

# Overcoming a Moment of Doubt

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Amen. If you will please turn with me to Genesis chapter number 16. I love that line that says, when the trumpet sounds, I will in the hymn be found.

I'm thankful that I'm found in Jesus tonight. As we look at Genesis chapter number 16, I really enjoy that the pastor has been preaching the book of Genesis with the book of Romans. Because imagine reading through the Old Testament without the knowledge of the New Testament, without the torch of the New Testament as we walk through the caves of the Old Testament giving us understanding.

And so it's been really neat as we've studied, it seems like these two passages have always went together. In Romans we learn about Abraham and we see it in Genesis. So we're going to look at Genesis chapter number 16 tonight and we're going to look at it also in the New Testament as well.

So you're probably familiar with the story that after the resurrection that Jesus discussed the Old Testament with two men on a road outside of Jerusalem. Remember that story? He goes there and as they're talking and he's walking along beside them, it says that, And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted them and all the scriptures, the thing concerning himself.

That's Luke 24, 27. Wouldn't you love to have the cassette tape of that or get that downloaded online? What Jesus expounded the Old Testament to them. And that would have been just phenomenal.

[ 1 : 21 ] That time that they had with him. And so even though we don't know exactly all that Jesus said in his words, we all agree that he is the cornerstone or the goal of the Old Testament. That he is Lord of all. Lord of the New Testament.

Lord of the Old Testament as well. So when we look at the Old Testament, we know that in this, beginning with Moses and the prophets, it's all concerning himself. That is constantly pushing us to Jesus and pointing us to Jesus.

Spurgeon said that every verse has a road that leads to the cross in it. It's also said of the Old Testament in 1 Corinthians chapter number 10 and verse number 6 that it's an example unto us.

Now these things were examples to us to intend we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And I'm speaking of the children of Israel as they're going through the wilderness wondering. And they were just never satisfied with the menu.

No matter what God gave them, they were wanting something else. And it says those people, the stories recorded in God's holy word were given to us to be an example. So that when me and Brother Ty read that in our personal Bible reading or here at church, it is an example to us to think that we shouldn't lust after evil things as they had lusted.

[ 2 : 25 ] So the game plan tonight for Genesis chapter number 16 is pretty simple. It's pretty straightforward. And we're going to look tonight at the example of Abraham when he comes to a moment in doubt that he makes a decision.

And we're going to see the example that he has as a believer in a moment of doubt. And we're also going to look at Christ in the passage that we would see in the New Testament. It's said that of Wiersbe says, And we see that time and time again in the Bible and in our own lives.

Let's read verses 1 and 2 and then I'll pray. Genesis chapter number 16 verses 1 and 2. Now Sarah, Abraham's wife, bare him no children. And she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

And Sarah said unto Abraham, Behold, now the Lord has restrained me from bearing. I pray thee, go into my maid, and may thee that I may obtain children by her. And Abraham hearkened to the voice of Sarah.

Heavenly Father, I pray that you'll be with us tonight, Lord. We want to see the example here in this story as a believer, Lord, so that when we come to this moment in our lives, this moment of doubt, Lord, we won't make the same mistakes, Lord.

[ 3 : 37 ] We won't fall into the same sins that we will learn from this example. Also, Lord, I thank you for your revealed word, Lord. I thank you for the New Testament and knowing about you and how this story will later on be an allegory and we'll learn about the cross and the promise that is made there for us.

I ask that you'll be with us, Lord. I want your word, Lord, to be preeminent today. And I pray that you'll just allow me to be a mouthpiece for it in this moment. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

So as we look at those first two verses there about Abraham and Sarah, we see a moment of doubt. Just to give a little background, we know about Abraham. We've been talking about him a lot. But you know in James chapter number 2 and verse number 23, it said that he was a friend of God.

That's a pretty wonderful thing, isn't it? That you're a friend of God. And the generation we live in, everybody loves to have 1,800 friends on Facebook or whatever's out there. We take pride in having a bunch of friends when you're in trouble.

