

Waiting On God

⇒ **Text:** Genesis 16:1-4 & Genesis 17:18-22

⇒ **Intro:**

- As we learn to walk by faith, we struggle to wait on God.
 - We get ahead of Him and we produce our own works.
 - However, God honors what He produces, not what we produce.
 - In this message, we will look at these three areas of walking by faith
 - Getting ahead of God,
 - The fruit of our works must be from God, and
 - Waiting on the Lord.

⇒ I. **Getting ahead of God**

- Probably the hardest part of living by faith is waiting on God.
 - We want God to act swiftly and decisively.
 - We don't want God to work behind the scenes; we want to see what He is doing so that we can be confident in what He is doing.
 - Our natural, human reaction when God doesn't act according to our ideas is that we want to take matters into our own hands.
 - This hasn't changed since the beginning.
 - Peter also address this by reminding us that "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward".
 - As we see time ticking away, we grow more and more impatient.
 - When time seems against us, His promise begins to look impossible.
 - We feel like we have to act now or miss out.
 - When people feel like they will miss out, they react and interfere with God's intended purpose.

⇒ We will look at the two ways Christians react to God's delay.

○ **A. Sincere Error.**

- We try to put 'legs on our prayers'.
 - This is what we observe with Abraham and Sarah.

- God gave the promise of a son years ago.
- As the years ticked by and old age crept in, impatience came with it.
- At the point where Sarah realized that it was now physically impossible for her to have children, she began to question whether they were following the promise in the right way.
 - It was already too late for her, if they waited much longer, it would be too late for Abraham too – if it was not already too late.
 - If they continued to wait, surely they would miss out on God's promise.
- What they could not see is that God's promise was to be fulfilled in such a way that it could only be attributed to God.
 - God was doing a work that would glorify Himself and benefit Abraham and Sarah.
 - What great work would it have been if Sarah had gotten pregnant after God gave Abraham the promise?
 - She was counted as barren, but we all have seen or heard of people who were told they could not have children and later became pregnant.
 - To the couple it may seem like a miracle, but the world credits time and chance.
- Throughout scripture you see miracles that only occur after it has become absolutely impossible without God.
 - Sometimes God allows the greatest defeats before He raises us from the ashes of despair.
 - If God bails us out of trouble, we glorify Him a little, but if God redeems us from the ashes of Satan's destruction, we will praise Him with all of our being.
 - It is also through trouble or the delay in His promise that our faith is established.
 - It takes very little if any faith to demand immediate relief of fulfillment, but it takes a lifestyle of faith and a heart that truly finds its hope in God to remain faithful when the promises seem impossible.

- God's promises aren't just goods and blessings to make us happy.
 - Though God does want us to be happy and He does give us good gifts, but the deeper meaning is what lies behind the promise.
 - It is the work of God.
 - What He is doing is the bigger picture of His will, not just the blessing we desire.
 - The promise was important to Abraham, but meant little outside of God's plan.
 - Abraham wanted a son and it would have been nothing for God to give him a son quickly.
 - But the bigger picture was how God established His covenant and sealed it with a miraculous promise.
 - The promise wasn't just Isaac, but the never-ending promise that linked Isaac to the coming redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross.
 - Isaac was only a piece of the bigger plan of God.
 - When Sarah and Abraham lost sight of God's plan, the promise of a son was the only thing they cared about.
 - They were sincere, but they were sincerely wrong.
- **B. Rebellion.**
 - Another way people respond when God seems to delay is to get angry and rebel.
 - King Saul gives us a good example of this.
 - In **1 Samuel 13** we see Israel preparing for war against the Philistines.
 - At that time, the Philistines were strong and feared, but God had delivered them into Saul's hand before with a miraculous victory.
 - Now the Philistine army has regrouped stronger than before.
 - The people of Israel were gathered for battle and the Philistine armies made the odds of victory look bleak.
 - When the Israelites saw the multitude coming against them, the Bible says the Philistines looked like the sand on the seashore for multitudes.

- The Israelite army became afraid and Saul watched his hopes of victory fading fast.
- The soldiers began to break ranks and look for places to hide.
- **Verse 6 of 1 Samuel 13** says, "When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hid themselves in caves, in thickets, and in rocks, in high places, and in pits."
- It was here that King Saul began his pattern of rebellion against God.
 - The priest did not arrive at the time Saul had appointed and there was no one to perform the sacrifices that the Lord required before going into battle.
 - Saul had seen enough.
 - He took the sacrifices and slaughtered them on the alter in the place of the priest knowing that he was in direct violation against the commandments of God and in violation of the written law handed down from Moses.
 - From this day forward, Saul continued to rebel when he felt God's plan didn't benefit him or didn't make sense.
 - Saul forfeited the promise as he rebelled against God to fulfill his desires in his own way.
 - **Look at 1 Samuel 13:13-14**
- Saul's replacement was not just someone who would obey commands, but someone after God's own heart.
 - When is temptation to sin the greatest?
 - When we are frustrated, stressed out and God's plan is not in our sight.
 - When our plans have been disappointed, it is easy to believe the lie,
 - "God has let me down, so I have a right to sin".
 - We get disappointed because God did not fit into my plan.
 - It is my plan that has failed, not God's plan.

