

Impossible Promises Brought Home

Genesis 18:1-15

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Introduction:

Today we continue our sermon series in Genesis.

- We are in the portion of Genesis where the LORD reveals to us His interaction with Abraham.
 - We have just completed chapter 17 where the LORD's covenant with Abraham is spelled out in the most detail.
- All along we have seen God's promise to Abraham, His promise that Abraham will bring forth an everlasting kingdom of people that belong to God!
 - We saw that in anticipation of this kingdom, Abraham and all who were in it were given the covenant sign of circumcision.

And we saw that recently God had promised to Abraham that even though his wife Sarah was past the age to be able to bear children,

- that the kingdom would come through a son that would be born to her!
- Abraham laughed when he heard that, not in unbelief, but in amazement and in happiness of the prospect that God was going to do what was impossible!
 - We are not told if Sarah heard this promise, but we can suppose that Abraham told her because he had to change her name.
 - But whether she had been told or not, we find in chapter 18 that she was struggling to believe the promise.
 - It appears that she felt that she was too old to even try—too old to have that kind of intimacy with her husband.
- Consequently, what we have here is a beautiful example of how the LORD comes to her to help her overcome her doubts and receive His promise!

So listen now as I read to you from this passage—Genesis 18:1-15.

- Please understand that this is the Word of God, so attend to this reading with all holy reverence and confidence.

Genesis 18:1-15: Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ³ and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. ⁴ Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may

refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said." ⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes." ⁷ And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. ⁸ So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. ⁹ Then they said to him, "Where

is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." ¹⁰ And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.) ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of child-bearing. ¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old,

shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" ¹³ And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear *a child*, since I am old?' ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁵ But Sarah denied *it*, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy Word.

You can see in this passage how the LORD goes out of His to resolve Sarah's doubts.

- In looking at this passage, I want to point out to you:
 - First, how eager our LORD is to proclaim His message to His people...
 - Secondly, how eager we ought to be to receive His message...
 - And thirdly, at how the LORD does not stop until He brings His word all the way home to our hearts if we are among His elect people.
- So let's begin with the first point...

I. See how eager our Lord is to proclaim His message to His people.

A. How often He has appeared to His church and spoken to us through the ages!

- Please understand that when I say that He has spoken "to *us*,"
 - I refer to the one church that is composed of all of God's elect people in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- Too often, modern Christians do not see that the nations who come to God in the New Testament are called the Israel of God and are said to be Abraham's seed when they have come to Jesus Christ.
 - That means that what God has done to the fathers of the faith in the Old Testament, we can see has been done for all of us.

1. Here we see how the LORD appears to Abraham, our father—in a special way.

- a. In verse 1 we are told right from the start that it is the LORD Himself who appeared to him.
 - It says, **Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.**
 - So it was the time of the midday siesta when Abraham was resting that this remarkable thing comes about—
 - that the LORD Himself comes up to his tent!
- b. As the narrative continues, we see that the LORD appears in the form of a man and that He has two other men with Him whom we learn to be angels.
 - It appears that Abraham does not know that this is the LORD, though he seems to have a sense that these men are important messengers...
 - We will look at that more in moment...
 - But the impressive thing is that the LORD Himself has come to bring a message to Abraham and in particular to Sarah.

