



Rice Memorial MBC

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A Promise to Sarah

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
Other definitions are from **Webster's** Dictionary, 1828 Edition
or Roget's Thesaurus – **October 13, 2013**

Worship with us at **3201 Mary St** until we rebuild our sanctuary at 802 W. 15th,
... We're just behind Kaufman's Lumber Company in Little Rock Arkansas

Genesis 17:15-17; 18:9-15; 21:1-7

Introduction: This chapter is a confirmation, elaboration, and further explanation of the covenant already in existence, the covenant God made with Abram in Gen. 12:1ff. Here, there began to appear some of the **duties** and **obligations** incumbent upon Israel and deriving from the covenant. Up until this point, it might have seemed that all of the wonderful things that God would do for the posterity of Abraham would be done regardless of any compliance on their part with any of the divine regulations pertaining to the covenant. All such notions were dramatically dispelled in the events of this chapter. The covenant that God had already made with Abraham was "reaffirmed in this chapter," and the rite of **circumcision** was initiated as the **sign** of the **existing covenant**. "The purpose of God's appearance in this chapter was to renew (repeat) the covenant." The simple truth thus attested and observable by any thoughtful scholar was beautifully summed up by Whitelaw:

"Therefore, this is not an additional covenant to that described in Gen. 15, nor a different traditional account of the transaction contained in Gen. 15, nor the original Elohist narrative of which Gen. 15 was a later imitation; but it was an intimation (declaration) that the covenant already concluded was about to be carried into execution, and the promise of a son was more specifically determined as the **offspring** of **Sarai**."

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Thought 1. The offspring of Abraham being specifically spoken to be the son of Sarai is very important for Abraham's understanding to know the son wouldn't be born of anyone else. Remember, in Genesis 16:1-16, he and Sarai thought it was God's will for him to go in unto Hagar and father a son for Abram. As we know, this was not God's will. And Abram should have checked with the Lord before agreeing to what Sarai suggested. Back then, it created problems for Sarai and Abram, and there are still ongoing problems because of that decision.

Genesis 17:3-14, *And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant **is with thee**, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be **Abraham**; for a father of many nations **have I MADE thee**. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an **everlasting covenant**, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an **everlasting possession**; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.*

*This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every **man child** among you shall be **circumcised**. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is **eight days old** shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, **must needs be circumcised**; and my covenant shall be IN your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be **cut off** from his people; he hath **broken my covenant**.*

Thought 1. The first point at which we'll look is when a man is circumcised, All of the flesh of his foreskin is destroyed (done away with, gotten rid of). This physical truth is known by everybody, including sinners. God's use of the word "FLESH" points to our old "human nature" with which we were born, received from Adam, who received it from Satan when he sinned. So, spiritual circumcision means all of the flesh (old nature) is completely removed from us, just like it is in the physical circumcision of the flesh of the foreskin! Furthermore, the circumcision is of the heart, **IN** the **spirit**. And it takes place when people believe on Jesus as the Christ.

This ultimately proves that we do not and cannot possibly have two natures. So, being born again, we have **ONLY** the nature of God our Father in our spirit, just like Jesus.

Romans 2:28-29, For he IS not a Jew, which is one **outwardly**; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the **flesh**:

But he IS a Jew, which is one **inwardly**; and circumcision is that of the **heart**, IN the **SPIRIT**, and **not** in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Spirit defined 4151, pneuma pnyoo'-mah: VITAL (of life) **principle** (source), **spirit** [the intelligent, immaterial {not made of matter} and **IMMORTAL** {able to last forever} part of man].

Thought 2. Another definition of "spirit" is breath, which doesn't fit this verse.

Romans 8:8-9, So then they that are IN the **FLESH** cannot please God. But **YE** are not IN the **FLESH** but IN the **Spirit**, if so be that the Spirit of God **dwelt** IN you.

Genesis 17:15-16, And God said unto **Abraham**, As for **Sarai** thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but **Sarah** shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a **son** also of **her**: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a **mother of nations**; kings of people shall be of her.

