

Series: Questions

Title: Is Any Thing Too Hard for the Lord?

Text: Genesis 18: 9-15

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Read Genesis 18: 9-15. Sara laughed when the Lord declared that by God's power and according to his word of promise, a son would be formed in her womb.

We see in God's power to do so the power of God to regenerate his child of grace. Is God able to regenerate his child, to turn us in repentance from our sin and unbelief, to cause us trust the Lord in faith? Is anything too hard for the LORD? With men it is impossible, but with the Lord all things are possible.

Jeremiah 32: 17: Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:

Daniel 4: 35: And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Isaiah 46: 9: Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11: [He called Christ his Son from heavens glory who came into this earth as the GodMan], the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.

Without faith it is impossible to please the Lord. Without faith it is impossible for you and I to believe that the LORD is able to do all that he has spoken.

**Proposition:** Yet, we see in God's dealings with Sarah, that one of the ways that the LORD shows us nothing is too hard for him is by his power to give us life and faith and to increase faith through his word and his providential dealings with us. Our focus is on God's dealings with Sarah.

**Genesis 18: 1: And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2: And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him:**

One of these three men was a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ, the Son of God. It says plainly, "**the LORD appeared unto him.**" The other two men were angels of the Lord.

Genesis 18: 22: And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

The LORD stood there with Abraham. The other two men went to Sodom. They are called angels who were men.

Genesis 19: 1: And there came two angels to Sodom at even;...10: But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

## **I. THE LORD WORKS GRACE IN HIS CHILD OF MERCY THROUGH HIS GOSPEL.**

In these two men we see an example of God's preachers bringing the word of the gospel.

Romans 10: 17:...Faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

We are told that Abraham was given faith through the preaching of the gospel.

Galatians 3: 8: And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

But man's preaching can give nothing in the heart of a sinner unless the Lord works regenerating, life-giving grace, teaching us and giving faith in our hearts. So we see, along with these men, the LORD came also.

Matthew 18: 20: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 28: 18: And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

One reason the gospel is taught us through God's preachers is because it pictures Christ our Head, our Shepherd and Bishop who does the teaching in the heart. We see also here an example of Christ our Husband teaching his bride. The LORD spoke to Abraham and Abraham taught Sara--**v13: And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh.** The wife is taught to learn of her husband at home because it is a picture of Christ our Husband teaching us in the heart. (1 Cor 14: 34-35; 1 Tim 2: 11-15)

God's order whereby God saves his elect through preaching is not to exalt man but to exalt Christ. The dishonor of rejecting God's chosen means is dishonor to Christ our Bishop and Husband who does the teaching and is glorified even in the means by which God ordained. (1 Cor 1: 21)

## **II. THROUGH THE GOSPEL, THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD DISCOVERS TO US OUR SIN AND UNBELIEF.**

**Genesis 18: 9: And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.**

The Lord said that when the Spirit is come he will convince his elect "Of sin, because they believe not on me." (Jn 16: 10-14)

We know Abraham believed God. Scripture tells us, Abraham left Ur by faith.

Hebrews 11: 8: By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Genesis 15 connects Abraham's justification—his righteousness—with Abraham believing Christ (Isaac, being a type of Christ.)

Genesis 15: 6: And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

But concerning Sarah, the scripture connects her faith to her receiving strength to conceive seed.

Hebrews 11: 11: Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

But here we see Sarah yet in unbelief. Sarah was in the tent. When the LORD came, along with these two men, we see faith at work in Abraham. He greeted them, washed their feet, and many other things to refresh them and comfort them. But when Abraham laid the meal out for them Abraham sat with them as they ate. But Sarah did not come out and sit with them. Some will say that was because it was not the custom of the day. Maybe so, but God's grace in the heart overcomes the customs of the day. Mary sat at the Lord's feet while Martha was cumbered about with much serving. That is what we are reminded of here with Abraham and Sara. Abraham is at the Lord's feet but Sarah is in the tent door. But the LORD spoke this word for Sarah to hear the good news the LORD had to declare.

### **Unbelief does not believe the word of God**

**Genesis 18: 10: And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.**

· "I will"—salvation is by God's will, not our will. Abraham and Sarah were shown this before. God had promised Abraham an heir. But Sara and Abraham looked to their wisdom and their will to bring this about.