It's nice that you have somebody to call. But God's word said that Abraham was a friend, that God was a friend to Abraham. And that's a wonderful thing. And that's true of me and you as well because we're now called saints.

[ 4 : 42 ] And that because he loves Jesus, he loves us because we are in Jesus. So just real quickly. In 14, we saw that he was blessed of God. That God was just pouring blessings out to him.

In Genesis 21, we'll find that he worships God. We've seen it already. We find that he has faith in God. You know the story with Isaac. And then even when he leaves his homeland, he's obedient to God in Genesis chapter number 12.

And then in Genesis 18, we'll see that he is a prophet and an intercessor, meaning that he hears from God and he talks to God. That God reveals himself to Abraham and then Abraham prays back to him.

So this is not an unbeliever and this is a real hero of the faith. This is a real man of God that we find in Abraham. And I think you know that, but I just wanted to remind you of it for a brief moment because when we look at this story, we kind of wonder, is this the same Abraham that we've been talking about before?

So now from the last time we were at, we're 10 years in the future forward and 10 years have passed since the promise has been made and the promise still hasn't happened to them. And we just read that.

[ 5 : 46 ] We see the frustration and Sarah said, hey, I know God made this promise, but it's not happening. It's been 10 years. Maybe we're supposed to do something. Maybe we need to initiate this. Maybe God needs her help.

I don't know exactly what she's thinking, but she puts a plan in action. So sometimes our obedience to God doesn't produce our desired result. We grow weary and well-doing.

Sometimes we think if I do this, then this is supposed to happen. Ed said the opposite of it in the fact that sometimes something good happens and we want to go back in our lives and say this good thing happened because I did something good.

And we also say, well, this bad thing happened because I did something bad. And so we want an immediate result for what we do. We're never told at what side of eternity. Galatians 6.9 says, let us not be weary and well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Now, you can buy any calendar that you want at Walmart and you'll find deer season and duck season, but you're never going to find due season, okay? You're never going to find exactly when due season is. You don't know if it's this side of eternity or the other side of eternity.

[ 6 : 47 ] You don't know if your obedient living is going to yield the result this week, next week, or in heaven. Maybe you'll never see it there, but we know that there is a due season and it's on his calendar.

He knows it, but we don't know it. And we get anxious at times. This week, Tinsley and my brother-in-law's youngest monkey, I mean son, was at my house. Tinsley and Bryce were there and they brought me one of those freeze pops.

You know, you put them in the freezer and they freeze and you can keep them out of the freezer. And they brought them to me and they wanted them. And I said, well, these aren't frozen. You don't want to drink them. Put them in the freezer. So Tinsley went in there and threw them in the freezer.

And then she immediately came back and she said, let's get them. And I said, we're going to lead a little more time than that. So they kept going back, Bryce and Tinsley, every little bit. They would open it up and they would get it and shake it.

And it still wasn't done. They wanted immediate gratification from them putting it in there. I'm the same way. I'll start some project with a big list of instructions and I'll start going.

[ 7 : 45 ] I'll think, well, diagram three doesn't look like mine. I'm just scrapping the directions. I know a quicker way to do this, a little duct tape, a few sprues where it isn't needed. We'll get the job done.

And the way that some of you wives are poking your husbands, I'm not the only one guilty of that. Sometimes we just want to abandon instructions because isn't the goal just to get somewhere? And really, wasn't the goal for Abraham and Sarah just to get a kid?

I mean, really, wasn't that all that God really wanted from them? Or was it something bigger? Or was it something they couldn't manipulate? Were their lives designed like our lives to glorify God, not only in the product, but also in the process there?

So God had made a covenant and God will fulfill it. All Abraham and Sarah had to do was wait by faith. Hebrews 6.12. So we're not told to be slothful, but we're told to be peoples that have faith and patience.

