



BAND of BROTHERS

FALL SERIES 2022 – WEEK 7

Genesis 16:1-18:15: Waiting on God

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."

– Genesis 17:1-2 ESV

- **Promises, promises, promises**

- Chapter 15 contained God's covenant promises

"...your reward shall be very great." – vs 1

"...your very own son shall be your heir." – vs 4

"...Look toward heaven, and number the stars...So shall your offspring be." – vs 5

"...your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs." – vs 13

"...and they will be afflicted for four hundred years." – vs 13

"...they shall come out with great possessions." – vs 14

"And they shall come back here in the fourth generation..." – vs 16

"To your offspring I will give this land." – vs 18

- A few problems with the promise

- A built-in delay of more than 400 years

...they will be afflicted for four hundreds years...and afterward they shall come out... – Genesis 15:13, 14 ESV

- And Abram was childless

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. – Genesis 16:1 ESV

- A decade of delays and disappointments – Genesis 16:1-3
 - Sarai hasn't been mentioned since Egypt
 - But ten years later, her name resurfaces
 - As Abram's wife, she played a vital role
 - But she had failed to "deliver"

"There is a palpable sense of guilt in this passage. Sarai felt personally responsible for the predicament in which her husband found himself. As his wife, she had, quite literally, failed to deliver. She had given him no son. In a sense, she was burdened by her inability to produce an heir and felt compelled to come up with an alternative plan." – Ken Miller, *Devotionary™ on Genesis*

- Was God surprised by her infertility?
Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children. – Genesis 11:30 NLT
 - God had known all about her condition
 - The 10-year delay was not a setback for God
 - It was all part of His plan
- His plan vs her plan
"The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." – Genesis 16:2 NLT
 - She viewed her infertility as God's doing
 - She had tried and failed – repeatedly – for 10 years
 - So, she put her hope in an alternative plan

- **A plan pregnant with problems** – Genesis 16:4-6

- Sarai's plan worked like a charm
- But it turned into a curse

There is a way that seems right to a man (or woman), but its end is the way of death. – Proverbs 14:12 BSB

- Sarai's plan had produced a baby, but no joy
 - She abuses Hagar
 - She blames Abram
 - She dooms Abram's offspring to certain death

*Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that **she finally ran away.*** – Genesis 16:6 NLT

- **A blessing to the nations** – Genesis 16:7-12

- Hagar is an Egyptian
 - But she is carrying the seed of Abram
 - And God promises to bless her

“I will give you more descendants than you can count.” – Genesis 16:10 NLT

- Hagar’s son would be blessed
 - But his descendants would be cursed
 - They would be wandering nomads
 - They would face constant conflict
 - The Israelites would always be their enemies
 - Our plans tend to produce blessings and curses

- **The walk of faith** – Genesis 17:1-14

Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. – Genesis 16:16 ESV

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram... – Genesis 17:1 ESV

- 13 years have passed
- Ishmael is reaching adulthood
- And Abram is thinking Ishmael is his heir
- Abram has been in the land 23 years

“I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” – Genesis 17:1-2 ESV

- Why is God just now issuing this command?
 - Because Abram has settled for less
 - He thinks Ishmael is the heir apparent
 - He has given up on Sarai
 - But God has not

*“At 13 years of age, Ishmael was on the cusp of becoming a man. And in His omniscience, God knew exactly what Abram was thinking. This 99-year-old father of a teenager had assumed that Ishmael would be his heir. But he was about to discover just how wrong he was and just how great God is.” – Ken Miller, *Devotionary™ on Genesis**

- A call to a life of integrity
walk – (*hālāk*) – to walk, live your life, conduct yourself

before me – (*pānîm*) – in front of, before the face of

- Live your life as if God is watching

blameless – (*tāmîm*) – whole, complete, entire

- God is not demanding **perfection**
- He is calling for **wholeness** and **holiness**
- Heart, soul, and mind

- The entire man – not just part

“Integrity is the concept that most captures the idea of living wholly for God, of being a living sacrifice....[it] points to the core of what it means to be integral, to be whole-hearted. It is being honest and truthful in word, action, and thought. It refers to consistency in all areas and at all times.” – Rabbi Stephen S. Pierce, Ph.D.