Genesis 16: 1: Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2: And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Sara knew the Lord had restrained her from bearing. But she looked to her wisdom to produce an heir, rather than the Lord. It ended up causing Sara great grief.

- “I will certainly”—just as salvation is by God’s will, so his promise to save his elect in Christ is certain.

Romans 4: 17: (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

- “I will certainly return unto thee”—God shall accomplish his promise in each of his elect by God returning to us. Sinners will never return to him, that is, repent from our unbelief and trust him. But by his power in coming to us, regenerating us to life, turning us to him in faith, God fulfills the word he has spoken.
- “I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life. And, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son”—God has appointed the time called “the set time” when Christ shall be formed in his child of grace just as the child was formed in Sarah’s womb.

Genesis 17:21: But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

### **Unbelief Focuses on Man’s Ability**

**Genesis 18: 10:…And Sarah heard *it* in the tent door, which *was* behind him. 11: Now Abraham and Sarah *were* old *and* well stricken in age;*and* it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12: Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?**

Sarah was rebuked of the Lord for her laughter because she laughed in unbelief. Abraham laughed but Abraham hit his face in faith, in reverence, and laughed with joy, not in unbelief, but in amazement and astonishment at what promised to do.

Genesis 17: 17: Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

As the Lord Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day.”

We know that Abraham’s laughter was in faith because the Spirit of God tells us that.

Romans 4: 19: And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: 20: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21: And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22: And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Sarah was absolutely right. She had no ability to produce fruit. Neither do you and I have the ability of ourselves by ourselves to produce fruits of righteousness. Paul said that during all his days of trying to come

to God by his works of law obedience that he brought forth fruit unto death. But now being dead to the law and married to Christ we bring forth fruit unto God.

Romans 7: 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 5: For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6: But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Philippians 1: 11: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Also, the Lord shows us in his answer to Sarah that Sarah's laughter was different than Abraham's because the Lord rebuked her and also by Sarah trying to deny that she laughed.

### **Unbelief Does Not Believe God's Ability**

**Genesis 18: 13: And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? 14: Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. 15: Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.**

God knows the heart. God looks on the heart. Sarah's laughing was of her flesh of unbelief. But it is a good thing for a child of God that God knows our heart because knowing our heart God knows best how to cure our unbelief.

Is anything too hard for the Lord? God the Father promised Christ would come. All hell endeavored to stop him. Yet, in the fullness of time—in the time appointed Christ came—God is faithful.

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Christ Jesus promised the Father he would accomplish the work of redemption for those given him of the Father. All hell endeavored to stop him. Yet, there he sits at the right hand of the Father. Having obtained eternal redemption for us Christ is waiting until his enemies be made his footstool

Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Christ promised God the Holy Spirit shall convince all his elect of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, that none shall be lost, but that all shall be brought to repentance and faith.

Romans 3: 3: For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4: God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;

Romans 11:29: For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Numbers 23:19: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Isaiah 55:11: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

2 Timothy 2: 13: If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

God's salvation is everlasting and unchangeable salvation. God has not left the security of his saints to depend upon our feeble frames of dust, nor upon our faithfulness to him, but the faith of faith is dependent upon his unchanging faithfulness toward us. Remember Hebrews 11: 11.

Hebrews 11: 11: Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Sarah appears a long way from that in our text. But is there anything too hard for the Lord?

### **III. AS GOD TEACHES US HIS GOSPEL, GOD IS ABLE TO WORK EVERYTHING IN PROVIDENCE TO BRING US TO THE END OF OURSELVES TO SWEETLY FORCE HIS CHILD TO TRUST HIM.**

In everything that took place before and after this day in Mamre, God providentially overruled all to make Sarah experience her inability and God's faithfulness.

God had already showed Sarah her folly in her trial with Hagar and Ishmael. Now the omniscient Lord has told Sarah her own heart in verse 15: **Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.** Remember the woman at the well said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (Jn 4: 29) Sarah tried to deny because she was afraid. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Then immediately, no sooner has the Lord rebuked her and notice what happened.

#### **Genesis 18: 16: And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom:...**

Sarah is in need of deliverance from her unbelief just as Lot was in need of deliverance from Sodom. Do you remember what the Spirit of God taught us to learn from Lot's deliverance?

2 Peter 2:9: The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations,...

God used even the deliverance of Lot to teach Sarah the power of God. He did so through her husband Abraham.

