

THE JOURNEY FROM BARRENNESS TO HOPE

Part VIII – The Moment is Here

There are countless of people walking the face of the earth today asking themselves some very difficult questions. Why was I born in an abusive family? Why did my father always physically beat me up? Why can't my wife stop drinking? Why did my mom marry seven times? Why does my husband care more about work than about me?

Many of us can identify with such frustrating situations. We live in fear because we no longer have control over our lives; everything is out of order and we cannot seem to get our lives back on track. We are so tired and ashamed about our circumstances holding us down from moments of joy. Maybe we have gotten accustomed to our life situations. "This is how my life looks like, full of destruction and barrenness. There is nothing I can do about it except to accept it." How many of us are in this condition presently?

Such is the life story of Abraham and Sarah. No matter how powerful God's word is to them, their present circumstance of not having a son dictates how they respond towards God's promise. And many times, they fail to believe that God's promise of a son will actually come true.

And it is in these faithless moments that God often chooses to bring his promises into fulfillment. The moment when our barrenness turns into hope normally takes place when our faith is running on empty. And God selects times such as these in order for us to recognize that only he can carry us towards hope. The moment of hope has finally arrived for Abraham and Sarah. Their moment is here.

Text: Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7 (NLT)

Genesis 18:1-15

¹The LORD appeared again to Abraham while he was camped near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day about noon, as Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent, ²he suddenly noticed three men standing nearby. He got up and ran to meet them, welcoming them by bowing low to the ground. ³"My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴Rest in the shade of this tree while my servants get some water to wash your feet. ⁵Let me prepare some food to refresh you. Please stay awhile before continuing on your journey."

"All right," they said. "Do as you have said."

⁶So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick! Get three measures of your best flour, and bake some bread." ⁷Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a fat calf and told a servant to hurry and butcher it. ⁸When the food was ready, he took some cheese curds and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them there beneath the trees.

⁹"Where is Sarah, your wife?" they asked him. "In the tent," Abraham replied.

¹⁰Then one of them said, "About this time next year I will return, and your wife Sarah will have a son."

Now Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent nearby. ¹¹And since Abraham and Sarah were both very old, and Sarah was long past the age of having children, ¹²she laughed silently to herself. "How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby?" she thought. "And when my master--my husband--is also so old?"

¹³Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD? About a year from now, just as I told you, I will return, and Sarah will have a son." ¹⁵Sarah was afraid, so she denied that she had laughed. But he said, "That is not true. You did laugh."

Genesis 21:1-7

¹Then the LORD did exactly what he had promised. ²Sarah became pregnant, and she gave a son to Abraham in his old age. It all happened at the time God had said it would. ³And Abraham named his son Isaac. ⁴Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. ⁵Abraham was one hundred years old at the time.

⁶And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter! All who hear about this will laugh with me. ⁷For who would have dreamed that I would ever have a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!"

1. The journey towards hope is always about **a call embraced**.

We have witnessed how many times Abraham and Sarah failed to embrace God's calling of hope in their lives. Sarah's plan for Hagar to sleep with Abraham and bear a child was one such act of faithlessness. No matter how many times God had to assure them of his promise for them, Abraham and Sarah continued to allow their present circumstances to dictate their decisions. Their lack of faith handcuffed them from embracing God's hope for them totally. In this story, Sarah's laughter indicates her refusal to accept God's plan for her life.

- God's promise of hope must be accepted into our lives.

There is no way around this. Faith comes into play when we want to experience hope in all areas of life. Faith is needed to believe that God's word is true. And faith is needed to push us into an active lifestyle of obedience in God's perfect plan. Through faith we will embrace God and the hope he wants to usher into our lives.

2. **Do not be accustomed to a life of barrenness**.

- To do so means that we are resigned to a closed future.

Sarah's doubt in God meant that she accepted her barren condition. She is willing to accept the dead ends that emptiness is affording to her. Her future is closed from any newness and change. And she is fine with that.

But, God is not fine with such a flawed attitude. He does not stand on the sidelines as we waste our existences in hopelessness. God has a joyful ending for our stories, but in order to experience it we must never be accustomed to our barrenness. Do not accept empty lives for they only promote futures that have no chance of ever succeeding in hope. Fruitful growths are not evident in a barren life.

3. To reject God's hope means no **new thing can enter and change our present conditions**.

To change an existing life that is filled with bitter emptiness, we must allow God to introduce a new thing that will transform our present conditions. But, if we keep on shutting God out how can he restore us in healing hope?

How are some ways we close the door on God? The most common way is to doubt his plan. That is what Abraham and Sarah kept doing in their spiritual journeys. Another way is to disobey God. We might listen to his word and we might actually believe it, but when it comes to active obedience in our day to day existences, we faithlessly ignore him.

In Abraham's and Sarah's case God remained faithful to them even though they continuously submitted to their present circumstances rather than embracing the will of God. God fulfilled his promise by giving Abraham and Sarah a son despite their disobedience and lack of faith.

But, this is more an exception than the rule. God expects us to follow him wholeheartedly and to depend solely on him. God does not want us to act destructively just because our current situations are in spiritual shambles. We must never reject God's promise for us; to do so will also mean a rejection of his hope and

a rejection of his healing powers. We must always allow God to create a new thing in our hearts that will transform us from barrenness into hopeful joy.

4. The good news of hope **requires a decision from us**. (Genesis 18:14)

“Is anything too hard for the LORD?”

- If our answer is “yes,” then we are choosing to remain in a hopeless existence without freedom.
- If our answer is “no,” then we have accepted God’s freedom to lead us towards a hopeful existence.

We must constantly make decisions whether we are willing to submit under God’s sovereignty or not. Everyday we must choose whether God can in fact do the impossible or whether he cannot. Every moment in life we are deciding whether we want to remain in a barren existence or in a hopeful lifestyle. A decision is always required of us – is anything, in fact, too hard for the Lord to accomplish? Your answer will decide whether your journey towards hope will be a successful one.

5. Enter the moment of hope **in ready faith and not in fearful doubt**.

Do not be like Sarah, who entered her moment of hope in deceit and fear. Our moment is right now; we can choose hope in this instance. But, we must enter it in ready faith. Do not cower in doubt, wondering if God can pull it off. God is accomplishing the miraculous all around us, but we can only experience them in trust and obedience in him.

Which leads us to this concluding remark:

6. True hope affirms that **God is faithful to his promises**.

Application

- God is not interested in keeping things “status quo.” Instead, he wants to change us in transformation.
- Ask yourself, “What changes does God want me to make in my life to better reflect his hope in me?”
- Honestly consider the excuses you use not to embrace God’s hope in your life, and then DO NOT DO THEM!
- Believe that God will continue to work in your life until he has completed the good work he has started in you.

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