2. He has personally appeared to our leaders in the church many times in history, and it is wonderful that He does this!
 - a. He sought out Adam and Eve after the fall to restore them with promises...
 - b. He came to Noah before the flood to prepare him for the coming judgement...
 - c. He came to our father Abraham many times to reveal His promised kingdom.
 - d. He came to Isaac and Jacob for the same reasons.
 - e. He came to Moses many times in order that Moses might instruct the whole church about God...
 - f. He came to the whole church at Mount Sinai and then to the 24 elders.
 - g. He came to men like Joshua and Gideon and Manoah and Samuel...
 - h. He came to David and Solomon and promised that they would have a Son on the throne of God's people who would reign forever.
 - i. And He came to His prophets whom He sent to us to warn us and to tell us about the coming of Jesus Christ.
- He came again and again and He spoke to them, graciously revealing His promises and His glory for the benefit of us all!
 - What a great blessing it is for us to have all of this revelation from God to us His people!
3. And in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son from heaven!
 - a. This is the climax of His redemptive revelation to us!
 - The epistle to the Hebrews begins with these wonderful words: **Heb 1:1-2: God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...**
 - Jesus is the Word of God incarnate...God's fullest revelation to us.
 - Hebrews goes on to say that He is **the heir of all things**—
 - the one who inherits the eternal kingdom so that we can inherit it...
 - That He is the **one through whom [God] made the worlds...** truly God, yet having come to us in the flesh...
 - That He is **the brightness of His [God's] glory and the express image of His person**—He shows us exactly what God is like in a way that no one else can...
 - and Hebrews says that has **by Himself purged our sins [and] sat down [having finished that work] at the right hand of the Majesty on high.**
 - So you see that Jesus actually performed the mercy that God had promised—
 - He establishes the kingdom of righteousness for all the rest of us so that we might have God as our God!
 - God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son!
 - To hear God, we must hear Jesus...now that He has come.
 - **1Jo 2:23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.**

- b. And that we may hear the Son, He sent forth His apostles to faithfully declare Him, to give us God's word concerning Him...
 - John opens his first epistle saying,
 - **1 John 1:2-3: the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.**
 - Do you see the plan?
 - The Apostles who saw Christ and heard Him have written about Him in the Bible so we can also believe in Him.
- c. And besides that, He sends ministers into all the world to preach the gospel that is now contained in the Bible.
 - The apostles themselves set up the government of the church as God appointed...and recorded how the Lord wanted it to be organised...
 - And part of what that included was that there should be teaching elders in every generation to preach the gospel.
 - Paul said to Timothy, **2Ti 2:2: And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
- d. And besides all of this, God has also ordained that those who know Him bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
 - Fathers are to instruct their sons and daughters in the way of wisdom as Proverbs explains...so that they might know the LORD too.

TRANS> You see to what lengths our LORD has gone to give us His precious word!

- And what is His message to us?

B. His message to us is the gospel, the impossible promise of the gospel!

1. Overall, it is the promise of a kingdom of righteousness in this fallen world.
 - A kingdom of people who are completely restored to God!
 - a. We all fell in Adam—
 - When he rejected God as his God, we were all thenceforth desperately cut off from God and without hope.
 - What could we do to atone for our sin?
 - What could we do to change our wicked hearts?
 - b. It is completely beyond our ability to bring forth such a kingdom.
 - And yet we have seen that the LORD came to Abraham and said that He would be his God and the God of his descendants,
 - And that all the nations would be blessed in his seed!
 - God was going to bring forth a son to Abraham that would take care of everything to restore men and women to God.
 - c. This could only be done by God's grace.
 - He would have to do it!
 - It would not be by our works, but by God's grace.
 - It was a promise that was impossible for us to accomplish.

2. And in our text, we have the immediate impossible promise to Abraham...
 - a. That his wife Sarah, who has been barren, and is now 90 years old, will bring forth the son through whom the promised kingdom will come!
 - She had passed menopause—her monthly cycle had stopped.
 - We are told that in verse 11:
 - **Gen 18:11: Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.**
 - It was impossible for Sarah to have a child—apart from God’s almighty hand.
 - b. God deliberately arranged it this way to show that bringing forth the church is entirely a work that He must do.
 - It is not a work that we do, it is a work that God does.
 - Only He can give eternal life to those dead in sin...
 - Only He can provide for the forgiveness of our sins.
 - The whole church, represented in Abraham and Sarah, is barren and dead and cannot produce this kingdom of righteousness...
 - But God who is rich in mercy has promised!
3. God continually speaks impossible promises upon which the gospel depends through the ages...to show that what He is doing for us is His work.
 - a. There was the impossible promise of deliverance from Egypt.
 - b. The impossible promise of conquering the Canaanites with their fortified cities and men that were trained for war.
 - c. There was the impossible promise to deliver His people from the Midianites when they were unarmed and few in number.
 - d. There was the impossible promise that Jerusalem would not be conquered by the mighty Assyrian army which had conquered many greater cities.
 - e. There was the impossible promise of deliverance from exile.
 - f. The promise that a virgin will bring forth the Son of God from heaven.
 - g. There was the impossible promise that people from all nations would come to God when the Messiah came.
 - h. The promise that the Holy Spirit would be poured out to give life to the spiritually dead.
 - i. There is the promise that we will all be like Christ—perfect and without sin!
 - j. There is the impossible promise that there will be a new heaven and a new earth with no sin or suffering or death, a kingdom that will never end!