**Genesis 18: 16:...and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17: And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;...19: For I know him, that he will command his**

**children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.**

God knew Abraham would teach his household the truth. That includes his immediate household—Sarah. So God told Abraham what he was doing in delivering Lot out of Sodom. I picture Abraham that whole year rehearsing over and over to Sarah the faithfulness of God in making good on his word to deliver us and provide as he has promised, using Lot as the example.

But we learn God's faithfulness best by personal experience. Sarah needs to experience God's power herself. We see God do that for Sarah in chapter 20.

In chapter 20, Abraham and Sarah go to Gerar where Abraham and Sarah make Abimelech to think Sarah is Abraham's brother. Again this is the second time they use this fleshly wisdom. It was a covenant Sarah had made with Abraham before they left Chaldea. She promised to lie—or at least not tell the whole truth—about their relationship as husband and wife. This way Abraham would not be killed so men could take Sarah but men would be more apt to show him kindness because they wanted to woo Sarah. But when they did it, the king of the Philistines, Abimelech, sent and **took Sara**. So now here is Sarah, Abimelech's captive, in need of God's deliverance, just as Lot needed deliverance out of Sodom.

Though Sarah was eighty-nine years of age, she had had no children, and was a beautiful woman. She looked much younger than she was. Abimelech took her to make Sarah his wife so that she would bear children by him. **Genesis 20:4: But Abimelech had not come near her.**

Do you know why the king wished to do this? Because the king's own wife and his handmaids had become BARREN. Does God do anything without a purpose? Never! The Lord had caused Abimelech and Abimelech's house to suffer the same barrenness that Abraham and Sarah suffered. And God did it for Sarah.

**Genesis 20: 18: For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.**

I do not see that this was done as a judgment against Abimelech for taking Sarah as most commentaries point out. (As it appears to have been the case in the like instance which happened when the Egyptian king took Sarah.) If in this case, it were done in judgment how could they have known that all the wombs had become barren in so short a time? It appears to me God shut up their wombs beforehand as part of God's purpose, which led the king to take Sarah, so that God could deliver her from his hand and thus shut Sarah up in faith. God taught Sarah greatly by this trial.

First, she was taught the power of God. Christ is King of kings. God restrained the king from touching her and made the king deliver her. **Genesis 20: 6...for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 7: Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.**

Secondly, God used this Egyptian king to reprove and humble Sarah to tell her to submit and come under the power of her husband using a veil. Christ is the Husband of Sarah. **Genesis 20: 14: And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. 15: And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. 16: And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reprovved.**

Thirdly, God used Abraham to show Sarah that by faith in God, God is able to make the barren fruitful as his command. Abraham prayed unto God because he believed God is able. Then God did for Abimelech and his wife and house, what God promised he would do for Sarah. Christ is the Intercessor through whom healing comes to his child of grace. **Genesis 20: 17: So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children. 18: For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.**

Brethren, is anything too hard for the Lord? Did Sarah remain in unbelief? No, by all this work of grace, God worked grace in her heart and Sarah believed God. Remember Hebrews 11: 11.

Hebrews 11:11: Through FAITH also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because SHE JUDGED HIM FAITHFUL WHO HAD PROMISED.

So Genesis 21 begins immediately to tell us that Sarah believed God. **Genesis 21: 1: And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2: For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.**

**Application:**Is anything too hard for the Lord? Now, let's go to Psalm 107 to get the lesson. Notice the pattern.

Psalm 107: 5: Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6: Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses... 12...he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. 13: Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses....18: Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19: Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses.

God has a reason for waiting. It is not until God has brought us to the end of our wit—our “wits end”, not until God has brought all our devices to fail and brought all our efforts to nothing, it is not until God has brought us to see our powers are "*dead*", “the womb of our flesh unable to produce fruit”, not until God turns us to trust God and brings us to "cry unto the Lord in our trouble" that then through faith we behold God is able by his power to perform all his promise. So God makes his power and grace evident to his child of mercy even in the power God exercises to bring us to trust him.

Psalm 107: 9: For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

One more thing, when the child was born, God commanded them to name him Isaac. It means **LAUGHTER!** When God brings us to rest in Christ while we become the laughing stocks of the world, our hearts are filled with the joyful laughter of faith and how we do repent from the foolishness of our laughter of unbelief. Ah, Lord God, behold! Thou hast made us new creatures in Christ by thy great power and stretched out arm, and now we believe, there is nothing too hard for thee!

Amen!