

“God’s Promises Are No Laughing Matter!”—Genesis 18:10-14

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “God’s Promises Are No Laughing Matter!”, is Genesis 18:10-14 → *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. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women 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.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

There is nothing quite like the experience of laughing so hard that you actually cry. From sitcoms on TV to comedians to the jokes which people share each day, it seems that many people desire to laugh and/or make others laugh. Why? Could it be that in the midst of so much of life that is serious, filled with evidences of sin everywhere and emotionally overwhelming so much of the time we need to find some joy somewhere in it all? Even

Proverbs 17:22 says: *A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.* Does your countenance reflect a *joyful heart* or a *crushed spirit*?

In our text we encounter Abraham's wife, Sarah, laughing from a different perspective. Rather than laughing in the midst of a "religious joke" she was laughing in disbelief, basically scoffing God's promise! This could be why she *laughed to herself*. However, before we are so hard on Sarah, it is important to point out that Abraham did not react in the most upright manner when he heard this same promise of verse 10 of our text: *About this time next year . . . Sarah your wife shall have a son.* Genesis 17:17 says that *Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"* They were soon to discover that when it comes to salvation God's promises are certainly no laughing matter!

Yahweh appeared to Abraham to reaffirm His promise of having a son with his wife Sarah based upon God's original promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 when he was seventy-five years old. He promised to make him into a *great nation* so that through him *all the families of the earth shall be blessed*. At the age of 99, with Sarah at the ages of 89, such a promise seemed incredulously ridiculous and impossible, as reflected in verse 11 of

our text: *Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.*

It is the nature of sin to look at ourselves and all the impossibilities in the face of God's miraculous promises and power. Satan uses such hopeless looking situations to produce doubt and despair in the midst of God's miraculous promises and power. The temptation is strong to manipulate our circumstances to make something happen in our own way, on our own terms and by our own efforts. Such deception flies in the face of that which God's promises demand of us—**faith in Him**.

This is exactly what Abraham and Sarah had done thirteen years earlier. They had tried to fulfill God's promise in a surrogate fashion when Sarah presented her servant, Hagar, to Abraham to produce a son in her stead. You see, not only are God's promises no laughing matter but they are also incapable of being fulfilled by us! When God promises, faith waits **for Him to fulfill those promises!** Our idolatrous natures want to make the promise come true on our own terms, in our own time and in our own way!

This is especially dangerous in the promise given to Abraham because it was more than simply having a son or becoming a great nation. The far reaching focus of this promise is revealed in Galatians 3:16 → *The promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to*

offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,”

Who is Christ. The blessing we have received from this promise is Jesus, the Christ! This promise had to do with the deliverance from sin for all mankind in the Person & Work of Jesus! Fulfilling God’s promise of salvation is never your work—it is always **God’s work in you through His Word and Spirit!**

The devil is constantly trying to get you to live your relationship with God based upon your working to fulfill God’s promises. Instead, the Holy Spirit gives you faith to simply trust His grace! Romans 4:16-18 says: *That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all . . . who share the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in Whom he believed, Who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope Abraham believed against hope. God showed His omnipotence as well as His faithfulness to His promise by sending Jesus to live, die and rise again to give you life eternal! No matter how dead something looks—even people dead in their sins—God can bring it to life!*

The rhetorical question of Yahweh in verse 13 of our text hits hard to the core of our sinful hearts and unbelief: *Is anything too hard for the LORD?* Unfortunately, many still “laugh” at God’s promises for them in Jesus because

of the unwillingness to recognize their sin and their need for their Savior. It may seem impossible to break such stubborn rebellion. *Is anything too hard for the LORD?* You may feel that your sins are so grievous that there is no hope of forgiveness. *Is anything too hard for the LORD?* You may think it is impossible for you to receive God's grace and favor. *Is anything too hard for the LORD?* You may feel that you've been so victimized by the sins of others with such a *crushed spirit* that new life or even some kind of joy for you is impossible. *Is anything too hard for the LORD?*

Nope! Nothing is *too hard for the LORD!* God's promise of salvation causes us to rejoice because of the blessings He's given us—forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ! In Holy Spirit wrought faith you can trust in God's promises, confident that nothing is *too hard for the LORD* while admitting that it is too hard for you! Only the Holy Spirit could instill such faith in Abraham and Sarah. Romans 4:20-23 says: *No unbelief made Abraham waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in Him Who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, Who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our*

justification. It was hard for Jesus to bear your sin so that your guilt and burden would be lifted in His death and resurrection! (cf. Matthew 11:28-30)

Oh . . . speaking of jokes and laughter: There was a 92 year old man who died and found himself standing in a long line outside the pearly gates of heaven. As the line approached the gates he saw a sign which read, "Entrance requirement: 1,000 points." "No sweat!" he thought to himself as he had been a Christian his whole life.

Approaching the pearly gates St. Peter welcomed him and said, "Entrance requirements: 1,000 points." The man confidently said, "Well, I attended worship faithfully, missing only in dire emergencies."

"100 points," said St. Peter.

"100 points?! That's worth a whole lot more than 100 points! Well, I served on the board of elders for 24 years," said the man.

"50 points," said Peter.

"50 points?! That was even more work than regular worship attendance! I sang in the choir for 40 years."

"50 points."

"I taught Sunday School for 17 years."

"100 points."

The man listed off every activity related to his "religious" life that he could

think of but it only left him with 650 points. Now he was really starting to sweat. “Think! Think!” he said to himself. “There must be something else!” Finally, realizing that he had expended every avenue of acquiring more points he threw up his hands and said, “I’ve got nothing but the grace of God in Jesus Christ.”

Peter replied, “1,000 points!”

With this perspective of trusting alone in the Jesus’ obedient life, perfect sacrifice for your sin and rising from the dead to give you eternal life, you can smile with joy because God has fulfilled His promises to you! Amen.

*Rejoice **in the Lord** always; again I will say, rejoice!*

(Philippians 4:4)

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