

What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM

“God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

SESSION #5: Genesis 17:1-22

TEXT:

v. 1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.

v. 2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

v. 3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him,

v. 4 “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.

v. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

v. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

v. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

v. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

v. 9 Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.

v.10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

v.11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

v.12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.

v.13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.

v.14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

v.15 God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.

v.16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

v.17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?”

v.18 And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”

v.19 Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

v.20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.

v.21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.”

v.22 When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

INTRODUCTION:

Juggler

A Kansas State Trooper pulled a car over on US135 about 2 miles north of the Kansas/Oklahoma State line. When the Trooper asked the driver why he was speeding, the driver said he was a magician and juggler and was on his way to Winfield to do a show at the Shrine Hospital. He didn't want to be late.

The Trooper told the driver he was fascinated by juggling and asked if the driver would do a little juggling for him, then he wouldn't give him a ticket. He told the Trooper he had sent his equipment ahead and didn't have anything to juggle.

The Trooper said he had some flares in the trunk and asked if he could juggle them. The juggler said he could, so the Trooper got 3 flares, lit them and handed them to him. While the man was juggling, a car pulled in behind the patrol car, a drunken good old boy from Kansas got out, watched the performance, then went over to the patrol car, opened the rear door and got in.

The Trooper observed him and went over to the patrol car, opened the door asking the drunk what he thought he was doing.

The drunk replied, "You might as well take me to jail, cause there's no way I can pass that test."

(Received via email from Doug Byrd, December 17, 2006)

Preaching

A preacher noticed one day that, as he was preaching, a man in the back of the auditorium was slumped over a little. Thinking he was asleep, the preacher asked the deacon to go wake him up. The deacon gave the man a little nudge, but he kept on sleeping. He bumped him a little harder and the man kept on sleeping. Frustrated, the deacon took a hymn book and smacked him in the head, knocking the man out of his chair and on the floor.

The deacon was shocked that the man didn't open his eyes. Concerned, he got down on the floor to see if the man was breathing, and the man said, "Hit me harder, I can still hear him."

(Received via email from Doug Byrd, January 9, 2006)

Will Rogers on Wasting Time

Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.

—Humorist Will Rogers (1879-1935)

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(A Continual Feast by Jan Karon) New York, NY: Viking / Penguin Group.
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If you think it's hard to meet new people, try picking up the wrong golf ball.

Jack Lemmon

One of the illusions of life is that the present hour is not the critical decisive hour. *Write it on your heart that every day is the best day of the year.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Laughter *Is* the Best Medicine

Proverbs 17:22 says, “A cheerful heart is good medicine,” and contemporary research seems to underscore this truth.

“Bob Hope made it to his 100th birthday, and so did George Burns. Coincidence? Maybe not, says Michael Irwin of UCLA’s David Geffen School of Medicine and former adviser for the federally funded National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. “Laughter releases endorphins—those ‘feel good’ hormones suspected of boosting immunity—and that might make you more resistant to disease.”

“At the very least,” Irwin adds, “laughter reduces stress hormones, which we know have a bad effect on immunity.”

“If you’re the strong, silent type, a good belly laugh now and then may be especially important. Doctors used to think hard-charging Type As were at heightened risk for heart disease, but we’ve moved on from that . . .” says David Katz, a preventive medicine specialist at Yale School of Public Health. “We know now it’s having a so-called Type D personality—someone who bottles up emotions—that really causes an increased risk of heart disease and possibly cancer,” Katz says.

So, laugh! It’s a prescription for healthy living.

*Sid Kirschheimer, “Never Get Sick!” AARP (May/June 2007), p. 70;
submitted by Ted De Hass, Bedford, Iowa*

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(Still Lookin' by Joe Kreger) St. Louis, MO: Doane Agricultural Services Company. Copyright – Joe Kreger (poetry) and Doane Agricultural Services Company (book), 2000.

Me'n Charlie

Charlie Darwin had a theory
about our family tree.
But Charlie ain't the one I'd choose
to write my pedigree.

I'm thinkin' that old Charlie
shoulda took another look,
'cause the One who made the lot of us,
well, He also wrote a Book.

And, in that big black Herdbook
which I'm convicted to believe,
it's recorded that I'm linebred
back to Adam and to Eve.

Now, Charlie saw a mystery.
He figgered a solution.
He thought him up a process.
It's known as evolution.

The creation of days four and five
are the ones that Charlie picks,
but my foundation stock got started
on day number six.

Charlie thought his grandpaw
once slithered on the ground.
But, how could he be so all-fired sure
when he weren't nowhere around?

I'll admit to havin' relatives
of every shade of skin,
but when it comes to critters,
I don't claim'em as my kin.

I know I've got some cousins
on the Islands of Samoa,
but I don't trace my lineage
to the simple protozoa.

My forebearers herded sheep.
That's bad enough for me.
But, at least they didn't wear a tail
and swing from tree to tree.

Maybe Charlie's Grandmaw
did climb from vine to vine,
so, I'll let Charlie pick his kinfolks,
but I'll be pickin' mine.
pp. 71-72

Woman Lives Without Power for 15 Years

When a hurricane hit South Florida, Norena's home was one of many that was severely damaged. The elderly woman received an insurance settlement, and the repair work began. However, when the money ran out, so did the contractor, leaving an unfinished home with no electricity. Norena has been living without power ever since.

The astounding part of this story is that the hurricane was not Katrina, but Andrew. Hurricane Andrew struck in 1992. Norena has been living in that dark, unfinished house for 15 years. No heat when the winter chill settled over South Florida. No air conditioning when the mercury climbed into the 90's and the humidity clung to 100 percent. Not one hot shower.

Without money to finish the repairs, Norena just got by with a small lamp and a single burner. Her neighbors didn't seem to notice the absence of power. Acting on a tip, the mayor of Miami-Dade got involved. It only took a few hours of work by electrical contractor Kent Crook to return power to the house.

CBS News says Norena plans to let the water get really hot, and then take her first bubble bath in a decade and a half. "It's hard to describe having [the electricity] . . . to switch on," she said. "It's overwhelming."

*KUTV, "Woman Turns Lights on After 15 Years in the Dark," KUTV.com (2-17-07);
submitted by John Beukema, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania*

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Guidance: Lesson from JFK, Jr., Crash

In the aftermath of John Kennedy, Jr.'s, death, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article about flying. In it, amateur pilot Stephen Hedges writes about the difficulty of flying a plane by instruments alone—a necessary skill if you want to fly at night or in fog. Without it, it is easy for a pilot to fall into an uncontrolled bank and crash.

During one instrument lesson, Hedges noted, “I flew the headings and turns as instructed, but even with 10 hours of instrument flying experience already in my logbook, I was amazed at how quickly the plane slid into a banking turn if I diverted my attention for just a few moments. The first time it happened, a pang of panic shot through me, a momentary fear that made it even more difficult to comprehend what the plane was doing.”

But when he heard his instructor next to him calmly say, “Watch your bank,” he quickly leveled the plane.

There are a lot of times in the Christian life when we're forced to fly in fog or at night, when it's hard to get our bearings, when we can't see the horizon and get the perspective necessary to stay level. At such times, it's doubly important to keep our eyes fixed on God's guiding Word and to stay attentive to his calming guidance.

Mark Galli; refers to “A Pilot Explains the Accident Chain,” Chicago Tribune (7-23-99), Perspectives section, p. 1.

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As the scene of our study opens today in the biography of Abram:

Abram is 99 years old and

Sarah is 89 years old.

This is a difficult time because in our previous episode the two of them pursued a path of trying to help God fulfill His promises of a son. With the help of an Egyptian handmaid, Ishmael was born.

(Lost Women of the Bible: Finding Strength & Significance Through Their Stories by Carolyn Custis James) Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. Copyright – Carolyn Custis James, 2005.

Sometimes the honesty of the Bible is terribly disconcerting. These dark chapters from Sarah's life make us uncomfortable. It's hard to see someone like Sarah or Abraham, whom we consider to be "giants of the faith," toppled like large uprooted oak trees blasted by the hurricane winds of desperation, anxiety, and collapsing hopes.

p. 71

It is when everything is on hold and we are clinging to the promises of God and nothing seems to be happening that we begin to **WORRY**. We're filled with **ANXIETY** and **FRUSTRATION**.

The same thing happened to **DAVID** while he was waiting for the Lord to open the door for him to become "king of the land."

(Facing Your Giants by Max Lucado) Nashville, TN: W Publishing. Copyright – Max Lucado, 2006.

But in the wave of weariness, David hits the pause button on good thoughts and thinks:

Sooner or later, Saul's going to get me. The best thing I can do is escape to Philistine country. Saul will count me a lost cause and quit hunting me down in every nook and cranny of Israel. I'll be out of his reach for good. (27:1 MSG)

p. 65

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." For if you give way to fear when you hear of evil tidings, you will be unable to meet the trouble with that calm composure which nerves for duty, and sustains under adversity. How can you glorify God if you play the coward? Saints have often sung God's high praises in the fires, but will your doubting and desponding, as if you had none to help you, magnify the Most High? Then take courage, and relying in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God, "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

p. 518

As we now begin to focus upon our next episode in the life of Abram in Genesis 17, I am reminded of:

Psalm 37:23-24 (version unknown)

The Lord delights in the way of the man
 whose steps he has made firm.
 Though he stumble, he will not fall
 For the Lord upholds him with his hand.

We have followed Abram from the Ur of the Chaldees to Haran along with his family and kindred. There was a six-year delay in Haran during which time one of his brothers Haran, the father of Lot, died and also Terah his dad. After six years. Abram and Lot, along with Sarah, go on to Canaan.

We almost see Abram nearly pass through Canaan. He does pitch his tent between Bethel and Ai and builds an altar there but because of the physical needs precipitated by the famine in the land, Abram and Lot go on down into Egypt.

It is while there in Egypt, out of the will of God, that both Abram and Lot acquire a great deal of personal wealth. We notice that as Abram came back in Genesis 13 to the will of God, to the place of the altar, that the Lord, through circumstances, separated Abram and Lot from each other. Then we noticed in Genesis 15 that God alone walked between the pieces of the sacrifice, obligating Himself to an unconditional covenant with Abram wherein He was going to bless him and make his name great and make his seed like the dust of the earth, and the stars in the sky.

In our last study we noticed that it had been ten years since God had made the promise to Abram that he was going to be the father of many nations, and so in Genesis 16 Abram listens to Sarah, his wife, as she makes a proposal which follows the custom of the day. Because she was barren, she suggested to Abram that he take her handmaid, Hagar, to wife and have a child by her. This is what took place and Ishmael was born.

Now as we prepare for our study in Genesis 17, we need to realize that there have been **THIRTEEN YEARS OF SILENCE**.

Abram was 86-years-old when Ishmael was born and now he is 99 years of age when this chapter opens.

He's been **THIRTEEN YEARS OUT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD**, a blank time. There is no fruit, no growth, nothing significant that takes place in his life. There is no progress in his life, no fruit borne in him and through him during this time, and we could also say, there is no altar, because there is no communication between Abram and the Lord.

This is the **SECOND TIME** in Abram's life that we have noticed a period of time when he was **OUT OF FELLOWSHIP**:

1. when he arrived at Haran and did not go on to the land of Canaan but accepted his father's suggestion that they remain there and for six years, with the same results, he had no new word from the Lord, and
2. here for thirteen years.

It is good for us to remember that Abram and Sarah have been about **24 YEARS IN THE LAND** since God had spoken to them initially.

I would imagine that during these **13 YEARS** Abram has continued to stack up possessions and wealth. Since there has been no new word from the Lord, he is assuming that the child which has been born, is the child that God intended to be the heir and the one whom the promise was going to be fulfilled.

Things are rock'n along pretty smooth, so things must be going OK:

NO HASSLES,

NO CRISIS,

NO TESTS.

He has become **RESPECTED**. He has become a **LEADER**.

Abram has lived some time now in Canaan and has probably increased greatly in his influence and stature with the citizens of the land.

I imagine he probably feels that since everything is going great and his ship is sailing pretty smooth, evidently God is pretty pleased with him.

He has not had any tests which were worthy of being recorded in the record and so life has probably settled down pretty much to normal.

I would feel also that Abram has probably become somewhat **COMPLACENT** and has not given thought to the fact that there is a distance in his spiritual life that has developed and that he has not sensed the Lord speaking to him or giving him any new directions.

Now that he has gotten quite a bit older, too, I imagine that this has contributed to his sort of **RELAXED WAY OF LIVING** because the older you get, the more you have a tendency to let the younger ones fight the battles and go to war.

A man and a woman reach the pinnacle of 100 years in age:

Man: “It’s been fun but I wouldn’t want to do it over again.”

Woman: “The thing I enjoy the most is the absence of peer pressure.”

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

This chapter records (a) God’s assurance of His promises by changing the names of Abram . . . and Sarai . . . (b) God’s instituting circumcision as the sign of the covenant . . . (c) God’s sure word on the promises’ fulfillment through Sarah . . . and (d) Abraham’s compliance . . .

God is dominant in the first three sections: He promised Abram a son and named him Isaac, He renamed Abram and Sarai to reflect that promise, and He instituted the sign.

Boice titles this chapter:

God of the Impossible

p. 574

Gangel & Bramer say:

God’s promises throughout his Word are true, and we can trust them.

p. 150

Hartley says:

A year before the birth of the promised son, Yahweh strengthens the relationship with Abram by renewing their covenant. Covenant is central to this narrative: “my covenant” occurs nine times (vv. 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 21) and “covenant” four times (vv. 7, 11, 13, 19). The use of the word “everlasting” captures God’s firm resolution to establish a people through Abram. That word occurs three times with covenant (vv. 7, 13, 19) and once with possession (v. 8).

p. 169

Hughes says:

Chapter 17 is about how God came to Abram and elevated his faith by confirming the promise with the covenant of circumcision, which was then sealed by Abram’s obedience. Abram’s covenant faith and obedience were encouraged by God’s revelation of four new names: “God Almighty” (v. 1), “Abraham” (v. 5), “Sarah” (v. 15), and “Isaac” (v. 19).

p. 246

Keil & Delitzsch title the chapter:

SEALING OF THE COVENANT BY THE GIVING OF NEW NAMES AND
BY THE RITE OF CIRCUMCISION.—CHAP. XVII.

p. 222

Phillips says:

Abram's trouble was that he could not wait. God had promised him a son and a seed. In his anxiety to see that promise fulfilled, Abram decided to help God out and to hurry things up by marrying Hagar.

A naturalist once took a cocoon of an emperor moth and kept it in his study for months, hoping to witness its emergence in due time. The cocoon was flask-shaped with a narrow opening at the neck through which the mouth would emerge. The great difference between the narrow opening and the size of the moth made the naturalist wonder how ever the insect would get out of its prison. At last the day came and all morning the man watched the struggles of the insect. It never seemed to get beyond a certain point. The struggle to emerge is what forces the fluids of the moth's body into the wings and makes it possible for it to fly. The naturalist did not know that and, his patience exhausted, he decided to help things along. With the point of his scissors he carefully snipped the confining threads to make the exit just a little easier. At once the moth crawled out with perfect ease. But the naturalist watched in vain to see the gorgeous wings expand and fill. They never did. His impatience and false kindness had ruined the moth. It never became anything but a stunted abortion, crawling painfully through the brief life it should have spent flying through the air on rainbow wings.