TRANS> So you see how our LORD loves to promise the impossible!

- In this way He teaches us to look to Him for our salvation and not to ourselves!
 - Salvation is the work of grace that He has promised!
 - How thankful we ought to be!
 - He loves to bring His message to us...

II. How eager we should be to receive His message to us!

- That is the second thing I want to look at...

A. Of course we should be eager!

1. His word is our life.
 - a. Romans 10 teaches us that salvation comes by faith and that faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God!
 - We obtain God's promises by believing them!
 - b. Jesus says we must receive His word to be saved...
 - **John 5:24: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."**
 - People who try to make it without Christ will all die in their sins.
 - Eternal life only comes through believing what God has promised in Christ.
 - c. Jesus also says we must *continue* in His Word...
 - It is not enough to just start out—we must continue to believe His promises—and we will if we are truly His disciples...
 - **John 8:31: Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed."**

TRANS> You see how important God's Word is to us!

- You see why I say it is your life—without it, you are dead in your sins!
2. So the scripture is full exhortation to eagerly hear.
 - a. In Deuteronomy, Moses urges the people to hear and obey the word.
 - b. In Proverbs 2:3& 4, we are told to search for discernment and understanding from God as one searches for hidden treasures...
 - c. In Psalm 119, we are given 176 verses about how desirable God's word is and how we ought to cherish it.
 - d. James 1:21-22 says: **Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**
 - e. Jesus Himself told His disciples to be careful how they hear.

B. Abraham is a wonderful example of eager hearing.

- This can be seen in the way he greets the divine messengers who come to him.
1. Gen 18:1 explains that he was resting at his tent door when everyone would ordinarily be taking a siesta in that hot country as well,
 - only to look up (v. 2) and see three men standing by him.
 - They have approached the area of his tent!
 - a. He is not on Main Street!
 - This was an extraordinary thing to have these men come to him and to approach his tent—especially in the heat of the day.
 - b. It is clear that they have come to see him and he does not want to miss the opportunity to host them!
 - He seems to have some sense that they may be messengers for God.

2. See how warmly he welcomes them.
 - a. He greets them with extreme honour and insists that they stay.
 - **Gen 18:3: My Lord, if I have found favour in Your sight, do not pass by your servant.**
 - Learn from this—it is your privilege to show hospitality to others!
 - You see how he addresses the one in charge as Lord or my Lord.
 - Many (including the Jews) say that by this greeting, he recognises this one as *the* Lord, but it is not conclusive from the language...
 - And the fact that he offers him food instead of sacrifice suggests that he does not yet know that this is the LORD God Almighty in human form.
 - In any case, Abraham has extremely high regard for these men and treats them as messengers of God.
 - b. He ministers to their immediate needs.
 - They have been out walking in the heat of the day.
 - So he says to them, **Gen 18:4: “Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.”**
 - As they wore sandals in those days, the washing of the feet was a common courtesy that was extended.
 - c. He provides a feast and calls it a morsel: **Gen 18:5: “And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.”**
 - If they have come to him, he is going to see that they are taken care of!
 - As soon as they agree to stay, he springs into action to prepare a feast...
 - He puts his wife to work to make bread...
 - He rushes off to find a tender and choice calf and puts a servant to work to prepare it.
 - Notice how many times words expressing haste are used—and how the description of his actions itself is fired off...
 - Then in verse 7, we are told: **So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.**
 - This was his morsel of bread!
 - We had some relatives in the Pictou area that used to do this when we would visit—they would ask us for tea and a snack and then bring out lobster and potatoes and vegetables and dessert.
 3. And you see how Abraham then stands by and waits while they eat.
 - a. He stands in readiness to serve them—not even sitting to eat with them.
 - b. He stands by, perhaps also, to hear what they have to say.
 - He waits for them to eat and then he will find out why they have come to him.
- C. Scripture exhorts us to exercise care in how we receive divine messengers.
1. Heb 13:2 seems to have this very situation in mind when it says: **Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels.**