So we find that slothfulness isn't the same as patience. And so oftentimes we think about being faithful and waiting patient. We think of maybe laziness or being passive, but daily being obedient when there's no result is a type of waiting that's being done there.

[ 8 : 53 ] Do nothing, Abraham, about the fact that you don't have children. Don't go in there with Hagar. Don't do anything else. That was bold and risky non-action, wasn't it?

Sometimes God calls us to action that's bold and risky, and sometimes he calls us to non-actions. And that's what was being called of them there. So we see faith here in a waiting room. And so a lot of time has now passed.

Ten years have come and gone, and still no child. What seemed unlikely and impossible ten years ago seems even more so now. She was old then, and she's even older now.

I would never call them old, but they called themselves old, and the Bible did, so I feel safe in doing that. And with the loss of that ability often comes a certain loss of identity. So there they are.

They wanted their identity to be found in what God provided, not just in the promise that God had made. So in Genesis 12, God has made a promise to us. We are the people of promise. Yay, that's exciting.

[ 9 : 47 ] Ten years later, we're tired of being the children of promise. We want to be the children that have something. Because you know that you can't rock a promise to sleep at night. You can't watch a promise grow up and go off to school.

You can't watch a promise grow up and have grandkids like the sands of the sea. You can't set up shop in the promised land if you haven't inherited. All these promises are good for a little bit, but then you want it.

You know, you find out that your wife's expecting, but nine months is a long time before that. You want it immediately. And so they're losing their identity. They say, we want the product now.

We want the child. The promise is not enough. And we find that all through the Bible and in our lives with Christians that deal with that. We are people of promise, but sometimes we'd much rather be people, the products of the world, than the promises God made.

I like the Psalm of Asaph in 73. It says, truly God is good to Israel, even as such as a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone. My steps had well not slipped.

[ 10 : 45 ] And for I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. And we've been there. We know God's good. And we know that he takes care of people. But I want what you promised me. And I want it right now.

So the promises of God are just as real while we're waiting as they are when they are realized. Find your identity and joy in all that God has promised to you. Could I challenge you in here that you ought to take as much joy in knowing that you have a house and come in Georgia.

You take more joy in the fact that you know you have a house in heaven. Not only do you have a family here, but you're part of the family of God. As believers, we live with a knowledge of something that's unseen.

And it affects the way we live and it affects our attitude. We can be happy when it rains because we're not thinking this isn't all there is to it. We can be happy when the economy turns down because we know our paradigm in life is much farther than just a few years out or this day.

Because we must remember we're people of a promise. So let's take a quick look at the faith report card of Abraham. My wife just recently went to a parent-teacher evaluation of Thatcher. Please don't ask me about it.

[ 11 : 51 ] I'm sure you know how it turned out. Now I'm just playing. It went good. So they showed him some different things about how he was doing. And it was graded on a scale of 1 to 5 and all that. So let's just look here on Abraham on how he did.

So his first venture out to his promise is he heads into Egypt and he showed unbelief in the way that he treated his wife. Remember that? Oh, this is my sister, you know. And he jeopardized everything.

Ladies, where do we give him there on a scale of 1 to 5? How many of you think he gets a 0? Thank you there. That's pretty bad, isn't it? He gets a 0. Then in Genesis 13 he passes a test with flying colors.

We see him part ways with Lot. He trusts that the Lord will provide good land for him even though he lets Lot take first pick of it. He says, take what you want. I'll trust that God will provide for me. That's pretty good.

You know, I give him maybe a 4 out of 5 there. Then in Genesis 14 the hero Abraham rescues Lot. Then he refuses the reward by the wicked king Sodom. And he gives an offering of thanksgiving to God.

[ 12 : 50 ] And then the priest king of Jerusalem. So there he conquers and he could get all this stuff. And he says, no. And I'm just thinking, Abraham, you're doing great, buddy. 5 out of 5, you're having great faith.

