? we see something that we want and it seems even like something that maybe God would want us to have I mean why shouldn't I have a spouse?

Why shouldn't I have a child? Why shouldn't I have a job that pays well and makes the ends mean? Why shouldn't I have a house to live in? Why shouldn't I have this good blessing that why wouldn't God want me to have this?

[14 : 20] And I want to be clear of course we have no promise from God that any of us should have these things we have no promise like Abram and Sarai have here but the question is even so how do we respond when God doesn't give us what we want?

how do we respond when God doesn't give it when we want it? Are we willing to wait on him by faith or do we just go out and get it by the flesh by any means necessary?

You know it's interesting that there is nothing wrong with Sarai's approach either culturally or legally at the time. Sarai's plan to go and hand over her servant to her husband and get an heir by that way.

That was totally fine as far as cultural standards go in her day. But we should recognize of course that just because something is culturally and legally permissible does not mean that it is permissible in the eyes of God.

God's methods his means of blessing are just as important if not more important than the actual blessing itself.

[15 : 42] I'll tell you something you already know. Most people want their income to grow. Amen? Right? Am I wrong about that? Many if not most women want their families to grow.

Most pastors want their churches to grow. We want to see the blessing but the point that we ought to learn here is that God's people they don't just chase the blessing any way that they can get them by any means available.

We are called to walk by faith and obedience to the Lord and to follow his ways and his methods his means of achieving blessing not the ways of the world around us.

Sarai doubts God's care for her and so she takes matters into her own hands. But of course it's not just Sarai is it? Abram is at fault here too isn't he?

Now think about what Abram's doing here. Abram too he's walking by flesh and not by faith. And just think about how crazy that is in light of what we saw last week. I mean like five seconds ago God just did this incredible display of reassuring Abram of his faithfulness he walked through the slaughtered carcasses and promised Abram I will do exactly what I promised and here five seconds over Abram forgets.

[17 : 09] He has this tremendous lapse of faith he goes right back to the default settings and he walks by the flesh. How can I go get this blessing rather than walking by faith?

Did you notice echoes of Adam here? Did you notice this? Because you have listened to the voice of your wife Adam Abram just like Adam just passively sits back and watches his wife in distress walking by the flesh and he does nothing about it.

Abram should have stepped up and said something like Sarai I know it's hard Sarai I know that we've been waiting Sarai I know that you desperately want a child Sarai I know you're not getting any younger maybe you shouldn't have said that but you're still beautiful but we are not going to do it this way we are going to trust in the promises of God by faith that's what this family is going to do men this is what leadership looks like husbands you are called to remind your wives often of God's care for you and your family that God knows you that God sees you that God knows your needs that God is watching over you that God is sovereignly in control of you and your family and that you are called to walk by faith in him husbands you are called to lead your home in the joy and the freedom and the peace of that truth

Abram and Sarai instead they go through this cycle delay leads to doubt doubt leads to distress distress leads to this decision to walk by flesh and not by faith and look at the result actually initial returns are pretty good aren't they the plan works Hagar gets pregnant and then they all live happily ever after right wrong this starts to look like a soap opera doesn't it everything starts to blow up everything starts to crumble apart everybody's coming after everybody verse four when Hagar saw she had conceived she's hating on Sarai verse five Sarai is blaming Abram verse six Abram just passively kicks it back to Sarai you deal with it everything is broken everything is falling apart you see the issue don't you worldly ways lead to worldly problems the ways of the flesh get you the problems of the flesh solutions in the flesh lead to more problems in the flesh doubting

God's care for us always ends in disaster and I just wish we could learn this lesson but like Abram we are so quick to forget aren't we we might get it for like five seconds maybe we read our Bibles we pray we come to church we're reminded yes God is faithful yes God is good yes God knows yes God cares yes God sees and then Bible shut walk out the door we go out it's Monday morning we haven't had our coffee yet and right away we're back to our default settings aren't we we're thinking in the flesh let this be a reminder for us church when we make plans in the flesh be careful because they might just work out Sarai got her child but as we'll see all she did was trade one kind of heart for another didn't she it is not easy waiting on the Lord is it it is not easy trusting him by faith but man she got some hard stuff coming with