It is always a mistake to try to hasten the work of God. He has His own reasons for His seeming delays. But Abram could not wait. As a result of his impatience there followed a solemn silence in which, for thirteen long years, he received no further word from God. He was eighty-six when Ishmael was born and ninety-nine when God at last broke the silence. There were thirteen years during which Abram made no further progress in the things of God, in which he saw no fruit, and during which nothing worthy of note happened in his life.
pp. 142-43

Radmacher & Allen say:

This text is a part of the complex of passages that form the Abrahamic covenant (see list at 15:1-21), the irrevocable promise of God.
p. 34

Spurgeon says:

He takes Hagar to wife. He could not leave it to God to give him the promised seed; he could not leave it with God to fulfil His promise in His own time, but justifies himself in turning aside from the narrow path of faith to accomplish by doubtful methods the end which God Himself had promised and undertaken to accomplish.

p. 86

Stigers says:

3) *God's promises must not be reduced to mundane mechanics, 17:1-27.* In this section Abram is brought face to face with the absolute power of Yahweh and, at the same time, the failings of his own confidence. Both God's power and the weakness of Abram's faith are revealed regarding Ishmael in relation to God's promises. Abram simply is not to believe that his devices can fulfill God's promises. We must not scale God's promises to our puny desires!

p. 162

Stigers says further:

The immediate occasion for this meeting between Yahweh and Abram was to terminate any confusion as to who should be his heir, for Abraham's words "Oh, let Ishmael live before you," i.e., be the heir, are indicative of satisfaction with the lesser induced by the prolonged delay in the appearance of the heir promised him. In addition there is the need to refresh in Abram's mind the covenant and to make more explicit certain aspects of it.

p. 163

Thomas says:

GOD has always some fresh surprise of knowledge, grace and blessing with which to delight His children. We see this again and again in the life of Abraham, and not least of all in the story recorded in the present chapter. This episode was a great step forward in Abraham's spiritual relationship to God, as well as in his personal experience.

p. 153

Waltke says:

In this scene of covenant dialogue between God and Abraham, God renews his promises. God, the primary actor of the Abrahamic narrative and the one who must supply the supernatural promises, carries most of the dialogue.

p. 257

Waltke says further:

The expansion of God's covenant promises requires Abraham to be completely committed and obedient. The implicit question of this scene—"Will Abraham respond with righteousness and covenant fidelity?"—forms the underlying tension. On this basis, the scene can also be divided by the Lord's granting of the covenant (17:1-22) and Abraham's acceptance (17:23-27).

p. 257

Waltke says still further:

He then identifies him by the name "God Almighty" probably to confirm God's power to produce supernatural offspring. After that, and for the first time in Book 6, the narrator refers to God as *ʾēlôhîm*, signifying God's transcendence over the nations. This reference to God occurs appropriately in connection with God's renaming of Abraham, "father of a multitude [of nations]" (see "Sources of Ur-Genesis" in the introduction). God's renaming of the patriarch and matriarch signals God's dominion (see 1:5; 2:19), acknowledges their faithfulness, and reveals their new destiny and mission. The name *Isaac*, which means laughter, reminds Abraham and the reader of the incredibility and joy of God's miraculous blessings.

p. 258

Wenham says:

This chapter is a watershed in the Abraham story. The promises to him have been unfolded bit by bit, gradually building up and becoming more detailed and precise, until here they are repeated and filled out in a glorious crescendo in the long and elaborate divine speech. From this point in Genesis, divine speeches become rarer and little new content is added to the promises, but the fulfillment of these promises becomes more visible.
p. 16

Wiersbe says:

In this chapter, you will discover four new names and a name that will always be old because it cannot be changed.
p. 87

It's time to dig into the text now and see what we can find of benefit for our own lives.

v. 1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 1:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God showed up and said to him, “I am The Strong God, live entirely before me, live to the hilt!

The NET Bible translates verse 1:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am the Sovereign God. Walk before me and be blameless.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

God’s promises to **Abram** grew more and more magnificent. As **God Almighty**, He was fully capable of accomplishing all His promises. (This is the first OT occurrence of the title “God Almighty” . . . which is used several times in Gen. . . . Some scholars suggest that **šadday** is related to the Akk. word **šadû** that means breast or mountain or both. [Some words describing parts of the body were also used for geographical descriptions; e.g., “mouth” of a river, “foot” of a mountain.] So **šadday**, when used of God, refers either to His ability to supply abundantly [“the Abundant One”] or to His majestic strength [“the Almighty One”].)

Theodore Epp points out on this particular verse:

Thirteen years had gone by since Abraham had hearkened unto Sarah and during this time there was no mention of God appearing to Abraham. In the Scriptures these thirteen years are passed over as a period of spiritual barrenness. For Abraham it was what is known spiritually as a time of wood, hay and stubble. But why all of this waiting? God had promised Abraham a son and by this time only Ishmael had been born into his home, by a means that was not pleasing to the Lord. The reason for God's delay was so God could bring Abraham to the end of himself. Later it was said of Abraham, "and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." Before divine power is put forth, man must learn his own impotency. Not until Abraham's body was as good as dead, would God fulfill His Word. Man's extremity if God's opportunity so to Abraham, this seemed like a long delay, God was right on time. At the time when Sarah suggested to Abraham that he go in unto her handmaid, Abraham's body still had its full procreative powers, thirteen years later, Abraham's body was passed this stage and he was cast totally upon the Lord.

I need to realize also in my Christian life that if I am going to try to produce the Son of God in myself, by prayer, or obedience or consecration, I'm making exactly the same blunder that Sarah and Abraham made over Hagar, "which were born, not of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man but of God." Immediately I realize that the thing is impossible, then God will do it. It is when we come to the end of ourselves that suddenly God steps in and reveals Himself as the One fully capable to do that which He has promised.

The safest thing to do in circumstances where you don't see anything, and you don't know what to do is just to trust God. You will eventually find there is a reason for the delay in His ultimate purpose.

What is it that the Lord says to Abram in verse 1?

“I AM GOD ALMIGHTY; WALK BEFORE ME AND BE BLAMELESS.”

This is the **FIRST TIME** we have God referred to as:

THE ALMIGHTY ONE or

EL SHADDAI.

He is God, the Mighty One, the covenant-keeping God, possessing the power to realize His promises—even when the order of nature has presented us with the impossibility of any prospect and the powers of nature are insufficient to secure it. In spite of Abram’s and Sarah’s deadness, God could and would give him, the promised innumerable posterity.

It is now time for Abram to be brought to his senses and to face up to the impossibility that Ishmael can be the heir and turn his face to the will of God. He must acknowledge that God can give him seed. This is God Almighty in His creative power and it is this God that makes that which is impossible, possible.

It is the God who can do all things and needs no one to assist Him and it is never too late for God.

The delay here is deliberate to establish the fact that His blessings come only through receiving them by trust in His promises. God’s power alone can fulfill them.

God was about to act in grace and before He can do this, the creature must come to the end of himself. Man’s extremity becomes God’s opportunity. When we come to the end of our resources it is then that God’s power takes over and accomplishes that which He has initially promised.

Here is a new and fresh revelation from the Father to delight the soul of His servant. **El Shaddai** means:

“Rested One,”

“One where you can come for rest and find nourishment,”

“God Almighty, the Creator and the Sustainer.”

It is a principle in Scripture that God never demands what He hasn't already provided.

After revealing Himself as God Almighty, He gives the **COMMAND TO ABRAM** and it is:

“WALK BEFORE ME AND BE BLAMELESS.”

“Don't be trying to help me out! Don't walk behind me and be phony!”

“Because I'm going to do what I have promised you to do, and I have the power to accomplish it, I am demanding of you, a whole-hearted cooperation in your conduct toward Me.”

The command denotes the entire surrender of the being. It is being true-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal, letting the Lord be King of our lives.

This quality of whole-hearted devotion has ever been dear to God. It was this that He considered in Job, and loved in David. It is in favor of this that His eyes run to-and-fro to show Himself strong in the behalf of those who are perfect or blameless toward Him. It is for this that He pleads with Abraham and it was because He met with it to so large an extent in His character and obedience that He entered into the eternal covenant bond with him and his.

It would be good for us to pause here for a moment and ask ourselves the **QUESTIONS**:

Is our heart blameless with God?

Am I wholehearted towards Him?

Is He first in my plans and my pleasures, my friendships, my thoughts and my actions?

Is His will the rule of my life?

Is His love my light, His business my aim, His well-done, my exceeding great reward?

There is no life to be compared with that of which the undivided heart is the center of everything. Why not seek it now? And turning to God, ask Him to bring the whole inner realm of your life under His government and to your hold it as His forevermore.

Matthew 6:22

“The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

Abraham is to walk before God and not before his own personal wants or wishes or desires. In walking before God, he is to acknowledge his ability to accomplish that which He has promised and he is not to try and accomplish the fulfillment of the Father’s promises on his own.

Our text says:

“WHEN ABRAM WAS NINETY-NINE YEARS OLD, THE LORD APPEARED TO HIM.”

Just like **SAUL OF TARSUS** had an experience of the Lord appearing to him on the **DAMASCUS ROAD**, so here Abram in Genesis 17 has likewise an appearing of the Lord unto him.

His message to Abram is:

“I AM GOD ALMIGHTY; WALK BEFORE ME AND BE BLAMELESS.”

Psalm 37:7

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when men succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Psalm 37:34

Wait for the Lord
and keep his way.
He will exalt you to inherit the land;
when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.

The **COMMAND** is:

“WALK BEFORE ME.”

In other words:

“SIT ON THE FRONT ROW SO I CAN SEE YOU!”

Radmacher & Allen say:

For the fourth time, **the LORD** appeared to Abram after he came to the land of Canaan (the first is in 12:7; the second in 13:14-17; the third in ch. 15; the next in ch. 18).

p. 34

They say further:

walk before me: As Enoch had walked with God (5:21-24), so now Abram was commanded to walk *before* God. He was to conduct his life as an open display of faithfulness to the Lord. **Be blameless** means to have integrity.

p. 34

Anderson says:

A thirteen-year period of silence spans the gap between Genesis 16 and 17. Not until Abram reached that age of ninety-nine would God once again communicate with him. That seems like a long time, doesn't it?

It does, and there's a reason why the Bible tells us nothing about Abram from the age of eighty-six to age ninety-nine, and it's this: there was nothing important to talk about! Nothing significant ever happens in our lives when we're out of fellowship with God, and when Abram and Sarai stepped in with Project Hagar and tried to help out the Lord, they marched right out of fellowship with him. The moment they did so, their spiritual growth was delayed, even stifled. No progress or fellowship occurred, no spiritual fruit developed, during the years immediately after Ishmael's birth. There's no record of any altar in the lives of Abram and Sarai, no mention of any place where they were even trying to spend time with God during those years.

It's the second time in the life of Abram that we view a period of spiritual stagnation. Remember that when he and his relatives left Ur of the Chaldees, they got as far as Haran and stopped there for six years. All the Bible reveals of those six years is that Abram's father, Terah died. Just as those six years were a loss for God, so were the thirteen years between Genesis 16 and 17.

pp. 109-10

Anderson says:

God was ready to communicate again, and for the first time in the Bible He identified Himself as “God Almighty”—*El Shaddai* in Hebrew. Do you know what that means? It means basically, “I am God—the all-powerful One.” God was telling Abram that He didn’t need human help to fulfill divine promises, that He was all-powerful and perfectly capable of keeping His word, that He could handle any circumstances.
p. 112

Anderson says further:

. . . “Walk before Me, and be blameless.” Why did He give Abram that command? Simply, He was asking for Abram’s wholehearted cooperation. The Lord wanted his total heart devotion, and that’s all. He didn’t want Abram to keep making the mistake of trying to help Him out. God didn’t need, want, or appreciate Abram’s efforts. The hypocritical hanky-panky that produced Ishmael had been insulting, and it was time now for Abram to be “blameless.”
p. 112

Barnhouse says:

It is never too late for God. There is no such thing as age for the One who is Himself the eternal One, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. One who is truly a child of God will be carried by Him to the end. The good work begun in us is to be performed, not till we are old and feeble, not until we die, but until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). God is concerned not with the outward man that perishes, but with the inward man, so that he may be renewed day by day (II Corinthians 4:16).
p. 131

Barnhouse says further:

God is saying: “I have opened an account, now draw on it.”
p. 132

Boice says:

The Hebrew name is El Shaddai. This is another name that scholars are not absolutely certain how to handle. It has an association with might or strength, so they translate it “God Almighty.” This may be right. But I notice that the Hebrew word that lies at its root is *shad*, and *shad* means the female breast. I suppose it could also be applied to a male breast, a strong one by which a person might be protected and defended. But it really means a female breast, in this case suggesting that God is the one from whom Abraham was to draw nourishment. By a most tender image, God may have been saying that we are empowered to live out our responsibilities in the covenant by feeding on him, just as a child grows and prospers by feeding on the milk of its mother.

pp. 584-85

Bush says:

. . . it is probable that he had long settled down in the belief that Ishmael was the destined seed, and consequently had renounced all hopes of farther issue.

p. 268

Bush says further:

. . . *El Shaddai, God all-sufficient*; able to accomplish with infinite ease all his purposes, whether of judgment or of mercy. This was a truth which he needed to have re-impressed upon his mind. It was for want of considering this, that he had had recourse to crooked devices in order to accomplish the promise. In view therefore of the physical impotency of Abraham’s body and of Sarah’s womb, the Most High is pleased to announce himself under this august title, which evidently carried with it the implication that no obstacles whatever could stand in the way of the complete fulfilment of the word of promise.

p. 268

Bush says still further:

It was if he had said, 'Have recourse to no more unbelieving expedients; keep thou the path of uprightness, and leave me to fulfil my promise in the time and manner that seem good to me.' What a lesson is here afforded us against a resort to unlawful or doubtful means under the pretence of their being better calculated to promote the cause of God! Our concern is simply to walk before him in uprightness of heart and cleanness of hands, leaving it to him to bring to pass his own designs in his own way.

p. 269

Candlish says:

In this doubtful calm, what is the patriarch's spiritual condition? How fares it with his soul? Is it prospering and in health? Or, is he saying,—Soul, take thine ease? Possibly the renewed enjoyment of domestic tranquillity, the increase of his worldly substance, his growing influence and reputation among the chieftains of the land, and, above all, the happiness that he now felt as a father,—in the supposed fulfillment of his long-deferred hope, and in the fresh light and love with which childhood's unconscious gladness ever fills a home,—all together might tend to lull his watchfulness asleep on the lap of a certain languid and luxurious repose, such as even piety itself might be tempted not to disown. He had got, as it has been well said, if not the very thing promised, at least something very like it; and he almost eased to look or long very earnestly for more. In such a state, how great the need of such a revival as Abram now experiences; receiving, as he does, a repetition of his original call, as preparatory to a renewal of the covenant.

p. 264

Candlish says:

To walk before God, is to walk or live as in his sight, and under his special inspection: to realize, at all times, his presence and his providence; to feel his open and unslumbering eye ever upon us.

p. 266

Candlish says further:

... “I am the Almighty God.” This is thine encouragement to act with entire frankness and unreserve in all thy dealings with me, and to let all be open and undisguised between us. I have all power and all sufficiency; and all that concerns thee may be safely left to me. There is no need of any underhand or circuitous procedure, nor any occasion to resort to any doubtful walk of thine own for the accomplishment of all that thy heart desires. I am the Almighty God; walk before me. Commit thy way to me, and I will bring it to pass. What is it that troubles thee, and would tempt thee to try some device of thine own for relief? Is it sin? Go not in any path of deceitful compromise, making a false truce with thine own conscience; walk before me, and be perfect. Let thy sin, in all its blackness, be laid bare before me; for I am the Almighty God; I have a provision such as no resources but mine could furnish—a provision of infinite wisdom, power, and love, by which I freely cleanse thee from it all.

p. 268

Gangel & Bramer says:

This chapter raises Abram to a new level of spiritual experience. Apparently his continuing need for confidence and reassurance occasioned this fresh revelation from God.

p. 150

Henry says:

Here is, I. The time when God made Abram this gracious visit: full thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael. There are some special comforts which are not the daily bread, no, not of the best saints, but they are favoured with them now and then. On this side heaven they have convenient food, but not a continual feast. So long the promise of Isaac was deferred. Perhaps to correct Abram’s over-hasty marrying of Hagar.

p. 33

Henry says further:

. . . *El-shaddai*, very rarely; it bespeaks the almighty power of God, either, (1) As an avenger, or, (2) As a benefactor. He is a God that is enough; or, as our old English translation reads it here very significantly, *I am God all-sufficient*.

p. 33

Hughes says:

El-Shaddai signifies God's power (omnipotence) and sovereignty. The rendering "All Mighty" is the best English translation of this name because "it describes the God who makes things happen by means of his majestic power and might" (Young blood).

p. 246

Hughes says further:

God was saying, by this initial invoking of his name *El-Shaddai*, "I am able to fulfill the awesome hopes that I have set before you of a *people* and a *land*. There is no need to let go of the promise because of your old age. There is no need to succumb to passive desperation. There is no need to scale down the promise to match your puny thoughts—no need to resort to fleshly expedience—no need of trying to fulfill the promise in any second-rate way. Everything—all your life, all your future—lies in this: I am God Almighty!"

p. 246

Keil & Delitzsch say:

Jehovah now appears to Him again, when he was ninety-nine years old, twenty-four years after his migration, and thirteen after the birth of Ishmael, to give effect to the covenant and prepare for its execution.

p. 222

Keil & Delitzsch say further:

The name which Jehovah thus gave to Himself was to be a pledge, that in spite of “his own body now dead, and “the deadness of Sarah’s womb” (Rom. iv. 19), God could and would give him the promised innumerable posterity. On the other hand, god required this of Abram, “*Walk before Me* (cf. chap. v. 22) *and be blameless*” (vi. 9).
p. 223

Lange says:

That thirteen years should have rolled away between the birth of Ishmael and this new revelation, appears to us very important. Abram had anticipated the purpose of God in his connection with Hagar, and must now, therefore, pass through a long time of discipline, of expectation, and of temptation. [“That which could not be reached by nature was to be secured by *promise*, in the *miraculous* seed, thus pointing forward to Jesus of Nazareth.
p. 421

Lange says further:

. . . El Shaddai the God *who constrains nature, so that it does what is against itself, and subdues it so that it bows and yields itself to the service of grace.*
p. 422

Lange says still further:

The great elements of Abram’s faith must be permanent; he must walk continually before the eye of the Almighty, in the consciousness of his presence who is mighty to work miracles.
p. 422

Parker says:

In the seventeenth chapter we read the renewal of the covenant which the Almighty made with Abram, with a clear statement of the terms upon which the covenant was based. Thirteen years at least had come and gone since the promise was given the first time. Thirteen years of waiting! Thirteen years of mortification for Sarai! Thirteen years of discipline for Abram and Hagar and Ishmael! They would have killed some of us: thirteen days are to us eternity.

p. 216

Spurgeon says:

But mark, beloved, the exceeding grace of God. The way to recover Abram from his backsliding was that the Lord should appear to him; and, consequently, we read in our text that at ninety-nine years of age Abram was favoured with a further visit from the Most High. This brings to my remembrance the words in the book of Revelation, concerning the church in Laodicea: "Thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth"—a very solemn declaration; but what follows? "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" which means just this, that for recovery out of a horrible state of languishing and lukewarmness there is no remedy but the coming of Jesus Christ to the soul in near and dear intercourse. Truly it was so with Abram. The Lord would bring him out of his state of distrust and distance into one of high dignity and sanctity, and He does it by manifesting Himself to him, for the Lord talked with Abram.

p. 86

Spurgeon says further:

Take Abram's sin; he could not see how God could make him the father of many nations when Sarai was old and barren. Hence his error with Hagar. But if he had remembered what God now brings to his recollection, that God is El Shaddai, the all-sufficient One, he would have said, "No, I will remain true to Sarai, for God can effect His own purposes without my taking tortuous means to accomplish them. He is all-sufficient in Himself, and not dependent upon creature strength. I will patiently hope, and quietly wait, to see the fulfilment of the Master's promises."
pp. 86-87

Spurgeon says still further:

Following up this model of the consecrated life, notice the next words—*"walk before Me."* This is the style of life which characterises true holiness; it is a walking before God. Ah! brethren, Abram had walked before Sarai; he had paid undue respect to her views and wishes; he had walked, too, in the sight of his own eyes and the inclinations of his own heart when he was allied to Hagar; but now the Lord gently rebukes him with the exhortation, "Walk before me." It is remarkable that on the former divine visit to the patriarch (which we tried to interpret last Lord's-day), the Lord's message was "Fear not." He was then, as it were, but a child in spiritual things, and the Lord gave him comfort, for he needed it. He is now grown into a man, and the exhortation is practical and full of activity—"walk." The Christian man is to put out and use the strength and grace which he hath received. The pith of the exhortation lies in the last words, *"Walk before Me,"* by which I understand an habitual sense of the presence of God, or doing the right thing and shunning the wrong, out of respect to the will of God; a consideration of God in all actions, public and private.
p. 87

Stigers says:

Abraham was to demonstrate his faith by covenant obedience (cf. 22:12 and James 2:21-24) and thus be blameless; that is Abraham is required to face up to the impossibility that Ishmael can be the heir and turn his face to the will of God. Abraham is to acknowledge that God can give him seed, for it is El Shaddai in His creative power who makes it possible. The covenant is given to Abraham in the interests of bringing forth an abundant posterity from Abraham. If he honors Yahweh with obedient faith, then Yahweh will multiply him. Involved, by the context, is the need for Abraham to forsake any trust in the promise being fulfilled in Ishmael: Abraham was to walk before God, not “before his own wants.”
pp. 163-64

Thomas says:

God called upon His servant to live and move in the Divine presence, and to be sincere, genuine, and true-hearted. Is this a hint that Abraham was settling down, satisfied with Ishmael, and no longer anxious about the special seed promised by God? Something of this seems to have been the case, or we should have hardly had this very definite call.
p. 154

Waltke says:

The most probable suppositions are (1) “The Powerful, Strong One” from the root *šdd* and (2) “The One Who Suffices” from *še* and *day*. Whatever its exact meaning, the contextual uses suggest, as Wenham states, that “Shaddai evokes the idea that God is able to make the barren fertile and to fulfill his promises.”
p. 259

Waltke says further:

Total obedience is the necessary condition to experience the covenant promises. To walk before God means to orient one's entire life to his presence, promises, and demands. Westermann states, "God orders Abraham (now representing Israel) to live his life before God in such a way that every single step is made with reference to God and every day experiences him close at hand."

p. 259

Wenham says:

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old" indicates that thirteen years have passed since the last episode (cf. 16:16). Thirteen years in which Sarah's inability to bear children has been further demonstrated. Thirteen years in which Abraham's hopes of an heir have focused on Ishmael (17:18). This passing reference to Abraham's age thus sets the frame for the revelation that follows. All aspects of the promises are enhanced in what follows, but none more so than the promise of descendants through Sara. The mention of Abraham's age obliquely reminds the reader how amazing the divine promise is.

p. 19

Wenham says further:

"El Shaddai is the God who so constrains nature that it does His will, and so subdues it that it bows to and subserves grace" (Delitzsch, 2:32).

p. 20

Wiersbe says:

If we combine these several ideas, we might say that "El Shaddai" is the name of "the all-powerful and all-sufficient God who can do anything and meet any need."

p. 87

Wiersbe says further:

But why would God reveal this name to Abraham at this time, at the close of thirteen years of silence? *Because God was going to tell His friend that Sarah would have a son.* The Lord wanted Abraham to know that He is the God who is all-sufficient and all-powerful, and that nothing is too hard for Him. God says, “I will” twelve times in this chapter; He is about to do the miraculous.

p. 87

Wiersbe says further:

After Abraham’s battle with the four kings, God came to him as a warrior and told him He was his “shield.” When Abraham wondered about his refusal of Sodom’s wealth, God told him He was his “exceedingly great reward” (Gen. 15:1). Now when Abraham and Sarah were “as good as dead,” God assured them that He was more than sufficient to bring about the miracle birth. God comes to us in the ways we need Him most.

p. 87

Wiersbe says still further:

This is not to suggest that God’s people should settle for anything less than striving to conform to His will. “His desire for us should be our aim and desire for ourselves,” wrote Alexander Maclaren. “It is more blessed to be smitten with the longing to win the unwon than to stagnate in ignoble contentment with partial attainments. Better to climb, with faces turned upwards to the inaccessible peak, than to lie at ease in the fat valleys” (*Expositions of Holy Scripture*, vol. 1, 120 [Baker Book house, 1974]).

p. 87

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

I ask thee if thou art not complete when God is thine? Dost thou want anything but God? Is not His all-sufficiency enough to satisfy thee if all else should fail?

p. 18

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

O let me affectionately warn you, for it is a grievous thing when we can live contentedly without the present enjoyment of the Saviour's face.

p. 181

No joy can excel that of the soldier of Christ: Jesus reveals Himself so graciously, and gives such sweet refreshment, that the warrior feels more calm and peace in his daily strife than others in their hours of rest. The highway of holiness is the highway of communion.

p. 194

Why does the Lord send down the rain upon the thirsty earth, and give the genial sunshine? Is it not that these may all help the fruits of the earth to yield food for man? Even so the Lord feeds and refreshes our souls that we may afterwards use our renewed strength in the promotion of His glory.

p. 558

(Turning Points: Moments of Decision in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2005.

J. Oswald Sanders writes, "Nothing is easier for the aging person who is growing increasingly infirm and experiencing some depression as a result than to turn inward and become self-occupied. That attitude of mind only exacerbates the problem. It is when with firm purpose we turn away from our own grief, aches, and ailments, and busy ourselves to relieve those of others, that we will obtain relief from our own."

p. 24

(Turning Points: Moments of Decision in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2005.

If you're a disciple, you're learning to expect the unexpected, for we never know what Christ is going to do next for us, in us, around us, or through us. It's an exciting, adventuresome way to live. Discipleship is an experience that dispels boredom and keeps the Christian looking up in amazement.

Expect Him to answer your prayers and to overrule the problems of your life and cause all things to work together for good. Expect Him to open doors, create opportunities, meet your needs, and bless your efforts. Say with the psalmist: "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62:5).

p. 61

Child Ballplayer Rewarded for Integrity

Seven-year-old first baseman Tanner Munsey never thought he'd end up in *Sports Illustrated*, but he did. While playing T-Ball in Wellington, Florida, Tanner fielded a ground ball and tried to tag a runner going from first to second base.

The umpire, Laura Benson, called the runner out, but young Tanner immediately ran to her side and said, "Ma'am, I didn't tag the runner." Umpire Benson reversed herself and sent the runner to second base.

Two weeks later, Laura Benson was again the umpire and Tanner was playing shortstop. This time Benson ruled that Tanner had missed the tag on a runner going to third base, and she called the runner safe. Tanner, obviously disappointed, tossed the ball to the pitcher and returned to his position. Benson asked Tanner what was wrong, and Tanner quietly said he'd tagged the boy.

Umpire Benson's response? "You're out!" She sent the runner to the bench. When the opposing coach rushed the field to protest, Benson explained what had happened two weeks before, saying, "If a kid is that honest, I have to give it to him."

Bill White, Paramount, California; source: Sports Illustrated (9-16-93)

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(The Joy of My Heart by Anne Graham Lotz) Nashville, TN: J Countryman / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Anne Graham Lotz, 2004.

GOD IS FAITHFULNESS

*His compassions fail not. They are new every morning;
great is Your faithfulness.*

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 NKJV

Three hundred and seventy-one days after the Flood began, “God said to Noah, ‘Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives’” (Gen. 8:15, NIV). We can almost hear the “Hallelujah Chorus” playing in the background! What a day of rejoicing that must have been! God had been faithful to see him through!

God has not changed. If He was faithful to watch over Noah and all those within the ark, bringing them safely through the storm, He will do the same for you. Just as He was faithful to preserve Joseph through thirteen years of slavery in Potiphar’s house and Pharaoh’s prison, just as He was faithful to preserve the little baby Moses floating on the Nile . . . *God will be faithful to you.* Why? Because God is faithful! He cannot be less than Himself! Keep your focus on God’s faithfulness and on God’s greatness!
p. 67

GOD’S WORD IS THE JOY OF MY HEART . . .

Many years ago I began a pilgrimage to know God, and that pilgrimage continues to this day. I don’t know Him today as well as I want or should, but I know Him better today than I did twenty-five years ago. I am growing in my knowledge of God, and I say without hesitation or qualification that knowing God is my joy and reason for living. He is . . .

the Wind beneath my wings,
the Treasure that I seek,
the Foundation on which I build,
the Song in my heart,
the Object of my desire
the Breath of my life—
He is my All in all!
And His Word is the joy of my heart!

Please join with me in this life-changing discovery as, day by day, we learn more about our God.

Anne Graham Lotz

p. 9

(Holiness: The Heart God Purifies by Nancy Leigh DeMoss) Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers. Copyright – Nancy Leigh DeMoss, 2004.

From his tormented heart, he asked a question you may have asked on occasion, as have I: “*Is there no rescue? Must it be thus to the end—constant conflict and, instead of victory, too often defeat?*”⁴

Still in turmoil, he returned home from a trip to find a letter from a fellow missionary named John McCarthy, who had recently encountered Christ in a new way. His testimony included a quote from a book called *Christ Is All*: “The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus *counted upon as never absent* would be holiness complete.”⁵

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 168.

p. 93

(Experiencing God Day-By-Day: The Devotional and Journal by Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby) Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman. Copyright – Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, 1997.

It is an affront to sovereign God to treat Him like a servant who should wait upon us. God will relate to us on His terms, not ours. God desires a close walk with us. He will make His presence real and personal if that is our desire. If we repent of our sin and seek God on His terms, we can look forward to intimate fellowship with Him (James 4:8-10). We are to continually seek Him, not content to enter a new day without the assurance that God is walking beside us.