- It is to live an **uncompartmentalized life**
 - Blamelessness involves **transparency**
 - It requires **submission**
 - It demands willing **obedience**
 - And it is based on **trust**
- **The promise partially fulfilled**
*“and **you shall be** the father of a multitude of nations.”* – Genesis 17:4 ESV

*“...for **I have made you** the father of a multitude of nations.”* – Genesis 17:5 ESV

- The promise had been partially fulfilled
 - Nations would come through Ishmael
 - But the land of Canaan was not to be theirs

This is the account of the family of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah’s Egyptian servant. Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael’s descendants... Ishmael’s descendants occupied the region from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. There they lived in open hostility toward all their relatives. – Genesis 25:12, 18 NLT

- Abram was to father many nations, not one
- Israel would be a nation (*gôy*) among nations (*gôyim*)
- The term *gôyim* would become synonymous for Gentiles

*“I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many **nations**, and kings will be among them!”* – Genesis 17:6 NLT

- But not all of them will share the covenant
- The covenant promises were for Abraham’s offspring
- But not through Ishmael
- **Wholly committed** – Genesis 17:9-14
 - This covenant came with a cost
 - Abram’s offspring would bear a mark
 - It would be a sign of ownership
 - A daily reminder that God wanted “all of them”

“As His chosen people, the descendants of Abram were to walk before Him and be blameless. They were to conduct their lives in keeping with their calling and set-apart status – just like Abram. They would belong to God. And as a reminder of their status as His prized possession, God provided them with a sign, a very intimate and extremely painful sign: The rite of circumcision.” – Ken Miller, *Devotionary™ on Genesis*

- Everyone went under the knife
 - o Including Abram, Ishmael, slaves, and servants

That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him. – Genesis 17:26-27 ESV

- **A change in names but not the plan** – Genesis 17:15-27
 - Abram and Sarai had been at this for 23 years
 - o That she would conceive was laughable
 - o Abram was counting on Ismael
 - This time next year
 - o God put His commitment on the calendar
 - o But it would require another year of waiting

“...for the next 12 months, Abraham was going to have to wait and see if God would do what He said He would do. And each day, Abraham would be faced with the unwavering reality that not only were he and Sarah growing older but that her barrenness remained.”
– Ken Miller, *Devotionary™ on Genesis*

- **Discussion questions**

God had assured Abram and Sarai that they would have a child. But how were they supposed to believe when all the evidence pointed to more disappointment?

What would living your life wholly before the Lord look like?

Read Romans 4:9-12. What does Paul teach us about the sign of circumcision and its relationship to Abram’s righteousness? How does it relate to us today?



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FALL SERIES 2022 – WEEK 8 HOMEWORK

WEEK 8: Genesis 18:16-19:38 – A Righteous Remnant

The righteous Abram found himself surrounded by unrighteousness, and this lesson focuses on the extent of the wickedness in the land. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah provides a stark and sobering example of mankind's capacity for sin and rebellion against God. And yet, in the midst of those two wicked cities, one man lived whom God deemed to be a righteous man. God sparing of Lot and His destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah point to the future redemption that will be made available through the death of Jesus Christ.

- Slowly read through this week's passages in Genesis. While these stories may be familiar, take time to consider any new insight you might see and write them down below.
- Read pages 219-240 of Ken's Devotional™ on Genesis.
- Due to time, we were not able to cover the first 15 verses of Genesis 18 in our last lesson. Look back over them to remind you of what took place. What is the key lesson in these verses?

What does God reconfirm for Abraham and Sarah and why is this important?

- Look closely at verses 17-19. Why do you think the fact that God has promised to produce a great nation from Abraham have anything to do with what He was preparing to do to Sodom? What was the potential lesson Abraham needed to learn?

- Verse 20-21 seem to indicate that God was not fully up to speed on the magnitude of the sin in Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you think that's the case? If not, why does God make this kind of statement?
- Verses 22-33 seem to indicate that two of "the men" went down to visit the cities while another stayed behind. Who do you think this individual was?

What was the gist of the conversation between Abraham and the Lord? What was Abraham attempting to do and what was his primary motivation?

Abraham does some serious negotiating with God. What does this reveal about his knowledge of conditions in Sodom and Gomorrah?

- Chapter 19 is a grim chapter. What are some of the more egregious sins that take place in this passage?

What is the angels' assessment of the moral conditions in Sodom according to verse 13?

- Look closely at verses 17-22. What do these verses reveal about Lot's mental and moral state?

Read 2 Peter 2:4-10. How does Peter describe Lot? Why is this such a disconnect from what the Genesis passage seems to portray? What is Peter trying to say about Lot?

- Lot and his family survived the destruction of Sodom, but what do verses 23-38 reveal were the cost of his decision to move there in the first place?

What lessons does passage teach us about the danger of the righteous dabbling in sin?