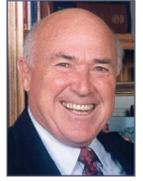


THE LOOK OF FAITH—PART 4

SIMPLY TEACHING THE WORD SIMPLY—PASTOR CHUCK SMITH

This article was edited by permission and taken from the book Faith by the late Pastor Chuck Smith of CC Costa Mesa, CA.



A Repeat Offense

Not long after God made His amazing promise of a son for them, Abraham and Sarah moved south. And believe it or not, Abraham made the same mistake he had made 25 years earlier. Abraham lied. He tried to pass off Sarah as his sister—this time to King Abimelech.

One thing that makes his action so evil is that Abraham had been walking with the Lord for many years. By now he should have advanced further in his faith. Yet by lying to Abimelech, Abraham put God's plan at risk. God had declared that through Sarah would his seed be called. The promise of God was to come through Isaac. If Abimelech had sexual relations with Sarah, God's plan could have been jeopardized. How could Abraham prove that any child born after that incident was his? Perhaps Sarah was already pregnant. Had there been any physical relationship with Abimelech, then the question would always be there: Was this truly the child God had promised? And the questions would continue to surface even concerning Jesus Christ, of the seed of Abraham.

When Abraham did not protect his wife, God moved in a sovereign way to protect His plan. God appeared in a dream to Abimelech and warned him that if he so much as touched Sarah, he would die (Genesis 20:3-6).

God will always protect His plan. I may fail. You may fail. If we do, God will raise up someone else to stand in our place.

I find it interesting that these times of failure can so often become times of growth. God, in His love and grace, reveals our areas of weakness so that He might make us strong. When God shows me those areas of my flesh that displease Him, He does not show them to me in a condemning way, but shows me the next area where I can expect Him to work. I just look at it as God putting up an "Under Construction" sign. That's what He did with Abraham, and that's what He'll do with you too.

The Child Is Born

Exactly at the time God had specified, Sarah gave birth to a son. The Bible says simply, **And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken** (Genesis 21:1).

That verse has a marvelous ring to it and resonates within my heart. God did exactly what He said He would do.

When at last God moved to fulfill His promise to Abraham, He did an amazing job of restoring Sarah physically. For not only did she give birth to Isaac, but she nursed him.

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The Lord totally rejuvenated Abraham too, because after the death of Sarah—when he was 137 years old—he married a woman by the name of Keturah and had six other children by her (Genesis 25:1-2).

The Death of Abraham

Abraham lived to the ripe old age of 175. **Then Abraham breathed his last**, the Bible says, **and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people** (Genesis 25:8). Abraham made the God of the universe his place of refuge—and as a result, the eternal, living God blessed his faith and prospered him right up until the day he died.

God Uses Imperfect People

The New Testament repeatedly uses Abraham as the classic example of a man of faith. Yet, as we've seen, the Old Testament records several instances where Abraham's faith wavered. Never does the New Testament mention the failure of Abraham's faith. God overlooks those lapses and tells us only of his triumphs.

It proves that God uses imperfect people. Had Abraham been totally perfect—never wavering in his faith—then I would feel discouraged. I would assume that God couldn't use me because I'm painfully aware of my imperfections. At times I question the things of God. Sometimes I have lapses of faith. I don't trust God completely as I should. Difficulties come, and I try to figure my way out rather than resting in God to see me through the problem.

The experience of Abraham comforts me. It reassures me to know that God will take me in the state I am and will begin His work in me by His Spirit, transforming me into the image of Christ through faith. He uses me, even though I am not perfect.

Maybe you have been using this very excuse for your failure to commit yourself totally to serve the Lord: "I'm so imperfect, God can't possibly use me." We fixate on our imperfections, flaws, and weaknesses rather than on our Creator. God wants to work through you, as He did with Abraham.

Remember that God uses yielded vessels, not perfect vessels. God desires to conform us into the image of Christ by His Spirit. But it's a process. No one can stand up and say, "I am thankful that I have been completely perfected in Jesus Christ. I never get angry or upset. I always have the sweetest, most pleasant disposition. I'm great to be around all the time." Try saying it sometime and watch people around you erupt in laughter.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 PETER 3:18

As Abraham got to know God better, his faith increased—and so will yours. The more you get to know the Lord, the more you will trust in Him—just like Abraham, the man of faith. 🙌