Do you say you want to experience God’s presence while your actions reveal otherwise? If you say you want to know God better but neglect studying His word, are you truly seeking Him? Have you regularly forsaken the place of prayer? If your actions reveal that you are genuinely seeking God, then He promises that you will find Him (Matt. 7:7).

p. 245

(God's Best Secrets: Daily Devotional Meditations by Andrew Murray) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – unknown, 1977.

I will learn the lesson, to *spend time each day*—without exception—in *fellowship with my Lord*.

(January 1)

O Christian, learn the blessedness of each day in fellowship with Jesus finding the secret of happiness and holiness. Your heart will long for the hour of prayer as the best hour of the day. As you learn to go apart with Him alone each day, you will experience His presence with you, enabling you all through the day to love Him, to serve Him, and to walk in His ways. Through this unbroken fellowship you will learn the secret of the power of a truly godly life.

(January 3)

(Sanctuary: Finding Moments of Refuge in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2002.

ONE DAY AT A TIME

MATTHEW 6:11

Give us this day our daily bread.

Every day I try to pray, “God, I want Your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Please meet my needs today.” To trust Him daily presupposes that you talk to Him daily. Praying week to week is not in the Lord’s Prayer. The challenges of life come daily, not weekly. For us to remain free of worry, we have to pray and trust Him daily.

It’s not wrong to think about tomorrow, to plan for tomorrow, or to make provision for tomorrow. It’s just wrong to worry about tomorrow. I believe God expects me to plan as if it all depends on me but pray as if it all depends on Him.

The only way we get through crises with our kids is one day at a time. The only way we get through sickness is one day at a time. The only way we get through times of financial stress is one day at a time. Why? Because God has ordained that life moves at the pace of one day at a time. All He wants us to do is be in step with Him—to trust Him for today.

p. 52

(Lost Women of the Bible: Finding Strength & Significance Through Their Stories by Carolyn Custis James) Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. Copyright – Carolyn Custis James, 2005.

He had brought this elderly couple to the point of fixed impossibility to show them that the promises rested on him alone.

p. 73

(Season of Life by Jeffrey Marx) New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. Copyright – Jeffrey Marx, 2003.

Joe's code of conduct revolves around four "strategic masculinity traits" that form what he calls "the moral and ethical foundation" of a man built for others.

He accepts responsibility.

He leads courageously.

He enacts justice on behalf of others.

He expects God's greater rewards.

"That's a code of conduct that I think we have to teach."

p. 140

(Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings by Joni Eareckson Tada) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 2007.

The Name of the Lord

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

—PROVERBS 18:10

Theological convocations are not usually scintillating. According to Dr. R. C. Sproul, they tend to be academic and sometimes tedious. But he will never forget one incredible speaker at a convocation at a prestigious seminary. The topic centered on Jesus Christ. The well-respected, elderly professor climbed the steps to the podium, cleared his throat, smiled, and then spent the entire forty-five minutes slowly repeating by heart every name and title of Jesus Christ.

Rock of Ages . . . Redeemer . . . King of Kings . . . Bread of Heaven . . . Living Water . . . Son of God . . . our Sure Foundation . . . Good Shepherd . . . Fairest of Ten Thousand . . . Savior . . . Mediator . . . our Advocate . . . Alpha and Omega . . . the Stone the Builders Rejected . . . Beginning and End . . . Wonderful Counselor . . . Friend of Sinners . . . Great Physician . . . Anointed One . . . Healer of Broken Hearts . . . Lamb of God . . . Prince of Peace . . . Blessed Hope . . . our Atonement . . . Mighty Fortress . . . Shelter . . . the Narrow Gate . . . Lord of Grace . . . God of All Comfort . . . Word of Life . . . Rose of Sharon . . . Lily of the Valley . . . Bright and Morning Star . . . Glorious Lord . . . Immanuel . . . Living Word . . . Chief Cornerstone . . . Creator . . . Ancient of Days . . . the Eternal One . . . Author and Finisher of our Faith . . . First and the Last . . . Son of Man . . . Almighty God . . . the Resurrection and the Life . . . the Way, the Truth, and the Life . . . Everlasting Father . . . Captain of the Lord's Army . . .

And that's just scratching the surface.

At the end of the forty-five-minute litany of the names and titles of Jesus, the entire audience was reduced to quiet tears. This is what happens when we focus on Jesus and all that he has accomplished. This Sunday, meditate on each of these names—and more, if you have a concordance—and express your appreciation to God for all that the Lord Christ achieved on your behalf.

Jesus, you are my all in all. You are everything to me. Thank you that I can hold fast to any of your precious names or titles and in them find safety. For, indeed, the name of the Lord is a strong tower.

(May 30)

v. 2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 2:

I'll make a covenant between us and I'll give you a huge family.”

The NET Bible translates verse 2:

Then I will confirm my covenant between me and you, and I will give you a multitude of descendants.”

Now that God has introduced Himself as the One who has power to fulfill His covenant, He reiterates the fact that He will now establish His covenant between Abraham and Himself, and He will multiply him exceedingly.

GOD'S PROMISES ARE NOT AFFECTED BY OUR FAILURE.

He had already made the covenant in Genesis 15 and now He's going to establish it with His servant. He's taking him back to the fact that He has not fulfilled that covenant yet. Although Abram felt his plan had been a means whereby it was already being accomplished, the Lord lets him know that it's going to be Him and Him alone who's going to establish this covenant and to multiply him exceedingly.

GOD IS NEVER SURPRISED AT WHAT WE ARE APART FROM WHAT HE IS!!

I faced a future all unknown, no opening could I see
I heard without, the night wind moan, the days were dark to me.
I cannot face it all alone, oh be Thou near to me,
He has, He will, He worketh still, In ways most wonderful
He drew me from the miry clay, He filled my cup quite full
And while my heart can speak, I'll tell, His love unspeakable.”
(source unknown)

Here God has a fresh surprise. Some more insight and knowledge, some extension of the covenant which He has made and the blessing with which He is going to delight the heart of His child.

Anderson says:

There's a principle to remember here: God's promises are never affected by our failure. The promises to Abram remained the same even though he was out of fellowship with the Lord for thirteen years. Independent of our performance, God promises.
pp. 112-13

Barker & Kohlenberger says:

Had not God already "made" a covenant with Abraham in 15:18? Why did he establish a covenant with Abram a second time? The two covenants are, in fact, two distinct aspects of God's covenant with Abraham—one stresses the promise of the land (15:18-21) and the other the abundance of descendants (17:2).
p. 25

Boice says:

There is another contrast also. In the first eight verses of Genesis 17, God says "I will" seven times. This certainly points to his initiative. In verse 2 God says, "*I will* confirm my covenant between me and you and *will* greatly increase your numbers." In the next verses God says, "As for me . . . *I will* make you very fruitful; *I will* make nations of you . . . *I will* establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you . . . *I will* give [this land] as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; *I will* be their God"—seven "I will's." All is God's initiative. But, then, immediately after this, we read, "As for you, you *must* . . ." So here is the contrast: God saying "I will," and then, as a consequence of that, "you must."

When God says "you must," he is not saying "My will is dependent on your action." God does not say, "You must do this, and if you don't, I won't do what I've promised." God does not act like that. God is sovereign. God is going to do what he will do. But it is no less true and no less important—though it is not a prerequisite for God's acting—that we must do something.
p. 582

Wenham says:

Whereas inaugurating the covenant was entirely the result of divine initiative, confirming it involves a human response, summed up in v 1 by “walk in my presence and be blameless” and spelled out in the demand to circumcise every male.

p. 20

**(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.**

My soul, it is God, even thy God, God that cannot lie, who speaks to thee. This word of His which thou art now considering is as true as His own existence. He is a God unchangeable. He has not altered the thing which has gone out of His mouth, nor called back one single consolatory sentence. Nor doth he lack any power; it is the God that made the heavens and the earth who has spoken thus. Nor can he fail in wisdom as to the time when he will bestow the favours, for He knoweth when it is best to give and when better to withhold. Therefore, seeing that it is the word of a God so true, so immutable, so powerful, so wise, I will and must believe the promise.” If we thus meditate upon the promises, and consider the Promiser, we shall experience their sweetness, and obtain their fulfilment.

p. 418

(Through the Eyes of a Champion: The Brandon Burlsworth Story by Jeff Kinley) Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press. Copyright – Jeff Kinley, 2001.

Burlsworth, who had been staring at the floor the whole time sensed someone was looking at him and slowly lifted his head, catching Tice's gaze. Immediately rising to his feet, the 308-pound right guard started walking across the room. As he drew closer, Tommy noticed big tears were welling up in Brandon's eyes. Extending a mud-stained hand, Brandon offered his old coach a firm handshake. That's when Tice broke the silence.

"I'm afraid that's not going to be good enough today, Brandon." Throwing his arms around the young man half his age but twice his size, Tommy Tice gave his friend an affirming bear hug, and Burlsworth responded in like manner. Following that locker room embrace, Tice looked up at Burlsworth's still sweaty face, matter-of-factly stating, "Brandon, have I told you I loved you lately?" By this time there were tears in both their eyes. "No, Coach," Brandon said quietly, "but I sure could use it today."

"Well, Brandon. I love you."

"Coach, I love you, too."

p. 120

(Come Thirsty: No Heart Too Dry for His Touch by Max Lucado) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, a Division of Thomas Nelson, Inc. Copyright – Max Lucado, 2004.

The big news of the Bible is not that you love God but that God loves you; not that you can know God but that God already knows you! He tattooed your name on the palm of his hand. His thoughts of you outnumber the sand on the shore. You never leave his mind, escape his sight, flee his thoughts. He sees the worst of you and loves you still. Your sins of tomorrow and failings of the future will not surprise him; he sees them now. Every day and deed of your life has passed before his eyes and been calculated in his decision. He knows you better than you know you and has reached his verdict: he loves you still. No discovery will disillusion him; no rebellion will dissuade him. He loves you with an everlasting love.

p. 141

(Turning Points: Moments of Decision in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2005.

It is not wrong to think of this world as a “system.” Indeed, the Greek word *kosmos* (translated “world”) means an ordered arrangement. But it is completely wrong to view this world in terms of modern chaos theory. While the earth was at one time chaotic—“without form, and void” (Genesis 1:2) — it is now being carried in the hands of “Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11).

Every headline that surprises us should be a reminder that there is no news in heaven.

p. 5

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Remember that you need much teaching, much upholding, much grace, and much humility, if your witnessing is to be to your Master’s glory.

p. 625

v. 3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him.

Peterson paraphrases verse 3:

Overwhelmed, Abram fell flat on his face. Then God said to him,

The NET Bible translates verse 3:

Abram bowed down with his face to the ground, and God spoke to him, saying,

Here Abram's response is an **ACT OF WORSHIP**. He realized that this fresh revelation and word from the Lord is going to have some further implication. As he falls to the ground, it's in an act of submissive and humble obedience to any new word from the Lord.

The rest of passage is the message from the God who has power to perform His promises!

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

The report of Abram's response is also brief: Abram "fell facedown," a sign of deep respect. Comparing Abram's response to the Lord's second speech (v. 17), we see that he not only "fell facedown" but also "laughed." When Abram heard that God would greatly increase his descendants, he responded with respect and submission. But when he heard *how* God would carry out his plan, his respect contained a tinge of laughter.

pp. 25-26

Barnhouse says:

It is a chain reaction: God saves us, we thank Him, this thanksgiving pleases Him, He blesses us more, we bow before Him, He blesses us exceedingly, we fall on our faces, He change our name by changing our nature, and the whole blessed process will continue forever and ever. He is the great giver, and He will give the most to those who will learn to be great takers.
p. 133

Henry says:

The posture Abram put himself into upon this occasion: *He fell on his face while God talked with him, v. 3.* 1. As one overcome by the brightness of the divine glory. 2. As one ashamed of himself, and blushing to think of the honours done to one so unworthy.
p. 33

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

3. Abram fell on his face—the attitude of profoundest reverence assumed by Eastern people. It consists in the prostrate body resting on the hands and knees, with the face bent till the forehead touches the ground. It is an expression of conscious humility and profound reverence.
p. 27

Kidner says:

Abram's prostration before God (3; *cf.* verse 17), unlike Adam's arrogance, acknowledge the master-servant footing of the covenant. It rooted the matter in the truth; in such soil the relationship could grow to its full stature of friendship . . .
p. 129

Phillips says:

Abram “fell on his face,” and thee he stayed throughout the entire revelation. He received the promise in a state of absolute subjection. Nothing was required of him, all was of grace. He simply had to listen, for the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional and in no way dependent upon the cooperation of Abram or even of his seed.

p. 143

Thomas says:

“Abraham fell on his face.” This attitude of reverence and of readiness shows that Abraham realized at once the solemnity of the occasion.

p. 154

Thomas says further:

God once again shows His trust in His servant, and that He will not hide from him what He is about to do. How beautiful is the picture of this holy familiarity between the Mighty God and His servant!

p. 154

(The Expositor's Bible: The Book of Psalms: Volume I- Psalms I-XXXVIII by A. Maclaren, D.D.) New York, N.Y.: A.C. Armstrong and Son. Copyright – 1899.

The one desire of the heart which has tasted the abundance, satisfaction, delights, fulness of life, and clearness of light that attend the presence of God is that nothing may draw it thence.

p. 355

v. 4 “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 4:

“This is my covenant with you: You’ll be the father of many nations.

The NET Bible translates verse 4:

“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of a multitude of nations.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Now, God said . . . you will be the father of many nations . . . “a great nation,” . . .

I’m sure the impact of this new revelation from the Lord really caused him to think prematurely that the Lord was going to truly use Ishmael as the one to fulfill this promise of him being the father of a multitude of nations. He has already ruled out the possibility of any other course of action could take place at this point because of his own impotency and age.

He could well be thinking:

“IT’S ISHMAEL AFTER ALL.”

Thomas says:

These words are evidently intended, by their emphatic reference to God Himself (“as for Me”), as a reminder to Abraham that, whatever he had forgotten, God had not been unmindful of His solemn promises. It is noteworthy that God reminds Abraham of an already existing covenant (“My covenant is with thee”), and then proceeds to tell him some of the forthcoming results of this existing fact. Not even the silence of thirteen years, still less the birth of Ishmael, can altar God’s purposes or change His mind concerning Abraham.

p. 154

v. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

Peterson paraphrases verse 5:

Your name will no longer be Abram, but Abraham, meaning that 'I'm making you the father of many nations.'

The NET Bible translates verse 5:

No longer will your name be Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham because I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.

It is now time for God to change Abram's name to Abraham and to confirm His covenant with him once again. Because on God's time calendar, it is now time to fulfill the promises which have been made some years earlier.

The new name in his mind is to serve as a personal assurance of God's changeless promise and every time he uses it, it should lead him to trust God more fully.

God has already made the promise and now He is preparing for the performance and the fulfillment of that promise.