And in Genesis 15 we find that he's asking God. He says, you know, show me something. Are you going to do this? And the pastor just preached that about how God put Abraham to sleep. And then God showed him that I'm going to do this without your help.

As if you're sleeping as he went there between the animals in the sacrifice. And that's just like a real boost of confidence in what's going to happen. That God would give an object lesson and teach him and remind him, Abraham, I'm going to take care of what's going on here.

But then this brings us to Genesis chapter number 16 where we're at tonight. And we find the moment of doubt. Isn't that amazing? He was able to say no to the kings. But his wife was able to persuade him to take a step of compromise here.

So we see this moment of doubt and we've been there before. And as you listen to this, I want you not to just think about the big promises. Because many times when I hear about this, I think, what is a big promise that God has promised me that I should be waiting for and be patient on?

[ 13 : 57 ] And can I tell you that the faith to live everyday life and obedience requires that you recognize that there's a promise. That living this life the way God designed it is what's best for me even when it doesn't look like it's what's best.

And that's a promise that he has given us there. That he knows what's best for you and me. And it affects our everyday life. Because what did Abraham's life look like for those ten years? It looked like everyday life.

And what did his lack of faith look like on that day? It was compromised. What would it look like if he was the continuing faith? It would have looked like an everyday life where he continued believing in the promise.

Verses 3-5. And Sarah Abraham's wife took Hagar, her maid, the Egyptian, after Abraham had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan and gave her to husband Abraham to be his wife. And he went into Hagar and she conceived.

And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sarah said unto Abraham, My wrong be upon thee. I given my maid unto thy bosom. And when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes.

[ 14 : 56 ] The Lord judged between me and thee. If you take notes in your Bible, can I challenge you to maybe put in a note on the side here where I put it. It said, And Sarah Abraham's wife took. I put in parentheses above it.

She took control of the situation. You ever been there before, man? We're just kind of floundering. You don't know what's going on. Steve and I, our families went on vacation last week to Disney World. And if we didn't have a plan, don't worry.

The ladies had a plan of what was going to happen next. You know, they always, they took control here. And so Abraham's wife, she took control of the situation here. And so Sarah Abraham's wife took control of the situation.

And so we often obey to try to control the outcome. And that's not the intended purpose of our obedience as believers. Obedience is about His glory and not our goals.

You know, if God didn't have a plan, and if just having a kid was the goal, and it wasn't about His glory, and if God hadn't already told them how to do it, then Sarah's plan was a great one. I mean, it was a custom in those days.

[ 15 : 56 ] People expected it. But she doesn't get to decide the plan because it wasn't her glory that we're living for. And God had already outlined the plan. And Abraham should have been faithful reminding, in this moment at least, he should have said, Hey, I know that sounds like a great plan.

I like that plan. But we're not calling the shots because somebody else already has a plan in this. And it's a non-negotiable. Those are the best ways in an argument, isn't it?

Where the Word of God speaks about it. There's plenty of things in this life to argue about between a husband and wife. And my wife is real nervous at this time, isn't she? There's plenty of things for us to argue about that don't matter. Cinnamon Toast Crunch or Special K-serial.

You know, those little things. But it's always good when God has something to say about it. And when God has something to say about it, husband, your opinion doesn't matter. And your wife's opinion doesn't matter on it.

God's opinion is all that matters on it. And that's what happened here. He listened to her. He took her advice. He wanted to do what she suggested. And they did it. And we have seen that faith is living without scheming.

[ 16 : 58 ] But at this point, both of them tried to help accomplish God's plan. Because they forgot they were living for His glory. And they just set forth on a goal. And they became pragmatic. She got tired of the fact that God is in control.

And we are not. We really like that, isn't it? We don't mind that God is in control. That's not the problem. In most moments, we like that God is in control. The problem is when God's being in control conflicts with our desires.

God, you can be in control most of the days as long as it never comes into conflict with what I want to do. And that's what happened here. And that's what she said. Now, this is a figure. This isn't just a figure of speech when she says, Behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children.

