

SERMON GUIDE

Is Anything Too Hard For God?

Genesis 18:9-15



SERMON NOTES

Exegesis

Two weeks ago we started Chapter 18 and looked at the first 8 verses. We saw the LORD visited Abraham. Three men show up. We discussed that this is the LORD in physical form and two angels. Abraham doesn't immediately know it is the LORD or angels, but he welcomes them and prepares a meal for them. As they eat, they ask Abraham a question.

VS 9-10 – 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.

One of the evidences that these are not just any three men traveling through is they ask Abraham where his wife, Sarah, was. First, they knew his wife's name. Second, they knew the new name she was given by God (17:15). They don't call her Sarai, but Sarah. So Abraham realizes in this moment the LORD has come.

He tells them she is in the tent. The LORD says to Abraham that He will return around this time next year and Sarah will have a son. Sarah, who is listening to this exchange, is in the tent behind the LORD. So there's no human way that the LORD can see or hear her reactions.

VS 11-12 – 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?”

Moses gives us some commentary here as a reminder that Abraham and Sarah are old. So old that "they way of women" had ceased to be with Sarah. She no longer ovulated. Her body no longer went through the natural cycles women experience that allow for pregnancy. She's been infertile all her life, plus she is old now. From a natural perspective, her window of opportunity is closed.

So upon hearing this prediction of a child this time next year, Sarah laughed to herself. I want you to catch that detail: to herself. She doesn't bust out in roaring laughter where the three men hear her. She's not on the ground in stitches. She laughs to herself. She scoffs. You can almost imagine an eye-roll. And she says to herself, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" She is beyond the years of both pleasure in sexual intercourse and of having a child. Her laughter is embedded with unbelief.

VS 13-14 – 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.”

The LORD addresses Abraham for Sara's laughter and unbelief. Then the LORD asks a question that is vital for all of us to answer in the depths of our hearts: is anything too hard for the LORD? Is anything beyond His ability to accomplish? Is Sarah's age and infertility beyond the LORD's power? He doesn't answer the question or give a dissertation about His ability. The LORD simply asks the question rhetorically because they know the LORD can do anything. He then restates the promise of a child.

VS 15 – But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

Sarah goes from unbelief to lying. She insists that she didn't laugh. Why? Because she laughed inwardly and has no reason to believe anyone knows this. But Moses interjects here that her denial was based on fear. She was called out for something she thought nobody could know. Her instinct was to lie and deny it. But the LORD responds back to her, "No, but you did laugh." Now Sarah is being addressed directly and the LORD confirms again that He knows she laughed.

Application

1. The LORD sees our external presentations and knows our inward dispositions.

Everyone who encounters you sees the external presentation that you give them. They can look at your face and make determinations about if you're happy or sad. They can look at how you dress, how you carry yourself, and listen to the words you say. But what people can't do with certainty is know your

inward dispositions. People can speculate about your inward disposition and motives, but they don't know your heart. They're not able to see your heart. But the LORD does.

He sees both the external and knows intimately the internal. He knows our thoughts and heart dispositions. This is not meant to scare us. But it is meant to help us realize that God sees the real us better than anyone else. He knows the secret thoughts we have. That can be bad for us, obviously. But this also means He can see the genuine thoughts and honoring intentions, even when others may accuse or assail you. This is why the Scriptures have examples of people pleading for God to vindicate them against accusers. He knows the real them, regardless of what others say.

God knows Sarah's inward laughter and thoughts. He sees the unbelief that she thinks is secluded from view. And it was secluded from everyone's view, including her husband's, but not God's. We have lots of biblical texts that make this clear to us.

All of these passages show us, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, that the LORD knows the thoughts and heart of men. He sees the inside, not just the outside.

This is one of the reasons that Christian salvation and discipleship focuses on the inside, not just cleaning up the outside. Salvation is about a change of heart. Discipleship is about sanctifying the heart. Behavior modification isn't discipleship. It begins with an inward change and then comes out in our external behaviors and lives. But it is an inside transformation.

Another implication of this is we can worship the LORD inwardly and pray to Him inwardly and know He hears and receives it. It is not only what is said or demonstrated externally that counts. But we can worship Christ in our hearts. We can speak with Him in our hearts. He hears and is pleased.

My challenges today are multiple:

- examine your heart and internal motivations (repent where you see sin)
- ask the Lord to purify your heart, to cleanse you, and transform you
- develop the pattern of the seeking the Lord inwardly

2. Nothing is impossible or too hard for the LORD...and that should feed our faith.

Sarah laughs in unbelief. "I'm too old. Even when I was young I couldn't have kids. NOW I'm going to have them?" And if we were left to the natural order and law God put in place, she might be right. But God is above the system. God created the natural order. He is able to do anything. Nothing is impossible for Him.