Gangel & Bramer say:

The name change from Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham ("father of many") indicates the sovereign authority of El-Shaddai and an additional pledge that God would fulfill his promise. Every time Abraham and Sarah heard their new names, they would be reminded of God's promise and encouraged by his faithfulness. In these verses Abraham was quiet before God, who did all the talking.

p. 150

Lange says:

For he is *El Shaddai* as the omnipotent God, *i.e.*, God of power to do wonders to create new things in the old world, and the very centre of his wondrous deeds is the new birth, in which man receives a new name, and of which circumcision is here set apart to be the typical sign.

p. 421

MacArthur says:

The new name, meaning “father of many nations,” reflected Abraham’s new relationship to God as well as his new identity based on God’s promise of seed

...

p. 38

Radmacher & Allen say:

Abram . . . Abraham: This name change is significant. Abram means “Exalted Father.” Abraham means “Father of Many”—a direct reflection of his new role. The new name is unequivocally a name of relationship with the living God, to whom Abram had turned from idols (1 Thess. 1:9).

p. 34

The last phrase in verse 5 gives us the **REASON** for the name change from Abram to Abraham:

“FOR I HAVE MADE YOU A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS.”

v. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

Peterson paraphrases verse 6:

I'll make you a father of fathers—I'll make nations from you, kings will issue from you.

The NET Bible translates verse 6:

I will make you extremely fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The patriarch's name change was crucial. The name **Abram** . . . meaning "exalted father," harked *back* to Terah (11:27) and implied that Abram came from royal lineage. But in Hebrew the name **Abraham** ('**abrāhām**) sounds similar to "father of a multitude" ('**ab hāmôn**) of **nations** . . . His new name implied a look *ahead* to his **descendants**.

The Lord now continues in His conversation with Abraham by expressing further promises to him.

There are **SEVEN SIGNIFICANT TIMES** in Genesis 17 that God says to Abraham:

“I WILL.”

God told Abraham:

verse 6—**“I WILL MAKE YOU VERY FRUITFUL.”**

verse 6—**“I WILL MAKE NATIONS OF YOU.”**

verse 7—**“I WILL ESTABLISH MY COVENANT AS AN EVERLASTING COVENANT BETWEEN ME AND YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS.”**

verse 8—**“THE WHOLE LAND OF CANAAN, WHERE YOU ARE NOW AN ALIEN, I WILL GIVE AS AN EVERLASTING POSSESSION TO YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU.”**

verse 8—**“I WILL BE THEIR GOD.”**

verse 19—**“I WILL ESTABLISH MY COVENANT WITH HIM [ISAAC] AS AN EVERLASTING COVENANT FOR HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM [ISAAC].”**

In verse 6, He promises Abram that he’s going to be fruitful, then he tells him that nations are going to come from him and also kings.

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

A new element is added in v. 6b: “kings will come forth from you.” This anticipates not only Abraham’s descendants recorded in Samuel and Kings but, more importantly, provides a link between the general promise of blessing through the seed of Abraham and the subsequent focus of that blessing in the royal house of Judah (Ge 49:8-12; Nu 24:7-9). The notion that the blessing would come from a king is not new (cf. 14:18-19), but the idea that this king would come from the seed of Abraham is.

p. 26

Hughes says:

In addition, Abraham’s astonishing name (“father of a multitude”) was matched by another astounding revelation—“and kings shall come from you” (v. 6b). It was beyond tent-dwelling Abraham’s dreams that such a thing could be! But one thousand years later the founding of a line of kings in the Davidic dynasty began the fulfillment of this promise, which was ultimately fulfilled another thousand years later in the advent of Jesus Christ, King of the Jews.

p. 247

(Unveiling Islam: An Insider’s Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs by Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner) Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel. Copyright – Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner, 2002.

Abu Huraira reported from Allah’s Messenger so many ahadith and one of them was this: that Allah’s Messenger said, “The most wretched person in the sight of Allah on the Day of Resurrection and the worst person and target of His wrath would be the person who is called Malik al-Amlaak (the King of Kings) for there is no king but Allah.” (Sahih Muslim hadith 5339)

p. 114

(The Importance of Being Foolish: How to Think Like Jesus by Brennan Manning) San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco. Copyright – Brennan Manning, 2005.

The dominant theme of the second part of John's Gospel is union with the Lord. Through the beautiful imagery of the vine and the branches, Jesus calls all people to himself. "Abide in me, dwell in me, resort to me, come to me," he beckons (see John 15:4ff). Significantly, Jesus does not say, "Come to a day of renewal, a retreat, a prayer meeting, a liturgy," but "come to *me*." Is this the self-flattering superiority of a religious fanatic? Yes, if he is not the Savior of the world. He is either an egoist or the Risen Lord who must be proclaimed as the world's only hope. No one else would dare to say:

I am the way, I am truth and life. (John 14:6)

I am the light of the world. (John 8:12)

I am the bread of heaven. He who eats of this bread will never know what it is to die. (John 6:51)

He who believes in me will have everlasting life; and the one who does not believe in me will be condemned. (John 3:35)

p. 54

(Turning Points: Moments of Decision in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2005.

Harriet Beecher Stowe once wrote a wonderful book titled *How to Live on Christ*, in which she said, “How does the branch bear fruit? Not by incessant effort for sunshine and air; not by vain struggles It simply abides in the vine, in silent and undisturbed union, and blossoms and fruit appear as of spontaneous growth.” We often forget that our walk with the Lord is more important than our work for the Lord. Abiding in Christ comes before abounding in labor.

Before the Bible records the mighty miracles of Moses, it describes the eighty years God spent preparing him for his mission. Before we read of Joseph’s exploits in Egypt, we read chapter after chapter describing his preparation—before the palace came the pit and prison. Even our Lord spent thirty years in Nazareth before devoting three years to public ministry.

If you feel that your life isn’t making an impact, that your ministry is fruitless, give that over to God. Focus instead on abiding in Him. Spend much time in secret, in the Word and in prayer. We’re often enamored by what a person does, but God is more concerned with who we are. Being always comes before doing in His eyes.

p. 9

(God’s Best Secrets: Daily Devotional Meditations by Andrew Murray) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – unknown, 1977.

Just as truly as the branch abides in the vine, and the vine gives its life and strength to the branch, and the branch receives it and puts it forth in fruit—even so do you abide in Me , and receive My strength; and I will work with an almighty power My work in you and through you. Abide in Me!

(April 18)

To the feeblest of God’s children Christ says: Ye are in Me. “Abide in Me Ye shall bear much fruit.” To the strongest of His messengers He still has the word, there can be nothing higher: “Abide in Me, and ye shall bear much fruit.” To one and all the message comes: Daily, continuous, unbroken abiding in Christ Jesus, is the one condition of a life of power and blessing. Take time and let the Holy Spirit so renew in you the secret abiding in Him that you may understand the meaning of His words: “ These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

(April 18)

(A Treasury of Wisdom: Daily Inspiration from Favorite Christian Authors
compiled by Ken and Angela Abraham) Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour.
Copyright – Barbour Publishing, Inc., 1998.

And yet we are some of us wanting God to give us a little help while we do our best, instead of coming to understand what God wants, and to say: I can do nothing, God must and will do all. Have you said: In worship, in work, in sanctification, in obedience to God, I can do nothing of myself, and so my place is to worship the omnipotent God, and to believe that He will work in me every moment.

p. 139

v. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

Peterson paraphrases verse 7:

I'm establishing my covenant between me and you, a covenant that includes your descendants, a covenant that goes on and on and on, a covenant that commits me to be your God and the God of your descendants.

The NET Bible translates verse 7:

I will confirm my covenant as a perpetual covenant between me and you. It will extend to your descendants after you throughout their generations. I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

Here we see the additional thought that it's going to be an **"EVERLASTING COVENANT."** That it's not going to be only between God and Abraham but also between his descendants.

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

The focus of vv. 7-8 lies in the repetition of the term "everlasting" (GK 6409). The covenant promised is "everlasting" and the possession of the land is "everlasting." The promises in these verses were given before (cf. 13:14-15; 15:18-21); however, here the everlasting nature of promises is in view. Eternality was certainly implied in the "forever" of the land promise (13:15); but when the covenant was granted in ch. 15, there was no mention yet of its being "eternal." Thus, as God reiterated his role in the covenant, the focus was centered on his everlasting faithfulness.

p. 26

MacArthur says:

This relationship was set up at God's initiative and also designated as an "everlasting covenant" (v. 7), thus applying to Abraham's posterity with equal force and bringing forth the declaration "I will be their God" (v. 8). This pledge became the dictum of the covenant relationship between Yahweh, i.e., Jehovah, and Israel.

p. 38

Waltke says:

God's covenant endures forever because he is faithful and does not change . . .

p. 260

v. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 8:

And I’m giving you and your descendants this land where you’re now just camping, this whole country of Canaan, to own forever. And I’ll be their God.”

The NET Bible translates verse 8:

I will give the whole land of Canaan—the land where you are residing—to you and your descendants after you as a permanent possession. I will be their God.”

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

One can well imagine that Abram was hurt by the suppressed smiles on the faces of his men when he told them to call him Abraham, meaning the father of a multitude of nations—**when** he was **99 years old** . . . Yet Abraham knew that God had not deceived him. His new name and his wife’s new name were perpetual reminders of God’s sure word. Every time someone addressed him he would recall God’s promise, until finally Isaac, the child of promise, would call him “abba” (father).

And now He moves into the sphere of the promises of the land which He had told Abram about after the separation from Lot. It is a place where he has been sojourning in all the land of Canaan and it's going to be his for an everlasting possession. In verse 7 he says he's going to make an "everlasting covenant" and He wants to be God to Abram and now He concludes this verse by saying:

"I WILL BE THEIR GOD."

This is the sum and substance of the covenant and it contains all else. For if we have God, we have all else besides. "In Him we live and move and have our being." Power belongs to Him and it is given to us in Christ. It is important to note that no strings are attached to this covenant. It is a flat, **"I WILL BE [YOUR] GOD."**

If someone had objected that Abraham would soon get out of the will of God again, the Lord would have answered, "I will be Abraham's God." The covenant did not rest on the character or the life of Abraham, but on the nature of God. He was out after souls and they were going to belong to Him, by this covenant of mercy and grace.

v. 9 Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 9:

God continued to Abraham, “And you: You will honor my covenant, you and your descendants, generation after generation.”

The NET Bible translates verse 9:

Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep the covenantal requirement I am imposing on you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.”

An act of grace calls for faithfulness on our part. An obligation goes with the nobility of our calling.

2 Corinthians 5:14 (version unknown)

The love of Christ constrains us to live unto Him who died for us.

When we learn there is no power in us to fulfill our side of the covenant, we also learn that God does not break the covenant because of our unfaithfulness. This will drive us back upon Him as never before and grace will call forth new desires to be faithful. Ultimately we learn that by coming to Him for fresh supplies of His grace we grow in grace and little by little, we progress toward the fulfillment of our side of the covenant.

Wenham says:

These verses constitute both the central and the longest divine speech in this chapter, dealing with circumcision, the principle human obligation of the covenant. Its key terms are “covenant” and “circumcise,” both of which occur six times. “Flesh” occurs three times, and many other words or phrases each occur twice.

p. 22

v.10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

Peterson paraphrases verse 10:

This is the covenant that you are to honor, the covenant that pulls in all your descendants: Circumcise every male.

The NET Bible translates verse 10:

This is my requirement that you and your descendants after you must keep: Every male among you must be circumcised.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The other confirming sign . . . was circumcision. This one applied to all males who shared the promise. Circumcision was practiced elsewhere in the ancient Near East, but here it achieved a new meaning. It too would remind **Abraham** and his **descendants** of the **everlasting covenant** . . . By this symbol God impressed them with the impurity of nature and with dependence on God for the production of all life. They would recognize and remember: (a) that native impurity must be laid aside, especially in marriage, and (b) that human nature is unable to generate the promised seed. They must be loyal to the family. Any Israelite who refused to be cut physically in this way would be **cut off** (separated) **from his people** . . . because of his disobedience to God's command.

Circumcision is the badge of the covenant. It is God's brand upon His own.

This new knowledge carries with it new responsibilities. **CIRCUMCISION** refers to:

DESIGNATION,

SEPARATION,

PURITY, and

POSSESSION.

Circumcision is the sign and seal of God's blessing upon His own. It is the cutting away of all things that would leave them unfruitful. It is a token of the covenant.

Romans 4 is written in the New Testament to show that salvation came to Abraham's years before he was circumcised so that this rite certainly has no saving merit. There we read:

Romans 4:11

and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them,

Regeneration or the giving of life is signified by circumcision. In the original call, Abraham was promised a great blessing which is nothing less than the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on those who believe. The blessing is otherwise termed, the gospel. Circumcision was the sign and seal of that blessing for Abraham received circumcision as the sign and seal of the righteousness of faith in Jehovah.

Deuteronomy 30:6

The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

Colossians 2:11-14

and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also braised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Elsewhere Scripture refers to circumcision as a symbol of separation, purity, and loyalty to the covenant. Moses said that God would circumcise the hearts of His people so that they might be devoted to Him (Deut. 30:6). And Paul wrote that “circumcision of the heart” (i.e., being inwardly set apart “by the Spirit”) evidences salvation and fellowship with God . . . One must turn in confidence to God and His promises, laying aside natural strength. Unbelief is described as having an uncircumcised heart . . .

Anderson says:

God gave Abraham and those after him a badge as a mark of the covenant. Circumcision . . . it was God's brand on the male, God's symbol for His chosen people, and it represented four ideas. First, circumcision was a *designation*—it marked the person circumcised as one of God's own. Second, it was a *separation*. Abraham and his seed would be physically separated unto God by the act of circumcision. Third, it suggested *purity*—a razor-sharp scraping of the soul. Fourth, it spoke of *possession*. The circumcised male would have an ever-present reminder that he belonged to God. Yet there is more to the concept of circumcision than that. It was God's mark on the Jews, but as Christians we undergo a type of circumcision, too, for it is God who circumcises the heart.

What do I mean by that? Deuteronomy 30:6 expounds upon the idea of the inward circumcision. The passage can pertain to us as followers of Christ, and in it Moses reveals that “the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.” There is a cutting of the heart when we become convicted of our need of Christ. The mark of the Christian is not physical circumcision as it was under the covenant of the Old Testament, but rather the evidence of the Christian is the circumcision of the heart done by the Spirit of God. At the very moment we receive the Lord Jesus Christ and we are born again into God's family, the Spirit of God comes into our lives. He it is who is the badge, who is the mark that shows we belong to Christ. As Paul says in his letter to the Philippians: “For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (3:3).

pp. 116-17

Barnhouse says:

This is the first use of this word in the Bible, and it will appear often. The word as we have it, is Latin. *Circum* means “around,” and we know it in such words as “circumnavigate” and “circumference.” The other half of the word means “to cut.” The act as God set it before Abraham, was to be a mark upon the bodies of all His people, as a sign that they were to cut away all things in their life which might hinder them from being fruitful.

p. 137

Boice says:

Abraham's obedience did not mean that he was contributing anything to the covenant. In fact, it meant the opposite. The cutting away of the flesh meant the renunciation of human effort, which arises out of the flesh, and the willingness to bear about in the body the mark of the individual's identification with God.

p. 585

Gangel & Bramer say:

This was not some new physical sign that God created just for this occasion. In fact, circumcision was well-known in ancient times and was practiced by many of the nations among which Abraham lived.

