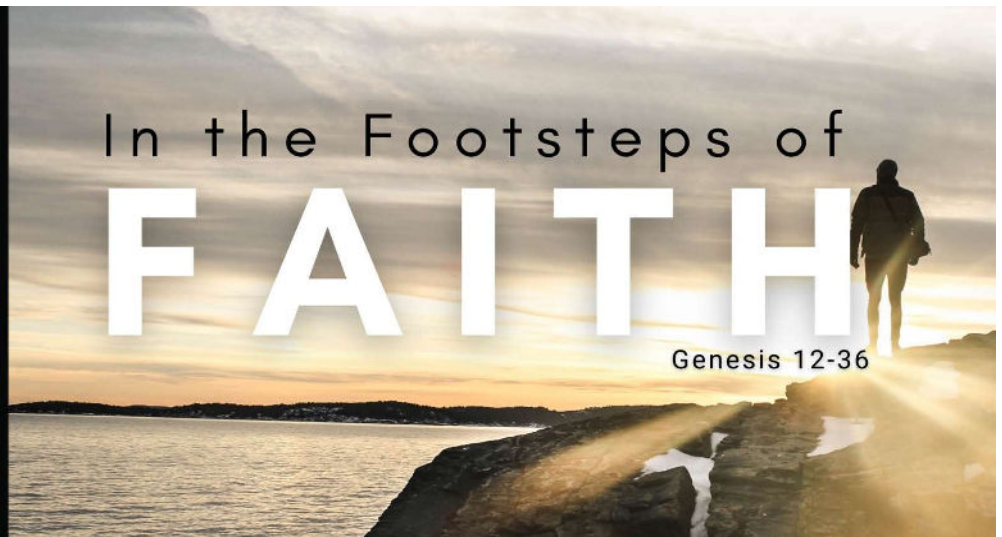




Midweek Study

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The Test of Patience

(Genesis 17:1-27)

I. God and Abram (17:1-14)

- 13 years have passed from the end of chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17, and still the promise has not been fulfilled.
- “Almighty God” [El Shaddai] or “the one mighty to nourish” or “the one mighty to supply.” **Jeremiah 32:17** – “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.”
- “Abram” means “exalted father”. “Abraham” means “father of a multitude”.
- Circumcision (v.11) – a sign, a symbol, an outward confession, a visible reminder of the covenant. Those who refused circumcision would be cut off from the Israelites. Circumcision showed them as different from the neighboring nations. Circumcision at eight days old reminded the parents that they had faithfully passed their seed onto this boy. Circumcision reminded the wife that he was part of the nation of Israel.

II. God and Sarai (17:15-19)

- “Sarai” means “contentious”. “Sarah” means “princess”. She would be the mother of many nations.
- “Isaac” means “laughter”. Abraham laughed. This is not the laugh of unbelief, but the laugh of **astonishment and joy** – “this will actually happen!” Sarah laughed later (**Genesis 18:13**), but that was a laugh of **unbelief** at God’s promise. **Hebrews 11:11** is clear that Sarah became a woman of great faith and **counted God faithful!**
- **Romans 4:19–20 (NASB)** - Without becoming weak in faith **he contemplated his own body**, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God.

*Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities, And cries it shall be done. (Charles Wesley)*

III. God and Ishmael (17:20-27)

- V. 18 - "Oh that Ishmael might live under your blessing!"
- V. 20-22 - God tells Abraham that Ishmael will become the ancestor of twelve princes and a great nation. John Phillips writes, "God has kept His word. The Arab world stretches from the seaboard of the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, and embraces some seventeen of the most strategically placed and economically wealthy countries of the world. But, as God foresaw, they do not know Him."¹
- God does not play "favorites" when it comes to salvation. Anyone who wants to be saved can be saved. However, God does choose to use whom He alone chooses to use. He does not need to explain Himself, either. Acts 10:34 – "And Peter, having opened his mouth, said, Of a truth I am in the process of comprehending the fact that **God does not show partiality** to anyone because of his looks or circumstances, but in every nation he who fears Him and does uprightly is acceptable with Him." (WUESTNT) (See also Romans 2:11)

Applications for Today:

- 1) **God's plans can continue, though people make mistakes.** God is all-knowing and all-powerful. Sarai should not have offered Hagar, and that was a mistake. However, God continued to fulfill His purpose and promise by sending Isaac.
- 2) **The symbol of the covenant has changed, but it is still important.** God's symbol of being in covenant with Him in the Old Testament was circumcision. Today, we show that we are His follower by unashamedly being water baptized by immersion as believers (Matthew 28:19-20). Though just a symbol, it is still important to be obedient to the Lord. Have you been water baptized?
- 3) **God honors instant obedience.** Ishmael was probably 12 or 13 years old at the time God commanded all of Abraham's household be circumcised. He immediately obeyed. **Has God told you to serve? To give? To forgive? To step out in faith?** Isaiah 1:19 says, "If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land." God honors instant obedience.
- 4) **We can trust God as our El Shaddai** – the God Who can meet our needs, nourish us and sustain us. Psalm 84:11 says, "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly." God can and will take care of us.

***God will make a way, where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see, He will make a way for me
He will be my guide, hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way. – Don Moen, "God Will Make a Way"***

¹ John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary*, (Kregel Publications, 2009), Ge 17:19–22.