

God Can Do Anything  
Genesis 18:1-14  
July 17, 2016

*And the Lord appeared to [Abraham] by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on – since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." The Lord said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."*

Grace, mercy, and peace from our omnipotent God, who works the impossible in our lives.

It's not hard to see the big sins in our lives, those things we do even though we know we shouldn't. However, sometimes we fall into a subtle sin that slides right passed our attention. That sin is the sin of unbelief. It's the sin of living with a small God that can only deal with the possible, not the impossible.

Impossible is a human concept. God doesn't concern himself with what we feel is impossible. In their song, *What Faith Can Do*, the Christian group Kutless says, "Impossible is not a word. It's just an excuse for someone not to try."

Henry Ford once came up with an idea for a new automobile engine. Ford drew up some plans and presented them to his engineers. The engineers studied the plans and came to the unanimous decision that the new engine was impossible.

In very gentle terms, they told Mr. Ford their findings. Ford said, "Build it anyway." They replied, "But it's impossible." Ford said, "Get started, and don't stop until you succeed." After six months, they had nothing. After another six months, they had nothing. They returned to Ford and told him it was impossible. He told them to keep trying. The engineers went back to work and discovered how to build a V-8 engine. So, it turned out that it was possible to build a V-8 engine.

However, sometimes God puts situations in our lives that truly are impossible for us to conquer. Such was the case with Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham was over ninety and Sarah was pushing eighty. People of that age don't have babies. Besides that, Sarah must have had infertility problems her whole life. Otherwise, they would have had children by now. It only stands to reason, that considering her infertility and their advanced years, a baby was out of the question.

The impossible things that come into our lives can make things difficult. These impossibilities can frustrate us, they can hurt us. Still, throughout our lives, God will allow us to encounter impossible things that no human being can solve. Why? Because doing the impossible is one of God's specialities. Doing the impossible shows us God's power, his glory, his mercy, and his grace.

What we heard in today's Old Testament reading was not the first time God told Abraham that he would have a son.

Genesis 12:2 *I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.*

Genesis 15:4 *Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."*

Genesis 17:2, 5, 8 *I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 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.*

However, now it was years later and Abraham and Sarah still had no children. The prospects of a son were pretty dim. But God hadn't forgotten his promise. He came to Abraham and renewed that promise. God came to Abraham to renew his faith. God came to assure him that the promise would be fulfilled in God's time. God renews his promises and our faith every time we read his holy Word.

We need to be mindful of our reaction to God's promises. Sarah was in the tent preparing bread when she heard her name mentioned. That caught her attention so she began listening. Her listening brought her quite and earful: *Then the Lord said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son"* (Ge 18:10 NIV).

Sarah found that statement a little more humor than she could contain. She laughed. After all, how ridiculous to think a woman of her age was going to have a baby. Everyone knew that was impossible. Everyone except God.

Sarah insulted God by laughing, because her laughter was a outgrowth of her unbelief. She simply didn't think God could make good on his promise. We must be very careful

not to do the same with the promises God makes in his Word.

The apostle John writes: *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us* (1 Jn 5:14 NIV).

The apostle Peter tells us: *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you* (1 Pe 5:6-7 NIV).

That's only two of God's promises. I have a list of 41 Biblical promises that I would like for you to take home and study. They will help you to see that God can do and will do whatever he pleases.

In order to believe God's promises, each one of us must confront the question of God's ability to perform miracles. God asked Abraham: *Is anything too hard for the Lord?* (Ge 18:14 NIV). That is the issue each person must settle within himself or herself. Just how powerful do you believe God to be? Is there anything that goes beyond God's power?

Activating God's power in your life often requires illogical obedience. For Sarah to have a baby, she had to have marital relations with Abraham. At that age, it would seem like a waste of time, but that's what illogical obedience is all about – following God when it seems like a waste of time.

Peter had a moment of illogical obedience and it paid off. John chapter 4: *When [Jesus] had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break* (Lk 5:4-6 NIV). Illogical obedience.

We must also understand that God may not intervene in every impossible situation in our lives. God does impossible things when those things are in his will. Every time we ask God to bring his changing power into our lives, we must conclude that prayer with the words, "Thy will be done."

The birth of Isaac and the nation of Israel were in God's will. So, things like old age and infertility weren't going to stand in God's way. God did the impossible. Sarah had a baby. Come to think of it, Hanna, Samuel's mother, had a baby. Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother, had a baby. Mary, Jesus' mother, had a baby. The impossible isn't a problem for God.

On the other hand, not all things that are possible are in God's will. There are outcomes that seem perfectly reasonable to us, but they are not what God wants. So how do we know what is and isn't in God's will? We study God's Word. Here are some things that Scripture tells us are God's will.

*Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for*

*marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery”* (Mt 19:8-9 NIV). It’s God’s will that we should have healthy marriages that last a lifetime. No matter how impossible a marriage might seem, any marriage can be healed by calling on the power of God.

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose* (Php 2:12-13 NIV). It’s God’s will that we allow him to work in us so that we might be conformed to the likeness of Christ.

*This is good, and pleases God, our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth* (1 Ti 2:3-4 NIV). In other words, it’s God’s will that his church grow and his lost children be found.

In the end, laughing became believing. The author of the book of Hebrews tells us: *By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise* (Heb 11:11 NIV).

The faith that conquered the impossible in Abraham’s life can conquer the impossibilities in our lives. For the rest of our lives, we need to live with the confidence that with God nothing is impossible (Lk 1:37).