God transformed this social custom into an act with religious significance. Rather than instituting a totally new ritual to signify the covenant, he adapted and transformed an ancient and familiar custom, investing it with new meaning.

p. 151

Hartley says:

Circumcision was **the sign of the covenant** (v. 11). It symbolized the close bond between God and one of Abram's seed. The presence of this sign on the male members signified that members of Abraham's seed had life more as the consequence of divine blessing than by natural generation.

p. 172

Hughes says:

Significantly, circumcision involved Abraham's powers of procreation—the area of life in which he had resorted to fleshly expediency—and had so failed. Man's best plans and strength of will would never bring about the promise. For Abraham circumcision was an act of repentance and a sign of dependence upon God for the promise.

p. 248

McGee says:

Circumcision is the *badge* of the covenant. The Israelites did not circumcise themselves in order to become members of the covenant. They did this because they *had* the covenant from God. Circumcision occupied the same place that good works occupy for the believer today. You do not perform good works in order to be saved; you perform good works because you *have been* saved. That makes all the difference in the world.
p. 74

Phillips says:

The seal of the promise was the rite of circumcision. The knife had to be taken to the flesh but in no way was the promise itself to be fulfilled by carnal means.
p. 145

Thomas says:

The ordinance of circumcision, already known widely in the East, is given a special meaning and deep sacredness. The truths connected with it seem to include at least four ideas: (a) designation, as belonging to God; (b) separation unto Him; (c) purity in Him; (d) possession by Him.
p. 155

Waltke says:

This ritual marks something as set apart. Here the organ of procreation is consecrated to God (cf. Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4). Roop argues that circumcision is also a sign of solidarity. The circumcised become members of the community with whom God has an unending relationship . . .
p. 261

Wiersbe says:

Since God's covenant involved Abraham's "seed," it was fitting that the mark of the covenant be on the male organ of generation. Since all people are conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5), this special mark would remind them that they were accepted by God because of His gracious covenant. It was God who chose the Jews, not the Jews who chose God (Deut. 7:1-11); and He chose them to be a holy people. Immorality was rampant among the Canaanite peoples, and was even a part of their religion; but the people of Israel were "marked" to be separate from the evil around them.

p. 89

Radmacher & Allen say:

Circumcision means "cutting around," a minor operation that removes the foreskin from the male organ.

p. 34

(Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them by John Ortberg) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – John Ortberg, 2003.

All their spiritual power filled them with contempt for the weak. And they became as enslaved by a cold heart as an addict can become enslaved by crack cocaine.

What is so insidious about the sins of the spirit is that the carriers don't have a clue. At least with sins of the flesh, you find out you have messed up. With the sins of the spirit, you may not even know.

You just walk through life with a stone in your hand:

- Judgmental thoughts
- A superior attitude
- Impatient words
- Bitter resentments
- Little room for love

People stand around you—trembling in brokenness, guilt, fear, lostness—but you're so caught up in your own self-righteousness you don't even see them. Or worse yet, you see them and are not moved. You don't even notice—you're not in the life-saving business anymore.

p. 95

(Lost Women of the Bible: Finding Strength & Significance Through Their Stories by Carolyn Custis James) Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. Copyright – Carolyn Custis James, 2005.

CIRCUMCISION — THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT

I was in elementary school the first time I came across *circumcision* in my Bible. Since my father was a pastor, I figured he could explain the meaning of this strange new biblical work. I remember the moment I brought it up with him like it was yesterday, and probably so does he. We were riding along in the car – just the two of us – when I decided this was a good time to ask, “What is circumcision?” My dad completely unprepared for his little girl to spring that question, which just goes to show how parents never know what a child will come up with next. His answer? “You better talk to your mother.”

pp. 73–74

Circumcision cuts in a man’s flesh a permanent reminder of his call to walk with God. Through circumcision, Abraham affirmed his personal intention to walk with God and to do everything in his power to ensure that his children and their children after them followed the same path. Far from excluding women, the rite of circumcision made women indispensable. Obviously no man can reproduce physically by himself. But Abraham’s need for Sarah went well beyond sexual intimacy and the physical birth of a child. According to God’s word in Genesis, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” Abraham needed Sarah’s help for the bigger and even more impossible job of reproducing spiritually.

p. 75

By circumcising Abraham’s household servants too, God’s covenant broke the boundaries of biology, extending the Abrahamic covenant laterally to encompass Gentiles even at this early stage. Both Abraham and Sarah had responsibility to direct the hearts of their servants and their servant’s children toward God. Circumcision wasn’t *male*-centered, but *descendant*-centered and *community*-centered. The sign of the covenant impressed upon the man his enormous spiritual responsibility to walk before God and be faithful and to influence others, especially those under his roof, to do the same. This burden was too great for any man to shoulder alone, Sarah, the *ezer*, would join him in battling for the souls of the next generation.

p. 76

v.11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

Peterson paraphrases verse 11:

Circumcise by cutting off the foreskin of the penis; it will be the sign of the covenant between us.

The NET Bible translates verse 11:

You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins. This will be a reminder of the covenant between me and you.

Just as the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit is the sign which marks off the child of God, so circumcision was the mark of those who were under the covenant relationship between God and Abram.

Barnhouse says:

It is evident, therefore, that baptism cannot save any more than circumcision did, since it is only a token of a covenant.
p. 137

Hartley says:

God had enjoined Abraham to conduct himself with integrity as being always in his presence. Honorable sexual behavior enhances one's fertility and leads to the fulfillment of the promise of numerous seed. This sign alerted a member of the covenant never to use the organ bearing this mark in a promiscuous manner (cf. the laws of incest and illicit sexual relations . . .
p. 173

MacArthur says:

Circumcision (cutting away the male foreskin) was not entirely new in this period of history, but the special religious and theocratic significance then applied to it was entirely new, thus identifying the circumcised as belonging to the physical and ethical lineage of Abraham (cf. Acts 7:8; Rom. 4:11). Without divine revelation, the rite would not have had this distinctive significance; thus, it remained a theocratic distinctive of Israel (cf. v. 13). There was also a health benefit; since disease could be kept in the folds of the foreskin, removing it prevented that. Historically, Jewish women have had the lowest rate of cervical cancer. But the symbolism had to do with the need to cut away sin and be cleansed. It was the male organ which most clearly demonstrated the depth of depravity because it carried the seed that produced depraved sinners. Thus, circumcision symbolized the need for a profoundly deep cleansing to reverse the effects of depravity.
pp. 38-39

(The Pursuit of God by A. W. Tozer) Camp Hill, Pa: Christian Publications, Inc. Copyright – Christian Publications, Inc., 1982.

Let any man turn to God in earnest, let him begin to exercise himself unto godliness, let him seek to develop his powers of spiritual receptivity by trust and obedience and humility, and the results will exceed anything he may have hoped in his leaner and weaker days.

Any man who by repentance and a sincere return to God will break himself out of the mold in which he has been held, and will go to the Bible itself for his spiritual standards, will be delighted with what he finds there.
pp. 70–71

(Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them by John Ortberg) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – John Ortberg, 2003.

We are most scandalized by sins of the flesh. *Jesus* was most scandalized by sins of the spirit.

C. S. Lewis wrote,

The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the most pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing; . . . the pleasures of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worse of the two. That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute.
pp. 94-95

(Our Daily Walk: Daily Readings by F. B. Meyer) Scotland, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications Ltd. Copyright – Christian Focus Publications, 1993.

How can we crucify the flesh? Only by allowing the Holy Spirit to have supreme control. He makes the Cross every day dearer and more effective. He will conquer evil habits in us and for us, while we stand by as more than conquerors through his grace. If we will be led by him, there will not only be deliverance from the self-life, but he will produce in us the fruit of holy living which will please God and refresh men.
(August 26)

v.12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.

Peterson paraphrases verse 12:

Every male baby will be circumcised when he is eight days old, generation after generation—this includes house-born slaves and slaves bought from outsiders who are not blood kin.

The NET Bible translates verse 12:

Throughout your generations every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner, who is not one of your descendants.

Circumcised at **“EIGHT DAYS”** only proclaims the **UNIVERSAL NEED OF REDEMPTION.**

v.13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.

Peterson paraphrases verse 13:

Make sure you circumcise both your own children and anyone brought in from the outside. That way my covenant will be cut into your body, a permanent mark of my permanent covenant.

The NET Bible translates verse 13:

They must indeed be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money. The sign of my covenant will be visible in your flesh as a permanent reminder.

This is something to involve the **WHOLE "HOUSEHOLD"** and it is to be a reminder in the flesh of the **"EVERLASTING COVENANT"** which God is making with Abraham.

Barnhouse says:

God had called Abraham, revealed Himself to him again and again, had given him the sevenfold promise, changed his name, putting His Spirit within him, but yet there remained a work to be done. Abraham must testify that there is nothing in the flesh of value, and he must take the knife to it in sign of the acknowledgement of the covenant.

p. 138

McGee says:

Again, circumcision is the badge of the covenant. They did not have to do this in order to get the covenant; God had already made the covenant with them. I trust that you see this because it is so important. The same thing is true today. A great many people think that, if they join the church or are baptized, they will be saved. No, my friend, you don't do those things to get saved. If you are saved, I think you will do both of them—you'll join a church, and you'll be baptized—but you don't do that to *get* saved. We need to keep the cart where it belongs, following the horse, and not get the cart before the horse.

pp. 74-75

v.14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 14:

An uncircumcised male, one who has not had the foreskin of his penis cut off, will be cut off from his people—he has broken my covenant.”

The NET Bible translates verse 14:

Any uncircumcised male who has not been circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin will be cut off from his people—he has failed to carry out my requirement.”

The MAJOR ISSUE in Genesis 16 was the FLESH.

Now, here in Genesis 17, we have the PHYSICAL FLESH that is being cut as a mark of the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

This is a person who has made the choice not to be obedient to that which the Lord has asked him to do and the results of that are judgment. The same is true of those who refuse to receive Jesus Christ, the One who is the Giver of life.

1 John 5:11-12

And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Wiersbe asks the question:

What does all of this mean to Christian believers today? The seal of our salvation is not an external rite but the presence of an internal witness in the person of the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Rom. 8:9, 16). We have experienced a “spiritual circumcision” (Col. 2:9-12) that makes us part of the “true circumcision” (Phil. 3:1-3). When we trusted Christ to save us, the Spirit of God performed “spiritual surgery” that enables us to have victory over the desires of the old nature and the old life. Circumcision removes only a part of the body, but the true “spiritual circumcision” puts off “the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col. 2:11) and deals radically with the sin nature.

This “spiritual circumcision” is accomplished at conversion when the sinner believes in Christ and is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). This baptism identifies the believer with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and also in His circumcision (Col. 2:11-12; Luke 2:21). It is not “the circumcision of Moses” but “the circumcision of Christ” that is important to the Christian believer.

p. 89

v.15 God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 15:

God continued speaking to Abraham, “And Sarai your wife: Don’t call her Sarai any longer; call her Sarah.”

The NET Bible translates verse 15:

Then God said to Abraham, “As for your wife, you must no longer call her Sarai; Sarah will be her name.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

God announced that **Sarai** was to be called **Sarah**. This new name, though involving only a slight change and meaning “princess,” was fitting for one whose seed would produce **kings** . . .

Someone could say that for Abraham and Sarah:

LIFE BEGINS AT NINETY AND NINETY-NINE.

Hebrews 11:11

By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised;

It is really nice of the Lord to remember Sarah.

The Lord, in Genesis 15 had made it clear that Abraham was to be involved in this whole covenant. Now He brings Sarah into the picture by changing her name as well, and making it clear that she is going to be the one that is going to mother this promised child.

SARAI MEANS:

“MY PRINCESS.”

But now her name is to be SARAH:

“PRINCESS.”

Parker says:

The name Ab-ram which signifies “Exalted father,” now becomes Abraham, father of a multitude, and the limited name Sarai (*my princess*), becomes Sarah, *princess*; the limited becoming the unlimited.
p. 216

Phillips says:

“Sarai” means “my princess,” and evidently it was a name of endearment as well as a personal name, for lovely Sarai was firmly enthroned in Abraham’s heart. Now God took that sweet name and gave it a whole new significance. Instead of “my princess” she was going to be “a princess”—the personal name became the positional name. That is what the grace of God does for a person. It ennobles.
p. 147

Thomas says:

Not only Abraham's, but also his wife's name is now changed. This is another indication of God's purpose and a special assurance of blessing. And now for the first time Sarah is announced as the mother of the promised seed. Up to this moment everything had been couched in general terms as to "seed," but without special reference to Sarah. God's promises become more definite and detailed as time goes on and need arises.

p. 155

(Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings by Joni Eareckson Tada) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 2007.

Mangled Earrings

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

—2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

I once was wearing a favorite pair of gold earrings, which were large and square with a smooth, shiny surface. While I was on the telephone, one fell off. When I backed up my wheelchair, it wasn't on the floor. I wheeled into the hallway to look for someone to help me, and immediately I felt a clunk-clunk. The gold earring was impaled on my tire. My friend plucked it off, but it was a mangled mess.

I asked a jeweler, "Sir, could you please make the crumpled earring look like this nice one?" He rubbed his chin and replied, "Lady, forget it. But I *can* make this one"—he pointed to the smooth earring—"look like your smashed one." It was an option I hadn't considered. After a few minutes of hammering, I had a unique designer original: a pair of crinkled gold earrings that reflected even more light than before!

When God allows hammering and hurting, he is purposing to transform us into something new and different. Like those earrings, we are the same, yet poles apart. Best of all, we are better; we are closer to reflecting the light of Christ because of our weakness. The jeweler at the mall could turn a flawless earring into a mangled one, but only God can take a mangled life and change it into a life that reflects the flawless perfection of his Son, Jesus Christ. One day the hammering process will cease and we will perfectly reflect the image of our Savior.

Someone has said, "God ruthlessly perfects whom he royally elects." In what way have your hopes or dreams been smashed? Agree with God to hold on to his wisdom and grace through the hammering. It'll be a change for the better.

Lord Jesus, I believe you are transforming me into someone far more beautiful, more complete than if I had never experienced pain. I trust you with the hammer!
(March 1)

v.16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 16:

I'll bless her—yes! I'll give you a son by her! Oh, how I'll bless her! Nations will come from her; kings of nations will come from her.”

The NET Bible translates verse 16:

I will bless her and will give you a son through her. I will bless her and she will become a mother of nations. Kings of countries will come from her!”

And now the Lord points up the fact that just like He had promised Abraham, so He is promising Sarah that it is His plan to bless her and He will give Abram a son by her and not by Hagar. Then He goes on to say:

“I WILL BLESS HER SO THAT SHE WILL BE THE MOTHER OF NATIONS; KINGS OF PEOPLES WILL COME FROM HER.”

This is also foreign to Abram's thought. It is astounding not only because of what has happened in the plans that he has made to try to help God fulfill His promises and what he had anticipated would be God's fulfillment, but there is also the very real problem that Sarah has been barren all of her life and now she is even beyond the age of potential motherhood.