[21 : 10] Ishmael so we see in our distress we sometimes are tempted to doubt God's care for us but thankfully! second point this morning in this second scene of distress we see the good news second in our distress God demonstrates his care for us Sarai and Abram were distressed because they didn't have a child yet but now Hagar is distressed because of Sarai Hagar is collateral in this battle here she caught some friendly fire Sarai is harsh with her she has been used as a means to somebody else is in she is treated poorly and so she flees she gets out of there she runs away and nobody there wants me and nobody there is for me nobody there loves me nobody there sees me hears me cares for me verse seven tells us there is someone who sees her the angel of the

Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness spring on the way to shore this is the first time that we've seen the angel of the Lord and we will see him again but I think it's worth asking at this point who in the world is this because it seems like it is more than just an ordinary angel angel are created beings they're servants of the Lord Hebrews says that they're they're ministering spirits sent out for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation but this particular being the angel of the Lord he carries a little bit more weight a little bit more significance than just an ordinary angel doesn't he if you look it's clear that the angel of the Lord is the!

speaking to Hagar verse 8 says the angel of the Lord speaks to her verse 9 he speaks to her verse 10 he speaks to her verse 11 he speaks to her but then look at verse 13 who did she say spoke to her says the Lord spoke to her very interesting isn't it and in verse 13 as Hagar sees the angel of the Lord she doesn't say that she saw God's angel what does she say I have seen him who looks after me I've seen the Lord later on we'll see that the angel of the Lord he carries the same authority as the Lord himself he he speaks and he stops Abram from sacrificing Isaac chapter 22 the angel of the Lord appears to Moses in the burning bush and speaks and commissions Moses who is he the Bible doesn't exactly say but I think does say enough to lead me to believe that this is a visible physical manifestation of

God himself this is the Lord other people people who are smarter than me go a step further than that and say well this is the second person of the Trinity this is the son of God incarnate this is the pre incarnate Christ here appearing I won't go that far people smarter than me do people like John Calvin people like Treg Hallman would make that argument what we can say I think with certainty is that this is a visible manifestation of the Lord what we call a theopany God shows up here in Hagar's moment of need God shows up and look at what he does three things he does he pursues he prescribes and he promises the Lord himself pursues a castaway think about that

God almighty sovereign king of the universe ruler of heaven and earth creator of all things God who is transcendent and above all and greater than all stoops down to pursue a servant who is Hagar that the Lord should think of her and come to her and speak to her and condescend to her and appear to her in a way that can be touched and seen and heard and understood who is Hagar Hagar's cast off she's rejected she was hated she was used and tossed out with the garbage what obligation does the Lord have to speak with her none she's not going to be the mother of the line of promise and yet God goes out of the way to pursue her he seeks her out personally individually and church we are seeing God's heart on display here in this passage some people try to make this divide between the

[26 : 25] God of the Old Testament he's so angry and mean and cruel and then Jesus comes and he makes up for it in the New Testament man have they never read this passage God's love for the weak and the broken and the hurting and the discarded is on display here God comes to a rejected woman in the desert and he stoops down low to speak to her he seeks her out much like he did with Adam and Eve in the garden as they hid themselves Adam where are you so here with Hagar who's a victim not of her own sin but of somebody else's sin here he seeks her out Hagar servant servant of Sarai where have you come from where are you going and she answers honestly I'm running away from my mistress Sarai and so the Lord prescribes her a task he gives her a command here verse 9 the angel of the Lord commands her said to her go back return to your mistress and submit to her