- a. Many times when you welcome people into your home, they end up being messengers from God to you.
 - Sometimes they might even be angels—but whether they are or not, they often bring something from God to you!
 - If you had not received them, you would have missed the blessing.
 - b. Do you remember in Acts 28 how the people at Malta showed “unusual kindness” to Paul and all those who were with him?
 - No sooner had Publius, the leading citizen on the island, brought him into his home than he learned that Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ...
 - We are told that Paul healed Publius’s father...
 - And we know that Malta received the gospel of grace at this time!
 - If they had not been hospitable, they would have missed the opportunity to receive the word!
 - c. When the two angels who are with the LORD in this passage go to Sodom, to warn the city of coming destruction,
 - we will see how differently they are received in that place!
 - The men of the city try to rape them instead of showing hospitality to them!
 - No one but Lot, who hosts them, hears their warning of coming destruction.
2. Jesus spoke about the reception of the seventy He sent out to minister the gospel of the kingdom...
 - As messengers of the Lord, the way they were received indicated the attitude of the people of those cities toward God’s word!
 - Jesus said to His disciples: **Matthew 10:11-15: “Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!”**
 - Learn from this that it is very important how you treat those who bring God’s word to you.
 3. Ministers of the gospel are to be treated well
 - In 1 Timothy 5:17, we are told:
 - **1Ti 5:17: Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, in particular those who labour in the word and doctrine.**
 - In 1 Cor 9:14, Paul says that God has ordained that those who minister the word should be provided for. **Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.**
 - When this is not done by a congregation, the people show that they do not cherish the message of God the way they should.
 - If you do not tithe, you need to consider what this says about you.

4. We are also to honour parents, missionaries, Christian friends, and strangers.
 - Blessings will come to you when you honour them and when you care for them.
 - They will often be used to encourage you in God's word.
 - Don't you find that to be true?
 - And always, even if they are ungodly, you have the blessing of serving Christ by serving others
 - In Mt 25:40, our Lord tells us that He will say: **Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.**
5. And by all means do not forsake the meetings that God has appointed!
 - a. Each Lord's Day, God calls us together as an assembly to receive His word and to encourage each other in the word...
 - Hebrews 10:25 says: **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**
 - b. Be eager for church
 - What better thing do you have to do on the Lord's Day than gather with God's people to hear the message of God to you?
 - Why not fill the day by coming to both services? It is the Lord's Day!
 - Be eager to receive the messages that God has for you!
 - And if you are sick, be sure and listen to the recording of the messages.
 - c. And likewise,
 - 1) Be eager for family worship—God commands fathers to teach their children.
 - 2) Be eager for fellowship—God commands us minister to each other...

TRANS> So now I have shown you the first two points...

- how God is eager to proclaim His word to us and
- how we ought to be eager to receive it the way Abraham was.
- Now I want you to see how the LORD not only goes out of His way to proclaim His word to us, but how He actually helps us to receive it by dealing with personal doubts and struggles...

III. The Lord brings home His message to each one of us.

A. He speaks in a way that makes it clear that His word is for us personally.

1. Sarah was discouraged.
 - a. She had been hoping to bear the special child that God had promised (the child by which the eternal kingdom of God would come), but she had been barren, and now she was too old to have a child.
 - Being past menopause, she had, of course, given up hope.
 - b. And though Abraham must have shared God's promise in Genesis 17 with her that she would bring forth the son of promise,
 - He must have done this because God had commanded that Sarai's name be changed to Sarah to reflect that promise...
 - But Sarah had, perhaps, been disappointed too many times to hope again—and she was too old!