And as Moses wrote this here, it doesn't ever at one point say that she was wrong. God had prevented her from having children. And it never gets corrected. There are actions that are right in the eyes of other people, but they're wrong in the eyes of God.

God, you know, when they did this, and it seems really odd to us in our culture today, and the day in which we live in, it seems like a really bizarre thing that he would have a child through his maidservant there. But everybody around that, say, was a common practice, which doesn't mean that it's right.

[ 18 : 06 ] And as I read this, I just want to scream into the Bible. You ever feel like that? You want to warn Abraham? And you want to say, Hey, Abraham, even though you're able to accomplish this one thing in your flesh, big deal, Abraham, you can produce a child.

How are you going to do everything else? How are you going to make that child have kids like the sands of the sea? How are you going to take the land that is promised to you? How are you going to do everything else in this? Just because you can manipulate this one moment doesn't mean you can do everything that God has for you.

And so they felt like they were in control of it, but they weren't at all in control of it. And they would end up falling short of the goal, which is the glory of God. And so faith is to stay still.

Faith to continue the course. As we say, Galatians 6, 9, Let us not be weary in well-doing, but in due season we shall reap if we faint not. And so it was not as if Abraham was doing nothing every day.

He waited patiently, but he was being obedient, and that is a big deal. I often tell this, especially to the teenage guys, you know, it's tough being a teenager. How many of you remember being a teenager?

[ 19 : 07 ] All right, some of you really should. I remember what it's like to be a teenager. But as a teenage guy, I really felt like I was a field goal kicker. I never played football, as you could probably guess why.

I never played football. But I felt bad for the guy that kicked the field goal because he can only mess up, right? I mean, if he kicks the field goal, nobody's like, that was great. No, they always set the ball in the same place, and he kicks it.

He practices it all the time. And so it isn't impressive when he kicks the field goal after a touchdown. But he can only mess up. And so as a teenager, I felt like that.

If I did good, if I obeyed, if I did what the Bible told me to do, if I didn't go where I wasn't supposed to, if I didn't say what I wasn't supposed to, if I did everything that was asked, what I thought was asked of me, then I was just neutral.

But I didn't feel like I could ever produce anything. I didn't ever feel like there was anything being accomplished of it. But every day that I lived obediently, in every moment, in every decision, I brought glory to God, which is the height of anything that I could do with my life.

[ 20 : 07 ] And when I realized that, when I was taught that, so encouraging. Because I felt like I was either a field goal kicker or maybe a goalie in a soccer match, since apparently you guys don't like American football, or you just don't want to respond to me here tonight.

But I felt like I could only mess up. And that's where Abraham, he wasn't just keeping from messing up. Every day, he patiently waited for those 10 years. He was saying, God, I trust you.

I believe in you. He was setting the example for his family. Faith often requires bold action, but it also takes bold waiting at times.

And it's scary at moments like that. Faint yet pursuing versus faith and being persuaded. There comes a time in the battle when we become faint. You're familiar with the story in Judges chapter number 8 and verse number 4.

It's where Gideon, he came to Jordan and he passed over him. And there's 300 men that were with him and they were faint yet pursuing them. The reason they're down to 300, remember all those that were scared and wanted to leave, got to go home.

[ 21 : 04 ] And now there's 300 of them and they've been fighting and fighting. And I love the story because they come up to one group of guys and they say, hey, we're faint, but we're still pursuing. There's still an enemy out there that we're going after. Can you give us some bread?

And they're like, we ain't going to give you any bread. You haven't finished your battle yet. You haven't conquered those other guys. And he said, all right, when I come back here, we're going to tear you up, man. He said, we're going to take the briars and thorns. And he gives us a great trash talk to those people, if you will.

And then he goes to the next place and they said, can we have some bread from you guys? Because we're feigning and pursuing. We need some nourishment. We're chasing out this army. We've been fighting a long time. And they said, hey, don't come to us. You haven't won this thing yet either.