I know what happened Hagar but I'm commanding you to go back and not with an attitude either I'm commanding you to go back and to submit to the one who was harsh with you love your enemies how hard is this but then he makes her a promise and one that sounds I think remarkably similar to the one that he promised to Abram although they're not the same promise verse 10 I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude and the angel of the Lord said to her behold you are pregnant and shall bear a son you shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has listened to your affliction and he he promises the future of Ishmael in verse 12 he'll be a wild donkey of a man how's that for a description his hand against everyone everyone's hand against him this is going to be a contentious child this is going to be an issue this child of the flesh will prove to be a problem for the children of promise down the road he's a he's a fighter don't miss the point the Lord came and pursued and appeared to a a broken discarded castaway he pursued her specifically directly individually personally and the significance and the significance of all of this is made clear in the names given here in the passage isn't it

Ishmael God hears Hagar assigns a name to the Lord God who sees me Hagar marks the location she names the well the well of the living one who sees me the point is obvious isn't it and it's the point that Abram and Sarai failed to understand in my distress God does see God does hear God does care God does know your pain and your struggle you don't have to put yourself in the place of God to bring about his promises by your own effort you can't do it trust the one who sees you trust the one who knows you personally individually directly trust the one who cares for you ask yourself though why would

God send Hagar back what's the point and why would he send her back look there to verse 15 I love this verse 15 says Hagar bore! Abram a son and Abram called the name of his son whom Hagar bore Ishmael did you catch that?

Who named the child? Abram called the name of his son Ishmael which means that Hagar clearly obeyed the Lord she returned to Sarai she returned to Abram and clearly she reported all that had happened to Abram and now guess what Abram and Sarai have a living breathing soon to be walking rebuke and reminder of the fact that God does in fact see and hear every time Abram would call his name Ishmael they would be reminded God hears God sees you don't we need the same reminder church in our distress we can easily believe the lie that God doesn't care about you

[31 : 53] God doesn't see your circumstance God doesn't hear your prayers they don't seem to be working God doesn't know what you need God doesn't care for you the Lord we're reminded here church loves the outcast loves the hated loves the forgotten loves the overlooked loves the orphan loves the widow loves the weak and the broken he sees and cares for those who feel alone and unseen by the world around them he sees and he loves those for whom the world has no more use God loves them God sees them God hears them moms at home with nobody near you but babies tired and worn out God sees you spouses struggling in your marriage feeling misunderstood feeling unloved by your spouse God sees you employees worn out at work feeling overworked and tired and under appreciated feeling like nobody understands the struggle that you go through weekend and week out just to make ends meet

God sees you widows at home lonely feeling unloved you are not alone God sees you Christian with hopes deferred good things withheld waiting on promises not yet fulfilled God sees you non-believer running running from the Lord God sees you God hears you Abram would be reminded of this every time he called the name of his son Ishmael but church don't we have another greater reminder than this by an even greater name if ever we are tempted to doubt God's care for us look to Christ and remember God sees you should our distress ever lead us to doubt God's care for us look to the supreme demonstration of the faithfulness of God in sending his own son

Jesus to fulfill all the promises of God what did Jesus come to do Jesus came to pursue to seek and to save the lost and to command us to repent of our sin and put our faith in him and then to promise us eternal life for any who would come to him by faith when we're tempted to walk in the flesh and not by faith remember Jesus Jesus Christ shows us God's faithfulness and his love for the broken Jesus Christ stepped down into our pain does God care about my pain Jesus took on our weakness and our frailty Jesus was rejected and hated and spat on and mocked and hung on a cross to die so that we by faith in him would live Jesus was rejected and hated by men so that we by faith might be accepted and beloved by God Jesus

Christ is the greatest display of God's care for us and if you are in him by faith then Christian take heart in every trial in every distress in every painstaking moment of waiting on him God knows you in Christ God sees you in Christ God hears you in Christ God loves you in Christ and God cares for you in Christ Father we praise you for the good news that you are a God who sees us Lord we are so unworthy of your care for us but Lord you have pursued us in Christ we praise you for the good news of the gospel that Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost to pursue!

those who are broken and cast away Lord those who are far from! Lord we pray Father that we would rest in your love and your care for us that we would not walk by the flesh but would walk by faith in all of your promises we pray in Jesus name amen