



This past week, I came across this quote: **If the people of God. . . fully believed what he said he would do – now or at any time in the history of the faith – their lives, their world, would be very different** (Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, p. 346). Do you agree with this statement? Does this statement confront you at all? If you *fully* believed and embraced what God says he did and does. If you *fully* believed he would follow through on all of his promises, then your life would be very different. So, the question comes back to us, do we fully believe him? How are we micromanaging and seeking to control?

Now, we can go down that rabbit hole, but here's what I find that I've done, and many others have done, when confronted with a true statement like this one. They say, "That's right! I need to wake up and live for God!" But we don't really know what that looks like, so we look to someone else as an example. That could be appropriate, but it can also be dangerous. Let me explain. I've heard a man named George Müller used by people at times. He lived in the 19th century in England and loved Jesus and people with all his being. If you read or hear about his story, you are both encouraged and convicted. He prayed all the time, about everything. He had such strong faith as well, and he saw God bring in so much money in order to build orphanages and care for the needy. All the while, he was utterly dependent on his daily bread.

So, you could study about George Müller, and think to yourself, "Ok, if I really believe God's promises and what he says he's going to do, I'm going to pray and believe, and all these x, y, z miracles are going to happen in my life!" But then life goes on and these things don't happen for you. So, you rehearse to yourself, "What did I do wrong? Why did God do it for him and not me?" You might think you don't have enough faith or you just need to try harder. But can I suggest something to you? I imagine that if Müller came to you today, he would say you totally missed it. The privilege is communion with the Lord – more than specifically answered prayers, it's relationship with Jesus. If you have a relationship of communion with the Lord, then he guides you in what to pray, how to pray. And, guess what else – every relationship looks a little different because it's personal. What the Lord does for one, he doesn't do for the other. But having the Lord is the privilege.

I think the same danger can come in when looking at Abraham (or any biblical character). We turn their lives into little stories to tell us what to do or not to do. And so, you could read about Abraham and Sarah and think, "Well, God promised them a baby. They waited and got a baby. So, if I pray, I'll get one, too." This can add insult to injury for those who battle against the curse of infertility. Or, we can look at Abraham and think, "Well, I'll be willing to leave my homeland and go to another country, and then God will do something great for me." If that's your mindset, you miss it! You're using God to get something else you think is greater. Do you recall the apostle Paul's words when he says, "Follow me, as I follow Christ"? See, that's the point. Don't follow Paul if he's not following Christ, but in the ways he's following Christ – that's the point!

The point is God, and this has been emphasized from the beginning of Genesis. Do you remember the punishment of Adam and Eve – they were kicked out of the Garden. And that was so horrible because they were away from deep fellowship with the Lord. So, what’s our greatest need? Fellowship with the Lord. And this is actually how we ought to read all the stories of Genesis. Genesis is written to show us God, and to reveal to us our need for him. And while the narratives reveal to us ways in which God interacts with specific individuals, we have to be careful to not assume all that’s written for them is identical for us. But, at the same time, we can assume that there is a message for us in each narrative, too. It’s not bad to look at the people in the Bible and learn lessons from them. Actually, the Bible encourages us to do so. Genesis is written to the wandering Israelites to not only learn about their past history, but also to discover who God is and how they ought to respond. Then, in the New Testament, we’re told in Romans 15 that, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction. . .”¹ So, if we want to grow in faith and live for God’s glory, the stories of God working in the saints are profitable, but we must make sure we’re looking at these to see God – not just a recipe list for “success.” God wants relationship. Do you?

I say all of this today because Genesis 18:1-15 can feel kind of weird and out of place. Why is this even here? And, I think it’s here to reveal the relational piece. And, as we understand the relationship, we’ll begin to understand how it applies to us who live thousands of years after Abraham. So, as we begin, I want to give the main idea and then we’ll jump into the text to see how we can get this application from these verses: **For those in fellowship with God, he does even the impossible for their eternal good.** As Abraham points to God, take note! And we should take note here in this chapter. Here in this chapter, we see that if the people of God fully believed what he said he would do. . .their lives. . .would be very different. So, let’s jump into the text, and I’m going to read the first 8 verses: And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. ²He 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 ³and said, “O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, ⁵while 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.” ⁶And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.” ⁷And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. ⁸Then 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.² In this section, I think we see the beauty of having fellowship with God. So, that’s the first part of the main idea:

1. For those who are in fellowship with God. . .(vv. 1-8).

Before looking at the verses here, do you remember what happened in chapter 17? God told Abraham to circumcise himself and his household in trust that God was going to fulfill his promises. We’re told that Abraham obeys. And then we come to verse one here: And the Lord appeared to him. . . God’s presence comes to Abraham in a very special way. God is going to fulfill his promise! But it’s not just God up in the sky fulfilling his promise. God fulfills his promise by coming down to the earth and to personally interact with Abraham. Who could ever imagine that God would condescend to that degree! And yet, God does. This is El Shaddai, the One we learned about whose name means that he takes all his power and merges it with his promises for his children’s eternal good!

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 15:4.

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 18:1–8.

So, we have El Shaddai come in human form. But, let me ask you: how many of you think this sounds very weird? We're told the Lord appears, but then there's three of them. Is this the Trinity? What's going on here? And why is Abraham feeding the three? I'll try to answer these kinds of questions, but let me just say first that I do not believe this is the Trinity. Instead, I believe that one of these men is the Lord come as a human, and the other two are angels. The reason I say that is because if you look at the last verse of this chapter, we read that the Lord went away from Abraham, and then in the next verse we read about the two angels who go to Sodom. So, we have the Lord and two angels. But even here, the emphasis is on the Lord in these verses, and the fellowship Abraham has with the Lord. I think we see this fellowship expressed by Abraham in a few ways. We see that Abraham is **Affected by God, Graced by God, Communes with God, and receives the Covenant with God.**

Let's see how these things are displayed. First, Abraham is **affected** by God. When God appears to him, he isn't indifferent. His whole being springs into action and response. You see, Abraham is in his tent in the heat of the day - the timeframe of when it's hot and you're resting. When Abraham looked up at the entrance of the tent, he sees the three men, but knows they're different. He immediately gets up to go towards the three men, but then bows down and says, **"O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant."**³ In chapter 17, the Lord told Abraham that by the next year, he would have his own biological child from Sarah. I can only imagine that Abraham has been anticipating this – continuing to wait. He has been waiting in the land for 25 years! He's been looking to the Lord. And now, Abraham doesn't just hear words from God. God doesn't only come in angelic form. He sees God come in human form! He moves quickly to the Lord's presence to bow down to him. Abraham is affected by God. Ventura, this is what a relationship with God does to us. I'm reminded of the apostle James' words when he says that even the demons believe that God is one, and they shudder. The reason James adds that "and they shudder" is because we humans can believe the right theology, but we don't even have emotional responses to correspond to it! James says that not only can demons be better theologians. They can also emote correctly! Listen, it's not enough to simply know the right stuff. We need to know God! We must pray that God would teach us his way and also unite our hearts so that we truly love and honor and praise him! Fellowship with God means we are affected by him.

We move on, and also see that the only way we can have fellowship with God is if we are **graced** by him. Abraham's statement emphasizes his dependence on God's grace. Even though he knows God's promises, he also knows he can't require God to give him grace. This is all God's choice. Oh, how glorious it is when you know that your relationship with God is secure. And the only way it can be secure is if it's dependent on grace. I say that because grace is undeserved favor. It's actually favor despite the ways we have also defied him. You see, God loves you because he loves you, believer. It's not because you do great things. And he doesn't hate you because of your bad things. He loves you because he loves you! He graces you because he graces you! And so, Abraham recognizes this grace. "If I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant."

If Abraham has grace, then he requests to **commune** with the Lord – to fellowship with him. He offers some bread and water and respite. But when God agrees, Abraham rushes in the tent and tells Sarah to make some bread, and then he takes a calf and sacrifices it for food, and he also gets goat's milk. In this text, notice the words "run," "quickly" (twice), "quick," "ran." Again, God's presence affects Abraham. And in this relationship, there's grace and communion.