And he points to the tower and he says, hey, when we come back, I'm taking that thing down. And he does. He goes and conquers. And then he comes back to those cities. And we don't find. And I was looking in there thinking, maybe I'd find the time where they get to stop and eat their bread.

And we don't find it there. But they just keep going and going. Don't you see that in our Christian life sometimes, our faintness of the flesh? We should get there. It's okay to be faint and yet pursuing.

[ 22 : 06 ] Because it's at those moments that we just rely upon God and say, God, I'm really tired of treating that person right. God, I'm really tired of being a witness in my workplace. God, I'm really tired of living on so little or whatever it is that you're going through right now.

And say, God, is there a shortcut out of this? And every day that you do that, you can bring glory to God. Our faintness of flesh should cause us to rely more upon our God and not move away from his plan for our lives.

Abraham's faith is challenged by the breaking of ties by nature, leaving his family, his father's house. His faith is tried by the childness, not having children and his age. His faith is tried by the forces of nature with the famine and the promised land.

His faith is tried by the fear of man. His faith is tried by wealth and his nephew. His faith is tried by combat. His faith is tried by the king of Sodom's offer. Now he is tried by his own wife's temptation to do God's work man's way and he fails.

And I wouldn't say this as a side note here, but ladies, do you understand the incredible influence that you have upon your husband? You know, who's the greatest advisor to all the world leaders to the president? No matter who it is on paper, it's his wife.

[ 23 : 13 ] Who's the greatest advisor to your husband, no matter what type of job he is? It's his, it's you. And he listens. So he had passed all these tests and then now his wife says these words and they were so powerful to him.

And why was it probably so powerful? It's because she put words to a doubt that was already going in his head. You ever been there before? You've said that your wife is speaking and you're wondering or the other, I've never been a wife so I can't really turn this illustration around, but you can do it for yourself there.

But you ever been there before and that person is speaking and you're thinking, are they talking right now? Or is this just the voice inside of my head? Because you're both dealing with that moment of doubt in the same way.

Just because we're so able to easily tune you out doesn't mean that when we do hear you that you don't have incredible weight. So use your influence in a good manner.

And the same with husbands. But we should protect our hearts and we should get victory with those thoughts that are going through our head and those negative attitudes. We should go to God and talk to him and we shouldn't constantly be venting to our spouse about that.

[ 24 : 17 ] Because we don't know when our careless speaking may take a moment of doubt and cause a bad decision. If the person that is closest to you doesn't want to go down the path of obedience with you, then you fully realize how lonely the path will be and good men will compromise.

And that's what we saw there. And here we're not proposing passivity, but passivity just to the flesh. The path to spiritual growth we find in the Bible in the riches of Christ is not a passive one because grace does not oppose the effort, but it's opposed to earning anything.

So it doesn't mean that we sit back and do anything. It just means that when God does something that we did not earn it and he didn't have to give it to us. That is glory to God.

Ever seen more people more active than when they truly understand the grace of God? It's Paul who would all say he understands the grace of God. In 1 Corinthians 15 10 says, It took action for that day.



If I take some liberty here, I don't know where Abraham and Sarah are at. Maybe they're at the morning table. Maybe they're sitting there and maybe this idea is brought up. Hey, let's just find another way. I know that God's promised, but it doesn't really matter how we get there, right?

[ 25 : 37 ] Isn't it just the goal that we're looking for? To have a child. It would take bold action from both of them to stand up from the table and say, No, I'm going to live my life of obedience even though it hasn't given me what I thought that it would give me.

And what it's giving you and what it promised to give you is that you would live a life to the glory of God. So that day instead of doubting and making a poor decision that was motivated just by getting to go, He could have got up, went about his day, living his life in obedience.

So here we find a method that is a rebellion to God's desire for our life. Verse 6, And Abraham said unto Sarah, Behold, thy maid is in thine hand. Do to her as it pleases thee. And when Sarah dealt heartily with her, she fled from her face.