- Whether that is exactly the case or not, what is clear is that she was not disposed to believe the promise and God came to bring it home to her!
- c. He especially inquires of her as soon as He begins to speak to Abraham.
 - He was there for her sake so He says to Abraham,
 - “Where is your wife Sarah?” as if He did not know...
 - showing that He does know even her name!
- 2. From this you need to see that no matter how unimportant you may think you are, if you are Christ’s sheep, He knows you by name...
 - He knows all about you!
 - He knows your doubts and your fears and your secret sins!
 - And He cares very much about you...
 - You are not able to avoid His eye!
 - He knows you better than you even know yourself!
 - And He cares and He comes to meet your need.
 - I don’t mean that He will come as He did here, but I mean that this is a picture for us of His care for each one of us...
 - But haven’t you often had the experience of hearing a sermon and feeling as if God is speaking to you personally?
 - That is the way He works with us—He knows our doubts and our sins and He addresses them through the ministry of His word.
 - It is very sad to see churches exchanging sound preaching for other things—singing, dialogue, pep talks, and so on...
- B. God also speaks in a way that makes it clear that it is He who speaks!
 1. This is important—
 - a. When you hear preaching, you actually hear Christ.
 - Not that the sermon is infallible, but that the word faithfully preached comes with the full authority of God behind it!
 - b. We need to distinguish when God has spoken!
 - We need to distinguish because we are to receive the word of God in an entirely different way than we receive the word of man...
 - Remember how Paul commended the Thessalonians because, he says: (1 Thess 2:13) **“when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”**
 - The Word of God should be received with all reverence and accepted as absolute authority—
 - It is not something we can modify at will or doubt—because it is the very word of God.
 - It is to be fully believed and obeyed.
 - c. God has ways of making it clear to His people that His word is His word—
 - When the prophets and apostles spoke, He confirmed them with many signs and wonders that they did before the people.

- They also gave many impossible promises that were fulfilled.
 - We ourselves have the promise that stares us in the face that people from all nations would come to God when the Messiah came.
 - This promise was made at times when there was no indication at all that they would come, but when it looked more like God's people would be wiped out!
 - And now we have the scriptures themselves which God's people have received and recognised as being the word of God.
 - And it bears witness to itself, everything from the unity of the parts and the scope of the whole to the majesty with which God speaks in them.
 - And even more the way it convicts us of sin and shows us the only way of salvation once our eyes are opened...
- d. The Holy Spirit works in us in such a way that we come to recognise God's Word as God's Word.
- It is something we ought to recognise, and something that we would recognise and believe if we were not corrupted by sin,
 - but because we are corrupted, the Holy Spirit must do a special work in us so that we are able to recognise the word and receive it as the word of God.
 - 1 Cor 2:14 tells us that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness to him...
 - but God reveals them to us by the working of His Spirit.
 - That is why it is important for us to pray for the Holy Spirit to work in us through preaching and reading of the word.
2. See how the LORD makes it clear to Sarah that it is He who speaks
- a. First, in that He knows her name—
- It must have been rather surprising when this obviously important stranger said, "Where is Sarah your wife?"
 - Sarah would say, "How does he know my name?"
- b. Second, He shows that He knows all about the promise that Sarah will have a son that had been given to Abraham three months before in Genesis 17.
- He repeats the promise that Sarah will bring forth a son to Abraham.
 - You can see that in verse 10... "**I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.**"
 - In Genesis 17:21, God had said that Isaac would be born **at this set time next year**—so a clear time was given...
 - And now three months later, this messenger says that Isaac will be born **according to the time of life**—that is, according to the gestation period—the nine months of pregnancy.
 - How could this stranger know that?

- He must at least be intimately connected with the LORD to know these things.
- c. Third, He shows that His is divine in that He speaks of the birth of Isaac as something that He Himself will bring about!
 - Did you notice that?
 - He says, **“I will certainly return you...”**
 - He is the one who will fulfill the promise.
- But that is still not all we have to show that He is God...
- d. Fourth, in that He knows that Sarah laughed!
 - We are told in verse 10 that she was in the tent door behind the speaker so that He could not even see her...
 - And we are told in verse 12 that Sarah laughed within herself.
 - She did not laugh out loud!
 - It was a laughter that went on inside her—a laugh that she hid and that could not be observed...
 - Yet this stranger knew exactly what she had done!
 - Only God is able to read the secret thoughts of the heart!
 - And that is how the Word of God is often convincing (that it is indeed the Word of God)—it reaches to the depths of our souls.
- e. And then fifthly, we see how the stranger, because He is the LORD, speaks to Sarah with authority...
 - When she says that she did not laugh, He simply says, “no, but you did laugh!”
 - She denied it because she did not laugh out loud—she suppressed it—and because she was afraid...
 - but with majesty He simply says, “no, but you did laugh,” and she knows that He has seen inside her heart.