Barnhouse points out:

If we long to bear fruit for the Lord in our lives, we must follow all the steps that have brought Abraham to this point. We must learn to know God in His glory, power and provision. We must trust Him as our shield and reward and as the source of all supply. He must breathe His Spirit into us, changing our name and our nature. Then the knife must be applied to our flesh so that we die to self, and mortify the deeds of the body. Only then shall we bring forth fruit unto God.”

p. 139

This verse just blows up all of Abraham’s previous plans.

Anderson says:

The Lord continued speaking to Abraham, saying of Sarah: “And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her” (17:16). Whoops! Think about Abraham here. He was listening along, and then all of a sudden God said Sarah would have a son—by him, her husband! “Wait, Lord,” Abraham must have wanted to exclaim, “don’t You mean that You *have given* me a son by Sarah through Hagar? Ishmael has already been born, God! Surely he’s the boy You want! It was all legal!” And the Lord, unaffected, merely went on to say of Sarah, “Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her” (17:16).

Poor Abraham—he heard those lines, and every single plan he had made exploded in his face. Every bit of the human wheeling and dealing he had fleshed out over the past thirteen years suddenly went up in smoke. He had been living on a false premise that Ishmael was the child God had promised, and for the first time since the sealing of the covenant he was forced to recognize his folly. Abraham had not even considered the possibility that God would work through his barren ninety-year-old wife to fulfill His word.

p. 119

ANOTHER KIND OF POWER

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
PHILIPPIANS 4:13

In 1967, a teenage girl dove into a lake, having no idea how shall it was. Crashing into the bottom, she broke her neck and was paralyzed from the shoulders down. For the next several years, she wrestled mightily with the person of God: What kind of God was He? Why had He allowed this to happen? And, most of all, why didn't He use His power to heal her of her disabilities?

Most Christians are familiar with Joni Eareckson Tada's life story. When all of her physical power was taken from her as a teenager, and God's power to heal seemed unavailable, she asked her friends to help her commit suicide. Fortunately, they refused. In time, God revealed an inner, spiritual power through Joni that overshadowed anything she could have accomplished physically. Books, art, music, advocacy for the disabled, films, radio, congressional testimony on cloning and human rights—God has touched more people through Joni in a wheelchair than she ever imagined He could.

Are you in a situation that is not changing for the better? Ask God to release His spiritual power through you. God has more than one kind of power. The kind He sends you is the kind you need.
(source unknown)

v.17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?”

Peterson paraphrases verse 17:

Abraham fell flat on his face. And then he laughed, thinking, “Can a hundred-year-old man father a son? And can Sarah, at ninety years, have a baby?”

The NET Bible translates verse 17:

Then Abraham bowed down with his face to the ground and laughed as he said to himself, “Can a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Hearing this, **Abraham . . . laughed** because it seemed incredible that a barren **90**-year-old woman could give birth to a **son**. Abraham had assumed that his descendants would come through **Ishmael**.

So great was the paradox that Abram could not help laughing. Not that he is ridiculing or treating as a fable that which God has said or is he rejecting it.

It is partly out of joy and ecstasy with wonder that he bursts out into laughter.

It says that he **"FELL FACEDOWN"** in an act of prayer and worship. His mind was in a whirl. He was believing, doubting, hoping, fearing and laughing all at once. His laughter is not the laughter of scorn or was it of comic relief. Abram was not laughing in joy or merriment. It was a laughter of astonishment which sometimes bursts forth from us involuntarily when we hear something that seems incredible and our mind races around the edges of it seeking to comprehend it.

There are then **TWO QUESTIONS:**

1. **"WILL A SON BE BORN TO A MAN A HUNDRED YEARS OLD?"**
2. **"WILL SARAH BEAR A CHILD AT THE AGE OF NINETY?"**

I guess we could just say **HE'S CRACKIN' UP!**

Anderson says:

Place yourself in Abraham's position, only let's update the situation a bit. Pretend your doorbell rings. Your son answers, and in walks a beaming man followed by a photographer whose flash bulbs are popping. The grinning gent strides into your den, stops right in front of you as you lounge in your recliner reading the newspaper, flashes credentials, and says to you (as the cameraman snaps away), "Congratulations, Mr. Smith, you have just won a million dollars!" What would you do? Faint? Maybe, but if you managed to retain your consciousness, you'd probably begin to laugh a bit. You'd start thinking about all the possibilities and your chuckle would soon expand into full-scale roar. You would be overjoyed at the realization that for the rest of your life there would be no financial problems (as long as tax rates didn't increase). You'd be amazed. That's what happened to Abraham.
pp. 121-22

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Abraham's response—"fell facedown" and "laughed" (GK 7464)—is unexpected. Abraham's own words uncover the motivation behind his laughter. In 18:12, when Sarah also responded to God's promise with laughter, her laughter was met with divine disapproval. The absence of such a rebuke here suggests that Abraham's laughter does not so much reflect a lack of faith as it does limitation of his faith. Abraham's faith must grow if he is to continue to put his trust in God's promise.

p. 26

Barnhouse says:

Abraham's mind was in a whirlwind. He was believing, doubting, hoping, fearing, laughing all at once. His laughter was not the laughter of scorn, or was it of comic relief. Abraham was not laughing in joy or merriment. The context shows that it was laughter of astonishment which sometimes bursts from us involuntarily when we hear something that seems incredible and our mind races around the edges of it, seeking to comprehend it.

pp. 139-40

Bush says:

Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed. Not out of incredulity or ridicule, for he was strong in faith, but out of the admiration and joy with which he was transported. Laughter may arise from very different states of mind. It is easy to perceive that in Abraham's case it was prompted by a very different feeling from that which moved the risibilities of Sarah on the occasion mentioned Gen. 18. 12, 13. Chal. 'He rejoiced.' Targ. Jerus. 'He marvelled.' His emotions, entirely free from the levity of spirit which usually we connect with laughter, were doubtless a mixture of wonder and delight. He was overcome with an extacy of surprise that vented itself in this unusual, though not unnatural manner, for we see similar emotions expressing themselves in a similar way in the language of the Psalmist, Ps. 126. 1, 2, 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with *laughter*, and our tongue with singing.' So also Job, 8. 21, 'Till he fill thy mouth with *laughing*, and thy lips with rejoicing.' In allusion to this circumstance the child, when born, was named *Isaac*, *laughter*, v. 19.

p. 279

Henry says:

Abraham's joyful, thankful, entertainment of this gracious promise, v. 17. Upon this occasion he expressed, 1. Great humility: He *fell on his face*. 2. Great joy: He *laughed*. It was a laughter of delight, not of distrust. There is the joy of faith as well as the joy of fruition. 3. Great admiration: *Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old?*
p. 34

Hughes says:

Laughter. And what was the patriarch's response? "Then 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?' And Abraham said to God, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before you!'" (vv. 17, 18). Abraham began well enough by falling to the ground on his face in the prostrate posture of deepest respect, just as he initially had done when the Lord said, "I am God Almighty" (v. 3). But as he lay in reverence, the old boy began to involuntarily convulse with laughter so that he laughed out loud! And as he laughed he thought to himself, *She'll be ninety and I'll be a hundred*. Perhaps he burst out laughing again. And then he addressed God, suggesting Ishmael's name.

Was Abraham disbelieving the Almighty? Evidently not, because God voiced no disapproval of his laughter. In contrast, in the next episode when Sarah laughed at the same promise, the Lord rebuked her—"Why did Sarah laugh?" (18:13). Her laughter reflected her ongoing lack of belief in the promise that she would bear a son—despite what God had said to Abraham. The absence of any correction for Abraham implied not that he lacked faith, but rather that his faith was limited. He was believing, but his faith was pushed to the limits of credulity.
pp. 249-50

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed—It was not the sneer of unbelief, but a smile of delight at the improbability of the event . . .
p. 28

Keil & Delitzsch say:

“The promise was so immensely great, that he sank in adoration to the ground, and so immensely paradoxical, that he could not help laughing” (*Del.*). “Not that he either ridiculed the promise of God, or treated it as a fable, or rejected it altogether; but, as often happens when things occur which are least expected, partly lifted up with joy, partly carried out of himself with wonder, he burst out into laughter” (*Calvin*).
p. 225

Kidner says:

Abraham’s laughter, to judge by God’s reply and by Romans 4:19ff., was a first, incredulous reaction . . .
p. 130

MacArthur says:

A proper reaction of adoration over God’s promises was marred by the incredulity of Abraham. He knew he was to be a father (12:2; 15:4), but this was the first mention that his barren, old wife was to be the mother.
p. 39

McGee says:

Old Abraham just laughed. This is not the laughter of unbelief. I think it is the laughter of just sheer joy that this could happen. I am sure that you have had this experience. Every now and then in our lives, God does something for us that is so wonderful that we just feel like laughing. You don't know anything else to do but to laugh about it. This was something unheard of. There was "the deadness of Sarah's womb," and Abraham was "dead"—have you ever noticed how Paul described this? "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him who he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 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 Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:17-22). Abraham believed in God, and he is absolutely overwhelmed by the wonder and the goodness of God.

p. 75

Phillips says:

There are various kinds of laughter. There is the genuinely humorous laugh—the hearty, side-splitting roar that, when kept within bounds, is as medicine to the soul. How wonderful of God to bless men with the ability to laugh. He wants His people to be a happy, singing, laughing people. Then there is the hideous laugh, the foolish cackle of a man who laughs at sin, who makes merry over the misfortunes and mistakes and misdeeds of others. God calls such a man a fool. Chapter 17 introduces another kind of laugh, *the laughter of faith* (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?”

Abraham laughed out of sheer joy. The glorious impossibility of it! Why, when God had first spoken to him about a son twenty-five years earlier, then it was bordering on the impossible, but now! Now he was an old, old man and Sarah (in faith he immediately employed her new name), was an old, old woman. And he laughed the laughter of faith as Romans 4 makes perfectly clear. “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 Sarah’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Romans 4:19-20).

It did Abraham’s soul good. For thirteen years he had not heard from God. For thirteen years he lived with the fruits of his own impatience. Would God forgive and forget? Would God speak again? And when He did, the dear old man could not contain himself for joy.
p. 147

Thomas says:

Abraham receives the new revelation of God with reverence, and yet with a certain trustful astonishment. The laugh is evidently not the laugh of unbelief, but of a faith which, while taking God at his word, considers the news almost too good to be true. God’s revelations to His people often seem to be too good to be true, and yet they *are* true!
pp. 155-56

Radmacher & Allen say:

Fell on his face recalls the words of v. 3. Abraham's laugh is unexpected and shocking but completely understandable! For twenty-four years Abraham had heard, and believed, the same promise: one day he would become the father of a son who would found the nation of promise. He had tried to force the birth of a legitimate heir (chs. 15; 16), but God had assured him that the true heir would not be an adopted slave (15:4) nor the child of a surrogate mother (16:11, 12). But now, after nearly a quarter of a century and at the age of ninety-nine (17:1), Abraham had reached his limit. Even if Sarah were to conceive now, she would be ninety when the baby was born and he would be one hundred! At this point it seemed as though the whole thing might be a joke. And so at last he **laughed**.

pp. 34-35

(Whispers of His Power by Amy Carmichael) Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications. Copyright – The Dehvanur Fellowship, 1982.

Ps. 31:19: Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou has laid up for them that fear Thee; which thou has wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!

Is not this a simply delightful pot of manna? Delitzsch has an enlarging word on the meaning of the Hebrew noun translated *goodness*. It means the sum of good which God has treasured up for the constant and ever-increasing use and enjoyment of His saints.

p. 165

(Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings by Joni Eareckson Tada) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 2007.

Gray-Haired Splendor

Gray hair [is] the splendor of the old.

—Proverbs 20:29

Ernest Barkaway, a ninety-year-old Englishman, looked bright, sprightly, and dapper in his woolen vest and British tam. . . . I could tell he had garnered much godly wisdom in his ninety years. He proved it with a poem he gave me . . .

*They say that I am growing old; I've heard them say times untold,
In language plain and bold—but I am not growing old.
This frail old shell in which I dwell is growing old, I know full well!
But I am not the shell.
What if my hair is turning gray; gray hairs are honorable they say.
What if my eyesight's growing dim; I still can see to follow Him
Who sacrificed His life for me—upon the Cross at Calvary!*

*Why should I care if time's old plough has left its furrows on my brow?
Another house, not made with hands awaits me in the Glory Land.
What though I falter in my walk and though my tongue refuse to talk?
I still can tread the narrow way; I still can watch and praise and pray!
The robe of flesh I'll drop and rise to seize the everlasting prize.
I'll meet you on the streets of gold and prove I am NOT growing old.*

(March 30)

v.18 And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”

Peterson paraphrases verse 18:

Recovering, Abraham said to God, “Oh, keep Ishmael alive and well before you!”

The NET Bible translates verse 18:

Abraham said to God, “O that Ishmael might live before you!”

How much the human heart is addicted to its own fruitfulness.

Abraham has still not given up on his plan and program for fulfilling the promise which God has given. He has not yet comprehended that which God has promised He is also able to perform.

He just still hasn't given up on his own plans and proposal.

Anderson says:

Sadly, Abraham's moment of sheer glee was quickly tainted with the stain of sorrow. Abraham voiced the feeling that immediately encroached on his joy when he said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!” (17:18). Abraham's thoughts rapidly turned to his thirteen-year-old boy—if he could just live before the Lord, if only God would accept Ishmael! Wasn't Abraham just like us? He wanted to cling to the idea that Ishmael was the chosen one. We, too, have such a difficult time giving up our personal schemes, the plans we've worked out on our own. We can be so stubborn and sure of ourselves that it is difficult for us to become willing to admit that God has a better way of doing things.

p. 122

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

One clear purpose in Abraham's laughter is that the Hebrew expression "he laughed" foreshadows the name "Isaac." The irony of Abraham's response is evident. His laughter became a verbal signal marking the ultimate fulfillment of the promise in Isaac.

p. 26

Barnhouse says:

This shows how much the human heart is addicted to desiring its own fruitfulness, and how foolish we can be even in the midst of our prayers. Ishmael had shown that tented world that Abraham was indeed a man, capable of begetting a child, so Ishmael had been the bulwark of Abraham's pride. He clings to that fruit of his flesh even while learning that God cannot receive or bless that which is born of the bondwoman by the power of the flesh. While receiving the promise of great, divine things, he pleads for the blessing upon little, human things. A child of Adam wants something that smells of Adam rather than to have the divine fragrance of heaven.

p. 141

Boice says:

But God does not work in that fashion. The line of the Messiah was not to come through the womb of a daughter of cursed Ham by means of the finagling of Sarah trying to help God out of a fix.

p. 578

MacArthur says:

Abraham's plea for a living son to be the designated beneficiary of God's promises betrayed just how impossible it was for him and Sarah to have children . . .

p. 39

(The Expositor's Bible: The Book of Psalms-Volume I- Psalms I-XXXVIII by A. Maclaren, D.D.) New York, N.Y.: A.C. Armstrong and Son. Copyright – 1899.