If you're picturing this here with me, if Hagar hears this, that could be kind of scary, isn't it? Abraham just kind of says, I'm not going to deal with this. Sarah, you do with Hagar whatever you think is right. Just take care of the situation.

And I can only imagine Hagar's face thinking, this isn't going to turn out very good for me. And it doesn't turn out very good. So anyone's plans are okay as long as God didn't have a plan, but he did.

[ 26 : 43 ] Remember, Abraham was supposed to be a blessing to who? In Genesis chapter 12, he's supposed to be a blessing to the nations. Thank you for that. He's supposed to be a blessing to all the nations. God was going to bless them to be a blessing.

But how has he done so far in that? Was he a blessing to Abimelech? No, he wasn't. Abimelech was very upset with him because by lying to him, he put Abimelech in a tough situation.

Now how is he doing with this poor Egyptian lady? Is he being very good to her? Not at all. He is not being good to Hagar. And he's not been a blessing to the Egyptians.

And now he hasn't been a blessing here to her at all. And so he is going against. In his pursuit of fulfilling the promise on his own, he has already been denying the promise to be a blessing to all nations.

But it doesn't matter because he forgot the promise. And he just zeroed in on that one thing that he wants so badly. And it didn't matter how he got to it. And this didn't move them any closer to the promise.

[ 27 : 41 ] At the very end of it, it says that we find that Abraham still doesn't have a child. And that he isn't any one step closer to having the child of promise that he did.

All that manipulating and all that working, it didn't take him one step closer to the promise that was made. All the trouble and all the sorrows, it didn't help him at all move one step closer to it being fulfilled.

In Matthew chapter number 6 and 27, it says, Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? I don't know if any of you ever worried about being short.

But here is the idea that you can't think about it. You can't just sit there and grow. My kids think they're growing all the time. I'll say, Tinsley, you're so tall. And she'll say, am I taller now? You know, she just thinks it's happening right there.

But it's just foolish to think that you can change your height by worrying about it. And it's crazy for Abraham to think he can claim something that's a promise that God said that he was going to do. Let me give you some examples of this.

[ 28 : 37 ] How in the flesh, we try to accomplish what can only be done by the Spirit. Has your nagging or manipulation changed anything in your marriage? Has your working in the flesh to change your spouse changed your marriage at all for the good?

Has your bribing your kids changed their heart for the better? Has your business satisfied your desire for real purpose in life? Your busyness hasn't satisfied your desire in just being busy.

So we go about it in the flesh so many times. We try to fix something in the flesh that can only be fixed through the Spirit. We try to fix people, don't we? If we find somebody and we don't like the way that we get along with them, we try to fix them.

How should we go about fixing somebody which we can't? We could pray for them. We could show them God's Word. And we could ask that God could do that, but we can't fix anybody. And we find them trying to fix it.

Then I love what we see here in verses 7 through 11. We see how God deals with people as opposed to the way we would. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain of the way of Sherem.

[ 29 : 42 ] And he said, Hagar, Sarah's maid, whence camest thou? And whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarah. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress and submit thyself unto her hands.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, and that it shall not be numbered for a multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard thy affliction.

And when I read this, it caught me by surprise, because I forgot how merciful God was to Hagar, that he made provision for her, and he took care of her. And Hagar learns here that God can see all.

How can it be that I can live after I've seen a glimpse of the one who has seen me? He is the one that sees. Hagar here knows that God sees her, the angel of the Lord.

But many people believe that this would be God, that this would be Jesus here, that he would be seen, that he would come down and all this story. And I take great comfort in this, because she's not the main character in this story, and what happens is that the main plot is we follow through that, but God cared for her.

[ 30 : 50 ] And so you say that my life isn't all that important, or the promises that I'm trying to live out, or my area of obedience isn't a very big deal. Can I tell you that's such a big deal that in this story that God came down from heaven and said, I'm going to take care of you here.