That's one of the reasons why there's a meal here. It's communion with the Lord. And this meal also states Abraham's view of himself. He's offering quite a meal that would have been made for a special

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 18:3.

occasion. Even the milk mentioned here is the goat's milk, which was considered better. To add to this, Abraham's bowing and also standing by while they eat, signifies that Abraham knows his position in light of the Lord. While he's graced by God, he is privileged to simply serve the Lord! This reminds me of King David's words later, when he says, **"For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."**⁴ To simply stand at the door of God's dwelling is better than any adventure we can imagine in this fallen world! Think of this. God is so glorious, we can't even imagine how wondrous being right outside his court would be like! And here, Abraham has served the Lord and his angels a meal – and he standing there in privilege as a servant and friend of God – being able to commune with God.

But not only is Abraham communing with the Lord. There's a **covenant** relationship here. Now, why does that matter? Well, think of it this way. I have had many meals with Tracy, but there's one meal that stands out above all the others. It's a meal that defines all other meals. It was the meal after my wedding ceremony. Even though I can't remember much of what I ate at that meal, it was the best meal because that meal signified that unique relationship that I've entered into with Tracy. She was no longer just my girlfriend. She was my *wife*. We no longer just ate meals together when we could. We were intimately tied together in all we did from then on out! We entered into a covenant relationship that would, and continues to, shape us until one of us dies.

This is what's going on here, too. But you might be thinking, "How in the world do you see a covenant meal here?" Well, it might be hard for us 21st century readers to see it, but I think that the original readers would have picked up on it right away because the next time God requires a meal with him is at the ratification of his covenant at Mount Sinai in Exodus 24. That meal was to signify a relationship of peace with God, and eventually in Leviticus, God would require a peace offering that was to emphasize that the worshipper had a peaceful relationship with the Lord and will receive the blessings he promises to them.

So, when wandering Israelites read that God appeared, and that Abraham has received God's grace, and then there's a meal here with Abraham, and we know that there's communication coming about Sarah having a child in just a few verses; the Israelites know this is a covenant stating a relationship of grace and peace! So, we are reminded of with Abraham is that he's graced by God, affected by God, and communes with God because God made a covenant promise with him! Now, let's go back to the quote I read at the beginning of the sermon: **If the people of God. . . fully believed what he said he would do – now or at any time in the history of the faith – their lives, their world, would be very different.** This is what we discover moving into the remainder of this passage. Let's look at verses 9-15: ⁹They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." ¹⁰The 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. ¹¹Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. ¹²So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" ¹³The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴Is 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." ¹⁵But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."⁵

For those in fellowship with God, he does even the impossible for their eternal good. Let's look at that second part of the main idea now:

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 84:10.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 18:9–15.

2. . . .he does even the impossible for their eternal good (vv. 9-15).

The reason the Lord appeared was to fulfill his promise he made multiple times over the years – and especially what he had stated previously to Abraham in chapter 17. The Lord asks where Sarah is – not because he doesn't know – but because he wants *her* to know and hear the promise!

Now, have you ever had a situation where someone said they'd do something for you, but it was too shocking to comprehend? I've had situations like that. I remember when Elyse was a newborn, and our van was breaking apart and one day my grandma called and immediately said, "I got you a van!" You'd never think of my grandma as wealthy. She wasn't. But she purchased a van outright for us! It was one of those surreal moments where you had to say, "I know this is real, but is this real?!"

If we can feel that way in situations like that, then I think we can understand the shock that shows up here. The Lord promises that by next year, Sarah will give birth to a child. And the Lord says "surely." This is emphatic. There's no if's, and's, or but's to this promise. But then we're told in verse 12 that Sarah laughed to herself. It could even be translated that she laughed within herself. Whatever the case, she was trying to hide the laughter. Why? Because this laughter doesn't seem to be from a place of faith – like Abraham's laughter in chapter 17. And, before you look down on Sarah, let's just admit that left to ourselves, we'd probably feel the same way. After all, she's 89 years old! She asks how she could have a child when her body is clearly past the age of having children! So, she laughs in disbelief. I mean, God can say what he wants, but her body says otherwise.

And, Ventura, I think many times we can think this way, can't we? I can say, "I know God says to love my enemies and that he will take care of me, but my enemies could (if things got real bad) kill me!" How is that God taking care of me? I can't help but wonder when we're stuck between God's promises and what the world can do to us, we sadly and faithlessly side with what the world can do to us.