His question is one we need to echo in our own hearts. We need to let the question challenge us. What are you dealing with in your life where this question needs to show up? What struggles are you facing that you need to let this question penetrate into your heart? Because the question is also a statement. The resounding answer is: No, nothing is too hard for God.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. He multiplied the bread and fish to feed thousands. He stopped a raging storm with His words. Over and over again we see in Scripture that nothing is beyond God's ability. Sarah would have a child. Isaac would be in her arms a year from the scene we've covered today. Nothing is too hard for the LORD. And everything God says and promises will come to pass. There are no obstacles or odds that can overcome Him. But what about the things He hasn't promised? What about things we want, even good things, that the LORD has not guaranteed? Healing from a disease. An open door to a job we want. Good political leaders. Well, we should believe that nothing is impossible for God. Nothing is too hard. So we should pray and ask. But we recognize that if God hasn't promised it, then we cannot assume God will grant what we want. He does all things according to the counsel of His will. His wisdom supersedes ours. This means we ask and pray, knowing nothing is too hard for Him, then we resolve to trust Him for what He chooses to do. We pray for healing, but trust Him if we don't. We ask for that job opportunity, but trust Him if He closes the door. We trust God's wisdom to know better than us for His plans, but we never let His decisions to do one thing over another cause us to conclude He couldn't do something. Nothing is too hard for the LORD.

You're praying for a lost friend or family member? Nothing is too hard for the LORD.

Your marriage feels beyond repair or in an irreversible rut? Nothing is too hard for the LORD.

You're experiencing physical pain, but are afraid to pray for healing or don't think the LORD can sustain you? Nothing is too hard for the LORD.

You're wanting a spouse and family, but you haven't found them yet? Nothing is too hard for the LORD.

You've tried and tried, but cannot have a child? Nothing is too hard for the LORD.

The odds seemed stacked against you getting the promotion, qualifying for the job, getting the scholarship, or having the right door open for your career? Nothing is too hard for the LORD.

We're wanting to plant and revitalize churches. It's not easy work. We're counting on people who are a part of this body to go help bring dead churches back to life. Nothing is too hard for the LORD.

Maybe you've had faith struggles. "Did God really create everything I see?" Is anything too hard for the LORD? "How is God going to raise the dead? What if they were in the buildings during 9/11? What if they were lost at sea? What if they were cremated and spread out in the wind? How are we going to get out of the ground and into sealed vaults?" Friends, is anything too hard for the LORD? "How can I not be sad if I get to Heaven and realize some people aren't there?" Is anything too hard for the LORD?

Friends, when will we recognize that He is the LORD. Nothing is too hard for Him. Like Sarah, we need to learn not to doubt His power to do all that He pleases. It should fuel our faith. It should deepen our willingness to pray.

I want you to consider this last thing as I wrap up. In Matthew 19:25, after the Rich Young Ruler walks away from Jesus, the disciples ask him, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible." One of the recurring messages of Scripture is that you and I cannot save ourselves. We can't reconcile ourselves to God by cleaning our act up or washing the outside up. Man cannot save himself. It's too hard. It is beyond our ability. It's like a dead man at the bottom of the lake deciding to resuscitate himself. He can't do it. He won't. He's dead. This is how the Scriptures describe man's spiritual condition: dead.

But God does what no man can do for himself or another: He saves us. Jesus tells His disciples after letting them know that with man it was impossible for them to be saved. But with God all things are possible. Why? Nothing is too hard for the LORD. And if you are in Christ today, if He has reconciled you and changed your heart to love Him, you are evidence that nothing is too hard for the LORD. He did for you what you could never do for yourself.

Where's the evidence of this in your life? Are you here by your own desire? Is the LORD inclining your heart towards His Word and seeking Him? That's not because of you. That's evidence of grace. It is the evidence that nothing is impossible with God.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**
 - Read **Genesis 18:9-15** from the sermon and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - Additional Scripture:
 - Psalm 7:9
 - Psalm 26:2
 - Psalm 139:2, 4, 23
 - Jeremiah 17:10
 - Jeremiah 20:12
 - Matthew 23:25–26
 - John 2:25
 - Acts 1:24–25
 - Romans 2:16
 - 1 Corinthians 3:20
 - Hebrews 4:12

- Revelation 2:23

- What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?

- **REFLECT**

- Why do you think Sarah laughed when she heard the promise of a son? Could there have been other influences besides doubt?
- God confronts Sarah after she denies that she laughed. What does this reveal about the Lord's knowledge of us?
- Sarah's reaction in verse 12 is to laugh, but the text doesn't tell us that Abraham reacted negatively. Why did they respond differently?
- What role does timing play in this story, especially since Abraham and Sarah had been waiting many years for a child? How does this connect to the broader theme of God's timing versus human timing in Scripture?

- **RESPOND**

- How are we to respond to God's promises?
- Is there an area of your life where you need to practice more patience?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?

- **MEMORIZE**

- Proverbs 19:17 – Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.



- **BUILD UP:** How will you follow Jesus this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
 - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Men** exists to build up men for the glory of God, the growth of the Kingdom, and the good of the world. The men's ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at

8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story or the gospel? We have several opportunities for local and overseas missions.
 - **For the City:** Serving international students at Cumberland University, serving the homeless at Compassionate Hands, supporting our local missions – Reach out to Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **For the Nations:** 2025 trips to the Philippines, Turkey, Rome, Indonesia, London, and Israel are open for applications now – Reach out to Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **PRAYER**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - **Staff:** Amanda Bayes (Administrative Ministry Assistant)
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our short-term teams**
 - Central Asia Team #2 departing on September 27
 - Central Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on April 25, 2025
 - **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>