Left alone, without God's help, what can a man do but think and think, plan and scheme to weariness all night and carry a heavy heart as he sees by daylight how futile his plans are?
p. 119

(31 Days of Prayer: Moving God's Mighty Hand by Warren & Ruth Myers) Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers. Copyright - Warren & Ruth Myers, 1997.

We like this quote from an unknown author:

Simply to drop all our dreams and ambitions and preferences, and to have no mind about it at all, but be willing for God to shift us anywhere on life's checkerboard, or bury us anywhere in life's garden, counting not our lives dear and loving them not unto death, gladly yielding ourselves for God to please Himself with, anywhere and anyway He chooses—that is rarely done.

If you are hesitant to drop your dreams and preferences into the loving hands of God, ask Him to work in you and make you willing (Phil. 2:13). Ask Him to nurture in His people everywhere the glad response of the hymn writer, "Ready to go, ready to stay, ready my place to fill. . . . ready to do Your will."

Pray also that this surrender will not be short-lived but lifelong, renewed quickly if reservations slip in. In *Shadow of the Almighty*, Jim Elliott said, "One does not surrender a life in an instant; that which is lifelong can only be surrendered in a lifetime."

Commitment to Christ, like marriage, is one big yes and a lot of little uh-huhs along the way.
p. 62

Terminally Ill Man Asks to Go Home

Fred Smith is an influential businessman who has mentored Christian leaders for several decades. In the summer of 2004, Fred was hospitalized in a semi-conscious condition and not expected to live. Family members heard him repeat, “I want to go home . . . I want to go home.” After an emotional family conference, they concluded that they should respect his wishes and allow him to die. They agreed to remove him from dialysis, knowing that his death would come in 3–5 days.

For the next 36 hours, they sang, read Scripture, prayed, and said their goodbyes. Unexpectedly, the promised peaceful decline turned into a pulmonary failure and choking aspiration. His daughter, Brenda, sat with him at midnight, begging for answers. The coughing, however, broke through Fred’s deep sleep, and he awoke. Brenda quietly told him of the family’s decision to follow his desire to “go home.” She explained that he would slip into unconsciousness and then step “from here to there.”

Suddenly Fred’s eyes were wide open and he made the effort to speak: “Home? I didn’t mean heaven, I meant Parkchester (his house on Parkchester Drive).” Laughing through tears, Brenda quickly called the doctors to reschedule his dialysis, and Fred was returned to what he called “the washing machine.”

Several days later, Fred was still prepared to go to his heavenly home, but happy to be at his current home in Dallas.

Fred Smith, “Ask Fred,” Leadership Journal (Summer 2005), p. 40

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(The Weathering Grace of God: The Beauty God Brings From Life's
Upheavals by Ken Gire) Ann Arbor, Michigan: Vine Books / Servant
Publications. Copyright – Ken Gire, 2001.

A poet, one like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, knows that to hear this best of voices, we first must have the quiet.

*Let us then labour for an inward stillness,
An inward stillness and an inward healing,
That perfect silence where the lips and heart
and still,
And we no longer entertain our own imperfect
Thought and vain opinions,
But God above speaks in us,
And we wait in singleness of heart,
That we may know His will,
And in the silence of our spirit
That we may do His will,
And do that only . . .*

p. 56

v.19 Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 19:

But God said, “That’s not what I mean. Your wife, Sarah, will have a baby, a son. Name him Isaac (Laughter). I’ll establish my covenant with him and his descendants, a covenant that lasts forever.”

The NET Bible translates verse 19:

God said, “No, Sarah your wife is going to bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac. I will confirm my covenant with him as a perpetual covenant for his descendants after him.”

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

Yet **God** assured him that she would **bear . . . a son** whose name would be **Isaac**, meaning “he laughs” (v. 19). His name would be a constant reminder that a word from God was laughed at.

God says no to Abram’s wishes that Ishmael might live before Him and reassures Abram that he will bear a son and that this son shall be called Isaac. Then He goes on to tell Abram that this son Isaac is the one with whom He is going to establish the covenant for his descendants after him.

When God says “NO” it always obligates Him to a better plan!

MacArthur says:

17:19 call his name Isaac. The name of the promised son meant “he laughs,” an appropriate reminder to Abraham of his initial, faithless reaction to God’s promise.

p. 39

(Diamonds in the Dust: 366 Sparkling Devotions by Joni Eareckson Tada)
 Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 1993.

Not Getting What We Want

“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’”

—Matthew 26:39

For years I pleaded with God to give me hands and feet that would work. I never got what I wanted. Looking back, I can see God’s wisdom in not granting my wish. From those torrid times of pleading. I’ve come away all the better for not having received my greatest desire. My faith is stronger. My love for Jesus is brighter. It wouldn’t be the same had my wish been granted.

Great things can happen when God does not give us what we want. Even the Father did not abide by the pleadings of His Son. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus longed to bypass the cross. He hoped it might be possible for His Father to take him in another direction. But at the close of His prayer, Jesus knew that His pleading was over. He was heading for Calvary.

But oh, the glorious things that happened as a result of the Father’s denying the Son His request. For one thing, the salvation of the world hinged on Christ’s obedience to the Father’s will. Thank heaven that the Cross happened.

A lot may hinge on God saying “no” to your wants and wishes. A lot of good may result in His taking you in another direction.

So, what is it that you want? Popularity or a clean reputation? An agreeable husband, an understanding wife? A bank loan? A thin body? If God does not grant you your wish, please know that he wants to strengthen you as you accept what comes from His hand. Ultimately, that may be the very thing your heart desires most.

Lord, not my will but Your will be done today!
 (September 8)

Hebrews 13:20-21

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

v.20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.

Peterson paraphrases verse 20:

“And Ishmael? Yes, I heard your prayer for him. I’ll also bless him; I’ll make sure he has plenty of children—a huge family. He’ll father twelve princes; I’ll make him a great nation.

The NET Bible translates verse 20:

As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I will indeed bless him, make him fruitful, and give him a multitude of descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes; I will make him into a great nation.

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

Ishmael was not forgotten, however, for God said he would have many descendants also. Even the number of Ishmael’s sons—**12**—was predicted. Their names are recorded in 25:13-15.

This takes us back to the previous study when God did promise to Hagar that the offspring of her womb was going to be blessed and now God just reinforces that promise here with Abram directly.

v.21 **But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.”**

Peterson paraphrases verse 21:

But I'll establish my covenant with Isaac whom Sarah will give you about this time next year.”

The NET Bible translates verse 21:

But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year.”

Verse 21 begins with the word **“BUT”** that forms the **CONTRAST**:

“BUT MY COVENANT I WILL ESTABLISH WITH ISAAC, WHOM SARAH WILL BEAR TO YOU BY THIS TIME NEXT YEAR.”

“My sovereign purpose and plan will prevail and I am going to:”

“ESTABLISH [MY COVENANT] WITH ISAAC, WHOM SARAH WILL BEAR TO YOU BY THIS TIME NEXT YEAR.”

Now God has completed the whole picture for Abram besides instituting the covenant and establishing it with Abram. He has told him that Sarah is going to be the instrument through which the child is going to be born and that the child is going to be named Isaac and that the time of this birth is going to be about the same time next year.

The name of the child means “laughter.”

Now God did not give this name to rebuke Abraham and Sarah for laughing at His promise. God was pointing out that after a halting walk of doubting there comes real faith.

Faith bears fruit and fruitfulness brings laughter of true joy. So the name of the child of promise speaks of the joy of the Lord which is our strength and we can never know that joy until we have turned from the flesh to the Spirit and learned the power of God to bring life out of our death.

Radmacher & Allen say:

. . . The promise was plain. The father and mother were named, the child was named, and the time was named.
p. 35

Waltke says:

Isaac represents the living God’s triumph over barrenness. By his own sovereign counsel the Lord elects Isaac, not Ishmael. The Lord’s chosen race will not come by natural generation but by supernatural grace at the ordained time . . .
p. 262

(Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs by Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner) Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel. Copyright – Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner, 2002.

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: "When the Prophet got up at night to offer the Tahajud prayer, he used to say: 'O Allah! All the praises are for you, You are the Holder of the Heavens and the Earth, and whatever is in them. All the praises are for You; You have the possession of the Heavens and the Earth. . . . Your Word is the truth And Paradise is true And Hell is true And all the Prophets are true; And Muhamm[a]d is true, And the Day of Resurrection is true. O Allah! I surrender [my will] to You; I believe in You and depend on You. And repent to You, And with Your help I argue [with my opponents, the non-believers] and I take You as a judge [to judge between us]. Please forgive me my previous and future sins; And whatever I concealed or revealed. You are the One who make some people forward [Al-Muqaddim] and [some] backward [Al-Mutaakhhir]. There is none to be worshiped but you.'" (Sahih Al-Bukhari hadith 2.21.221)
p. 115

v.22 When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

Peterson paraphrases verse 22:

God finished speaking with Abraham and left.

The NET Bible translates verse 22:

When he finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

Radmacher & Allen say:

God went up: We sometimes read of the Lord coming down from heaven; here we read of Him returning there. Such language is expressive of God's holiness, transcendence, and wonder (Ps. 113:4-6).

p. 35

Barnhouse says:

How inestimable our advantage over Abraham! When we have talked with God and have listened to His voice in the Word, brought to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, He does not leave us.

We have so much that Abraham did not have. If we are honest with God, we shall find that either the Holy Spirit is within us in fullness of power and joy, or that He is grieved and waits for us to fall before Him and acknowledge our sin . . .

p. 142

Kidner says:

It is God who closes the conversation, as it was He who opened it, a fact that will be particularly marked and significant in the intercession passage of 18:16ff.

p. 131

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Nothing significant happens, as far as God is concerned, while we're living in the flesh and out of fellowship with Him.

LESSON #2: God reveals Himself in such a way as to meet our need. To Abram He is God Almighty.

LESSON #3: His power is always adequate to fulfill His purpose and to be faithful to keep His promises.

LESSON #4: God is always faithful to keep His promises when we die to ourselves and allow Him to take over and bear fruit through us.

LESSON #5: A death to self precedes fruitfulness. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal" (John 12:24-25).

LESSON #6: We must give up our plans in the flesh so that the Spirit might fulfill His purpose in our lives.

LESSON #7: A name and a nature change accompany salvation. "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

LESSON #8: Just because things are smooth and okay doesn't equal fellowship and progress spiritually.

LESSON #9: Sometimes it takes a long time for us to catch on to what the Lord is doing.

LESSON #10: God's promises are not affected by our failure.

LESSON #11: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:27-29).

Boice says:

I have a friend who was recently in the hospital. In spite of his illness, he witnessed to those who were with him and bore such a testimony to the grace and love of God that, when he was about to go home, those who were in the room with him said, “We’re glad you were sick.” After a bit of laughing they explained, “Well, we don’t really mean we’re glad you were sick but we’re glad your sickness got you here to the hospital, because you’ve been a great source of blessing to us.”

I know another man, who lives in Colorado. He had an apartment in a high-rise building, and the rates went up. They were so high that he was going to have to leave. But the manager came and said, “No, we don’t want you to leave; we’re going to keep your rent right where it is. You have been such a blessing to the people in this apartment house that it would be a loss for us to have you go.”

Are you like that? Let me suggest what the problem might be if you are not a blessing to others. Isn’t it the case that you are not really obeying God or responding to him as you ought? Notice that after God had spoken to Abraham and had gone from him, “on that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him” (v. 23)—on that very day. Abraham did not say, “All right, God, I hear you. I know what you want. I’ll do it tomorrow, or next month when I have a little leisure time. I’ll do it after I do something else I want.” Abraham knew that the time to obey God is now.

pp. 586-87

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

How glorious is Jesus when the will is subdued, and sin dethroned!
p. 677

Arise, believer, and behold the Lord Jesus yoking the whole of His divine Godhead to the chariot of salvation! How vast his grace, how firm His faithfulness, how unswerving His immutability, how infinite His power, how limitless His knowledge!
p. 278

(Surrender: The Heart God Controls by Nancy Leigh DeMoss) Chicago, IL: Moody. Copyright – Nancy Leigh DeMoss, 2003.

Lee's surrender paved the way for peace to be restored to a war-torn nation. In the spiritual realm, there can be no peace with God, nor can there be peace in our hearts, apart from unconditional surrender. Refusing to surrender merely compounds our losses; delayed surrender only prolongs the conflict.

p. 52

Everyone listening to Jesus knew that a cross meant only one thing—death. He was calling them to come and die to everything that competed with His reign and rule in their lives.

In verse 33 (NIV), He reiterated his call to total surrender: “Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

Jesus' words in Luke 14 are penetrating because they are so intensely personal and practical. He did not speak in sweeping generalities; rather, He identified specific issues that must be surrendered by those who call themselves His followers—things like our *relationships*, our *affections*, our *physical bodies*, our *rights*, and our *possessions*.

p. 130

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

O that poor sinners would go to Jesus, believing in the power of His blessed substitutionary work, and they would soon learn the power of his gracious touch. That hand which multiplied the loaves, which saved sinking Peter, which upholds afflicted saints, which crowns believers, that same hand will touch every seeking sinner, and in a moment make him clean. The love of Jesus is the source of salvation. He loves, He looks, he touches us, WE LIVE.

p. 496

RESPONDING WITH HOPE

When the people in Colorado Springs, Colorado, learned that Jed Jackson, a popular local TV sportscaster, was losing his battle with cancer, they sent thousands of e-mails, letters, and cards to him. In response to the outpouring of encouragement, Jed wrote an article that was printed on the front page of the newspaper the day after his death. In it he said:

“It has been my sincere privilege to serve this wonderful community, which has given me so much in return. The Lord has blessed my life in every possible way. He has given me my wife of 19 years, my three splendid children, and more friends that a man should be allowed to have. I am overwhelmed by the kind regards so many of you have sent. Truly, my cup runneth over. Never forget that, with Jesus, the best is yet to come.”

As he spoke of his hope in Christ, Jed modeled what the apostle Paul had challenged every Christian to do: “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside . . . Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:5-6).

Each day, we are to yield ourselves fully to Jesus, so that we may live wisely and respond graciously to others about the One who gives us the assurance of eternal life. –DCM

*Oh, make me, Lord, so much like Thee,
My life controlled by power divine,
That I a shining light may be
From which Thy grace may ever shine. – Robertson*

**A CHRISTLIKE LIFE CAN BE A MESSAGE OF HOPE
TO A SEARCHING WORLD.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Tuesday, August 28, year unknown)

Alexander Maclaren says:

This was the crisis of Abraham's whole life. It was the moment at which his hundred years nearly of patient waiting were about to be rewarded. The message which he had just received was the most lovely and gracious word that ever had come to him from the heavens, although many such words had come. And what does he do with it? Instead of falling down before God, and letting his whole heart go out in jubilant gratitude, he has nothing to say but 'I would rather that Thou didst it in another way. It is all very well to speak about sending this heir of promise. I have no pleasure in that, because it means that my Ishmael is to be passed by and shelved.' So the proffered joy is turned to ashes, and Abraham gets no good, for the moment, out of God's greatest blessing to him; but all the sky is darkened by mists that come up from his own heart.

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