This reminds me of the scenario in Jesus' ministry when a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus, and Jesus first says that the man's sins are forgiven. Then the religious people there were upset because they said he's blaspheming because only God can forgive sins. Then Jesus says, **"⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."⁶** What's Jesus saying here? Which is easier to say? Well, it's easier to say your sins are forgiven because you can't *see* sins being forgiven. So, in this world where we can't see sins forgiven, it's actually harder to say "Rise, take up your bed and walk" because then it has to be seen. So, Jesus tells the man to walk, and he walks. And that's to signify that Jesus can do the harder thing, which is to forgive sins.

Now, what does that have to do with Abraham and Sarah and her having a baby? Which is harder? For Abraham to receive God's grace or for Sarah to have a baby? The first! And yet, Sarah thinks the baby is harder. But listen, the curse of Genesis 3 was that there was going to be all sorts of pain surrounding having a child. And God promised to reverse the curse and crush the serpent. And so, he's going to do that. He doesn't submit to the world. The world, and the curse, submits to him!

It's now that we can move on to see the reality that God does even the impossible for those who trust him! Let's re-read verses 13-15: ¹³ The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mk 2:9–11.

indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ 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.” ¹⁵ But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.” ⁷

The emphatic phrase here is in verse 14: **is anything too hard for the Lord?** The Lord actually asks Abraham why Sarah would laugh simply because she’s old. Again, this question isn’t asked because the Lord doesn’t know an answer. It’s to draw out her heart and to emphasize what both she and Abraham ought to believe. Is anything too hard for the Lord? The Hebrew word for “hard” can also be understood as “impossible, marvelous, surpassing.” Is there anything that can surpass God’s ability. Is there anything too marvelous for God to do? We have to merge the ideas of wondrous and impossibility with this. Is there anything too wondrous and impossible for God to do? The answer is an emphatic no! And the Lord promises that by this time next year, she will have a son.

Then, intriguingly Sarah responds to this, out of fear, saying she didn’t laugh. She’s caught red-handed and still tries to cover herself. Why? God has shown so much grace and mercy – but this reminds me of how we can be like right? There’s no need to try to justify ourselves before the Lord. He already has made us right with him. But we still do. And the Lord won’t let her have the last word. He says, “No, but you did laugh.” Stop it, Sarah. You did. Oh, and the beautiful irony will be that your son’s name, Isaac, means laughter. Both Abraham and Sarah will both remember El Shaddai – the one who merges his power and promises for the eternal good of his children. The God who does such amazing things despite of disbelief and also brings joyous laughter!

So, how does this passage apply even more to us? Well, I’ve already given applications, but we always need to see God’s glory in how this points to Jesus. Ultimately, this promise of the seed of the woman is looking forward to Jesus who came to live the perfect life that Adam (and all humankind) didn’t live. And Jesus is God the Son who didn’t just appear as an angel, but he appeared in human flesh. And in coming in human flesh, he came to reveal God’s grace to us – and he covenanted with people in a meal. A meal that revealed the spiritual and eternal nourishment that we all need. We need Jesus’ sacrificial death to be in our place. Jesus would shed his blood, and have his body torn so that anyone who turns from their sin and faithlessness and turns to the Lord for mercy, will be forgiven and reconciled to God forever.

This is the *hardest* thing that we can imagine. But God can and does forgive sins. If he can make Sarah pregnant and bring about Jesus to this world, then he can forgive you of your sin and shame and guilt. Do you believe him? If so, you have fellowship with God. If you don’t trust him, you’re still in your sins. But if you do have fellowship with him, then you have been graced. And not only that, you can anticipate communing with him every moment of every day because he has covenanted with you. And that covenant was emphasized when Jesus had his final meal with his disciples. This meal that signifies peace and wholeness and reconciliation with God. And because of the sacrifice of Christ, we ourselves can know **For those in fellowship with God, he does even the impossible for their eternal good. Whatever is for our eternal good, he will ensure even in this life. Will you continue to trust him? After all, if the people of God. . . fully believed what he said he would do – now or at any time in the history of the faith – their lives, their world, would be very different. And gloriously, even in the face of Sarah's disbelief (like ours at times), the Lord remains faithful.**

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 18:13–15.