- I get angry with God because my expectations have not been met.
 - God was about to let my golden opportunity slip away.
 - God should have shielded me from this hurt or frustration.
 - God has let me down, so I am going to turn my back on Him and lift myself up.
 - Our natural tendency is to lash out when God doesn't make sense.
 - However, it is during these times that God either establishes us or proves to us that we are not walking by faith.
 - We all get discouraged at times.
 - It is hard to realize that my expectation is not necessarily for God's plan.
 - If my expectation fails, it is because God's plan is better.
 - At the time God's promises may seem impossible, but each time we look back, we see clearly that if we have remained faithful, God shows Himself strong on our behalf.
 - If we turn our back on God during our time of testing, we may never see what God had planned.
- ⇒ **II. God only honors what He produces**
- The fruit of Abraham's labors parallel the contrast between Cain and Abel.
 - Cain brought to God the fruit of his own labors and God rejected it.
 - Abel offered to God the best of what God had given him and God honored Abel's sacrifice.
 - Here in Genesis 16, Abraham produced a child outside of God's promise.
 - Ishmael was the work of man, not the work of God.
 - Abraham said to God in **Genesis 17:18**, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!"
 - God rejected Abraham's offering.

- God did accept Abraham's intercession on behalf of Ishmael, but he rejected the fruit of Abraham's labor and declared that Ishmael would not be under the covenant, but He would give Abraham a son that would be the heir of the promise and under His covenant.
- This theme of works is echoed from Genesis to Revelation.
 - What man produces is worthless.
 - Only what God produces through faith and obedience will be honored.
 - God only honors His own righteousness that is credited to us by faith.
 - God only honors the work He produces through faith.
- **John 15** illustrates this clearly.
 - Jesus taught that we can do nothing unless we abide in Him.
 - We are branches and cannot produce fruit ourselves.
 - Outside of abiding in Him, we will wither.
 - But, "**he that abideth in me, and I him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.**"(John 15:5).
- So, Abraham's offering of Ishmael before God was rejected.
 - Look ahead to **Genesis 22:2**, "**And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son**".
 - God addressed Isaac as Abraham's only son.
 - God reiterated in **verses 12 and 16 of Genesis 22**, that Isaac was Abraham's only son.
 - God took care of Ishmael and made him the father of many nations, but God never acknowledge Ishmael as a son of the promise.
 - This symbolizes God's promise today.
 - The Bible says that God causes it to rain on the just and the unjust.

- God shows grace toward the world and the Christian, but only those who have the miraculous birth through Jesus Christ are children of the Promise and are under God's covenant of grace.
- The consequence of going outside of God's strength to make things happen continues to plague Israel today.
 - Ishmael became the father of the Arabian nations and God foretold in the beginning that these nations would trouble the house of Abraham throughout history.

⇒ III. Wait on the Lord

- Our struggle is no different than Abraham's.
 - God tests us and He doesn't jump when we think He should.
 - When we see our hopes slipping away, like Abraham, we want to jump in and give God a hand.
- God is not asking us to hope in the promise, but to put our hope in Him.
 - When we are looking at the promises and blessings of God –
 - or even our works and personal ministries that we know God has called us to –
 - if these things are our focus, we will feel desperation when it seems to be slipping out of reach.
 - I believe this is by design.
 - God does not want us to put our focus on anything but Him.
- Even ministry can be works of the flesh if it becomes our strength.
 - My ministry does not belong to me, nor does it come from my own strength or labor, but from standing strong in the Lord.
 - When I forget this, my flesh takes over.
 - We are capable of doing almost anything in the name of God if we are taking desperate measures.
- Our ministry is not our purpose.
 - The works God has called us to is not our purpose.
 - Our purpose is to love God and glorify Him.

- If my ministry falls apart tomorrow for something outside of my control, it should not matter because it belongs solely to God.
- The only thing that matters is the purpose for which we have all been created.
 - To have a personal, abiding relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.
 - Out of that relationship, God produces fruit and God glorifies Himself.
 - It is not my job to produce glory for God.
 - It is my job to reflect His glory.
 - We are short sighted and can't see the ways God is glorified.
- **Look at 1 Peter 4:13-15**
- Humanly speaking, how could God be glorified when I am called evil?
 - Look at the persecution in so many countries.
 - Pastors are tried and convicted for drugs planted on them during government raids.
 - How is God glorified from this?
 - When someone stands on the truth of God's word, the world calls them evil and intolerant.
 - Even other churches will call us evil if we stand firm on Christ.
 - Each of the apostles went through worse circumstances.
 - They were called blasphemers, hated by the religious leaders, enemies of Rome, conspirators, and accused of many crimes.
 - Each one was an outlaw and all were killed except for John.
 - If they lived by human reasoning alone, they would have been defeated.
 - It does not make sense that they would all be taken out of the ministry at such a critical time.
 - But through it all, God used persecution to turn the world upside down for the gospel of Christ.

- In human terms, we wouldn't think these things make sense, but in all these circumstances, God was and is glorified.
- When our way is unclear and God just doesn't make sense, we have promises to stand on.
 - **See Psalm 27:13-14**
 - **See Isaiah 40:28-31**

⇒ **Conclusion:**

- His understanding is unsearchable.
 - **Deuteronomy 29:29**, tells us that the secret things belong to God, but what is revealed belong to us so that we may keep all His words.
 - God gives us everything we need to live life and walk by faith.
 - God is also sovereign.
 - What God has hidden from us, is not meant for us to know, only to trust Him.
 - Many things become clear after we have been found faithful.
 - God almost always hides from us how His promises will be fulfilled, but He does reveal what we need to stay within His plan.
 - With sight, there is no need for faith.
 - We know God never grows tired and is always in control.
 - Even the young and the mighty will fade from the race of faith if they are running by their own strength.
 - But even the weak and feeble will have the strength of an eagle and run without failing if they wait on the Lord.
 - Only He can renew our strength because He is our strength.
 - Only His strength can give us the endurance to run His race.
 - God calls you to go where you cannot go and do what you cannot do.
 - Your failing strength is by His design.

- God's way is not for the strong. Human strength will always fall short of God's calling.
- **I want to end with Psalm 37:34..**