TRANS> So you see how the LORD makes it clear, as He does with Sarah, when it is Him speaking—or at least when it is His word.

- All who belong to Him are able to recognise the authority of His word.
 - That is why we require people to confess that the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the very word of God, the only rule of faith of obedience when they join this church.
 - If they do not see this, it calls into question their profession of Christ.
- C. And now I want you to see the main point—how the LORD who speaks helps us receive His impossible promises despite our weakness.
- He doesn’t just proclaim His word in our ears, but He brings it home to our hearts!
1. He exposes our unbelief and calls us out on it...
 - a. Having told Sarah the impossible promise, He knows that she doubts it and that....

- **Gen 18:12: Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”**
 - It appears that she was not even intending to have relations with her husband at this point...she thought they were too old for it...
 - And she knew that she was definitely too old to conceive a child...
 - The LORD apparently has come to her to tell her to get on with it and that she will indeed have a child!
- 1) And now He knows what is in her heart and He says to Abraham,
 - “Why did Sarah laugh?”
 - This is how He rebukes Sarah to correct her unbelief!
 - She must believe or she won’t have the necessary intimacy with her husband to have a child!
 - She must believe or the promise would not be fulfilled!
 - He repeats the promise after the rebuke:
 - Look at verse 13: **And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”**
 - 2) That statement—**Is anything too hard for the LORD?** is the clincher for Sarah!
 - Of course it is not too hard for the LORD who made heaven and earth to bring forth a son to an old woman!
 - He is God!
 - Nothing is too hard for Him—
 - too wonderful—too supernatural!
- b. Now what about you?
- Do you not have the same kind of weakness that Sarah had?
 - Do you really believe what God says in His word?
 - Do you believe that He is working out His good purpose for you when everything seems to be going wrong? Do you believe that?
 - Do you believe in heaven—that it really will be a place without sin and without sorrow? Do you live as if you believe that?
 - Do you really believe that what God says about disciplining your children is best—and about submitting to your husband—and about dying to yourself for your wife?
 - Do you believe that God will always give you grace in your time of need?
 - Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, and are you actually trusting in Him for the forgiveness of your sins?
 - The LORD sees it when you laugh inside at His promises!
2. Maybe you are even afraid to admit to yourself that you laughed at God’s promise in your heart.

- Maybe like Sarah, you are afraid; and because you are afraid, you say, “I did not laugh.”
 - But the LORD will see to it that you admit your doubt...
 - He will not let you go on and not face your unbelief...
 - He is constantly refining us and helping us grow in our faith.
 - So be like the man Jesus met who said, “I believe Lord, help my unbelief!”
 - He knew that he had some doubt mixed with his faith.
 - Come to God in honesty—He already knows all about your doubts and He is there to help you.
3. We know that the LORD really does help us overcome our unbelief...that we may become believers and that we may grow stronger in faith as believers.
- a. We know that He did help Sarah because she did have relations with her husband and she did conceive Isaac...
 - And Hebrews 11:11 gives us the wonderful news that: **By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.**
 - She realised how foolish it was to suppose that anything is too hard for the LORD!
 - b. Jesus tells us that if we are His sheep, He will see to it that we receive His word and come to Him in faith and continue in Him...
 - In John 10:27, He says: **My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”**
 - And in John 10:16, He says, **Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.**
 - Do you see?
 - He works in us to overcome our unbelief!
 - c. Like Paul, we should give thanks for all those who believe because it is due to the work of God in them.
 - 1 Thess 2:13: **For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**
 - We believe because He has brought us to hear His voice.
 - That is why we ought to thank Him.

Conclusion: The LORD will always get His impossible promise into your heart.

- Blessed be His holy name forever!