Whatever you're going through, whatever doubt you're living in, whatever area of compromise you want to go after, whatever promise you want to give up on so you can just get what it is right now, it's a big deal to God.

Every character in this story is a big deal. Every story, every character in this story in the world we live in, it's a big deal to him. And so your story and whatever's going on is a big deal to him.

And so we find Hagar here. She says, this is the God that sees. So she recognizes that this is a God that sees me and recognizes what's going on. Then when she goes back to Abraham and she says, the angel of the Lord told me that we should call Ishmael because he has seen my afflictions.

And Abraham calls him Ishmael, which is to let us know that he believed her story. And God is reminding Ishmael, hey, I see, or he's reminding Abraham, hey, I see what's going on.

[ 31 : 54 ] Because maybe God knew that 10 years ago when he made the promise that he was watching and that he was going to take care of things. But maybe Abraham's thinking, well, it's been 10 years. Maybe God's been busy making promises to other people.

Maybe he got a little bit busy and he hasn't seen what's going on. And God sends a reminder into the story and he says, I see what's going on. Stay faithful to the promise. And so we should find our identity in that.

And so what's my challenge to you tonight, all of us as believers, is there's so many ways to compromise, isn't there? In our marriages, in our finances, in our ethics, in every area of life, there's a compromise offered to us.

There's a way to get something we want in a way that would be displeasing to God. And can I remind you that you can go after good things, but isn't the goal that we should be going for the glory of God?

How you go about getting what God has for you? We take easy things like if I was to have X amount of money, then I could do something, so it doesn't matter how I get X amount of money. If I had a kid, I would raise them, so it doesn't matter how I go about getting a kid here in this story.

[ 32 : 55 ] If I was to have a whatever it is, if I had this, then I could get back on God's plan so I can compromise now. God, I'm going to compromise to get a kid, and then after I do that, pick up where I left off and fulfill your promise.

Can I tell you as people in here, we must find our identity in the promise that He gave us. We don't see heaven right now. And on many days living the Christian life, where we say it's wonderful to be a Christian, some days it's woefully hard to be a Christian.

And it's hard in the everyday life to be obedient when we don't know if the promise is going to be fulfilled or when we're going to reap what we've been doing. And can I tell you that it's worth it, that He's made a promise to us, and that every day you live.

And can I encourage you, you're not a bunch of field goal kickers in here, that God's just waiting for you to mess up so that He can tell you that you messed up. Today, as you served Him with your life, you brought glory to Him.

Today, when you didn't compromise, you brought glory to Him. So here's where I'm challenged. I don't only want to do what God has for me to do, but I want to do it in the way that God has for me to do it.

[ 34 : 02 ] And I want to go after it, which means maybe things that I want now, I may not get for 10 years. And maybe I will never get them. But I want to go after it in a way that would glorify our God.

And if you're not a believer in here tonight, or if you're going to talk about this tomorrow with a believer, can I tell you that this promise is something that is foreign completely to them. This is a land that they would never see, that this isn't something He gave.

This is to the children of promise, that people that believe in Him under righteousness. And we must remember that we are different than those people because we are the children of promise, and we're not the children of flesh.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, I thank You for the example here as we looked at tonight. And Lord, I pray that You'll encourage us. Lord, I don't know where people are at in life, but I know that I have been in a moment of doubt many times in my life.

And that moment of just getting up and going forward and just living my life in obedience to You, even when 10 years seem to have passed and nothing is happening, Lord, I pray that I will continue to do that when those moments of doubt come, that You'll strengthen our faith, Lord.

[ 35 : 06 ] I ask that they'll be in here somebody tonight, Lord, that's just really at a moment of doubt, that they're asking something of You and they don't know how You're going to work it out. And so they're now coming to a point where they can get what they want without You and they're scheming and they're manipulating and they're trying to find a way to get it.

I pray that You'll work right now and that You'll encourage them to continue to walk by faith and to be people of integrity and not to compromise. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia.

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