NOTE: Sarah certainly stands at the head of all the women of the Old Testament, on account of her extraordinary privileges. I am quite of Calmet's opinion that Sarah was a type of the blessed Virgin. St. Paul considers her a type of the New Testament and heavenly Jerusalem; and as all true believers are considered as the children of Abraham, so all faithful holy women are considered the daughters of Sarah, Gal. 4:22, 24, 26. & 1 Pet. 3:6. (Source: *The Adam Clarke Commentary* classic.studylight.org/com/acc/)

Galatians 4:21-26, Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the **flesh**; but he of the freewoman was **by promise**. Which things are an allegory (parable): for these are the **two covenants**; the **ONE** from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is **FREE**, which is the **mother of us all**.

1 Peter 3:1, 6, Likewise, ye wives, **be in subjection** ..to your **own husbands**; ...Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Genesis 17:17-19, 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**? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might **LIVE before thee!** And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son **INDEED**; and thou shalt call his name **Isaac (laughter)**: and I will establish **my covenant** with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

Thought 1. We're going to first define the word "LIVE" in its entirety since there is not agreement among us Christians that study God's word as to whether Abraham laughed withholding belief of what was said and had a desire for Ishmael to be his heir OR laughed believing God's words that Sarah would bear him a son, and was just concerned about Ishmael being replaced as his heir. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we'll determine which part of the definition of "live" fits the context of what God and Abraham said as they talked.

Live defined 2421 chayah pronounced khaw-yaw' a primitive root (Compare 2331, 2421); to live, whether literally or figuratively; causatively, to revive: --keep (leave, make) alive, X certainly, GIVE (promise) life, (let, suffer to) live, nourish up, preserve (alive), quicken, recover, repair, restore (to life), revive, (X God) save (alive, life, lives), X surely, be whole.

Thought 2. Before I speak on the choice highlighted as the correct meaning, I'd like to say, some translations of the bible actually insert the word "Nay" right after "And God said" because they say it's implied that God meant "Nay." So, the phrase reads: "And God said Nay, Sarah thy wife shall bear..." Two of these translations are: the New King James Version and the American Standard Version. Most translations leave out the word "Nay."

Now, as to the context of the conversation, God told Abraham that Sarah is going to bear him a son. He looks away from what God said, and looks at their ages. He's about a hundred and she's ninety. This is not faith! He's withholding belief at this time! It's because he knows even though he fathered Ishmael, which was about 13 years ago, NOW, his body is dead and so is Sarah's womb. At this time, this is WEAK faith! It looks at the circumstances.

The verses of Romans 4 that speak of how strong Abraham's FAITH was are speaking of how he was AFTER God restates his promise that Sarah will "INDEED" bear him a son! He corrects him, so, Abraham learns to look at only God's word.

Romans 4:17-21, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who **quickeneth** the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. 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 (behold [LOOK])** **not** his own **body** NOW **dead**, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara'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.

Thought 3. And so, since Abraham DID, at FIRST, look at his body and Sarah's, it was AFTER God restated his promise that Abraham BELIEVED God and from that point on looked only at what God said about him and Sarah!

All of that means when he said, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!", the definition that best fits the context of the conversation is "GIVE LIFE." What he was actually asking God, before he was corrected, was that Ishmael be the one to bring forth the people of "nations" about whom God was speaking. So, Gen. 17:18 reads:

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might **live (GIVE LIFE) before thee!**

Genesis 18:1-10, And **the LORD** appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, **three men** stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

And **Abraham** hastened into the tent unto **Sarah**, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the **herd** and fetcht **a calf** tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them **under the tree**, and they did eat.

And **they** said unto him, Where is **Sarah** thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And **HE** said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the **time of life**; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall **have a son**. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

NOTE: And **THEY** said unto him. And **HE** said, I will certainly return In the first clause, what the principal one of the guests said was attributed to all three, but in the next verse, the pre-eminence of the chief personage is made clear. **In the tent door. behind him (the Lord)** Sarah was eavesdropping, the privilege of good wives in all generations! Little could she have anticipated that she would be exposed.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

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

NOTE: From the human standpoint, it was impossible for a woman long **after** the onset of menopause (The period of natural cessation of menstruation) to give birth to a child, and Sarah's derisive laughter seemed to her to be the most appropriate response to what the stranger had said. As yet, it was not fully evident to her that God Himself was behind the promise. To her credit, **in time, she believed** and was **empowered** by The Highest to conceive and bear Isaac, appropriately enough called "laughter." Willis noted that, "The Hebrew word [~titschaq] is very similar to the word Isaac, [~Yitschaq]"; and that is why the meaning of the name Isaac is usually given as "laughter." He was, by his very name, a perpetual reminder to both Abraham and Sarah that, in a genuine sense, he was a supernatural gift from God, called forever afterward, "the son of promise."

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Thought 1. What Paul did in Romans 4 was look pass this part of Sarah's life to AFTER she was corrected and "in faith." Because, as we know, in order for the baby to be conceived, not only did Abraham have to ignore their bodies which were now DEAD, but Sarah also had to ignore their OLD bodies and look ONLY at what God had promised. In time, God also finally got her "fully persuaded."

Romans 4:19-21, And being not weak in faith, he **considered (behold [LOOK])** **not** his own BODY now **dead**, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara'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.

Genesis 18:13-14, And **the LORD** (Yahweh) said unto Abraham, Wherefore did **Sarah** laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? **Is any thing too hard for the LORD** (Yahweh)?

NOTE: *And Jehovah said...* At this point, there could have been no doubt of the identity of the speaker. Only God can address the secret thoughts of the heart, and He did so in this question as to why Sarah laughed. Note the explanation of Sarah's falsehood here. She was afraid to tell the truth, but her fears could not hide it from the Lord.

Is anything too hard for Jehovah? ... What a magnificent thought this is. As Morris wrote: "Verse 14 is one of the mountain-peak verses of the Bible. 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' To ask this question is to answer it. 'With God all things are possible' (Matthew 19:26). He who created all things surely controls all things. He who enacted the **laws of NATURE** can **change them IF he wills.**"

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Genesis 18:14 ...At the **time appointed** I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Thought 1. This reveals a very important spiritual principle. As God's children we must understand that our Father has a TIME set as to WHEN he's going to fulfill his promises to us. Another truth I learned from him is it doesn't matter how much fasting and praying we do, as he told me in prayer, **"I'm going to bless you, but, you can't rush me."**

Genesis 18:15, Then Sarah **denied**, saying, I laughed not; for she was **afraid**. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

NOTE: Some render the words, "**Sarah lied**"; and indeed it was no other than a lie, to say she did not laugh when she did; which she might be tempted to say in her confusion, partly because the back of the speaker was to her, and he could not see her, and partly because it was inward, and very little at least discoverable in her countenance: for she was afraid; of the reproof of her husband; and of the charge of ill manners to a stranger; and especially as she had reason to believe that it was the Lord himself that had spoken these words, and therefore could gladly have excused herself, and wiped off the reproach... (Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Genesis 21:1-4, And the LORD **visited Sarah** as he had **said**, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his **old age**, at the **set time** of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, **Isaac (laughter)**. And Abraham **circumcised** his son Isaac being **eight days old**, as God had commanded him.

NOTE: Circumcised. ...eight days old This continued ever afterward as the invariable custom of the Jews; but the **Arabians** who descended through Ishmael observe the rite at the beginning of the **13th year**, as it was initiated in the instance of **Ishmael**. Christ also was circumcised the eighth day; and thus Christians are IN Christ circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands (Colossians 2:11, 12).

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Genesis 21:5-7, And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son **Isaac** was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath **made me to laugh**, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.

NOTE: All of the **happiness** that should have come to Abraham and Sarah with the **birth** of this long-awaited son, however, did not come. The terrible evils of polygamy, and the tangled affairs of their domestic life, resulted almost at once in **jealousy, strife, enmity, and division**. The climax came on the occasion of the feast given to celebrate the weaning of Isaac.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)