

Introduction

In our last study, we saw Abram and Sarai grow tired of waiting on the Lord's promise. Trying to bring God's will to pass through human effort, they brought Hagar into the mix—a decision that resulted in the birth of Ishmael and brought instant conflict into their home.

How often do we do that? We receive a promise from God, but when His timing doesn't align with our fast-paced expectations, we start concocting our own "Plan B."

Now, in Genesis chapter seventeen, we find ourselves thirteen years after those events. Following that lapse in faith, the heavens seemed to fall silent. Thirteen long years passed without a word recorded from heaven. But notice the grace of our God: He is the God of the second chance. When He finally breaks the silence, He does so with a magnificent revelation of His character and a glorious renewal of His covenant.

In this chapter, we arrive at a monumental chapter in the life of Abram. Three powerful truths emerge from this text today:

First, we will behold The Revelation of El Shaddai, as God appears to Abram declaring Himself as the "Almighty God"—the All-Sufficient One—reminding us that God does not need our human "help" to accomplish His will; He only requires that we walk before Him in faith.

Second, we will examine The Sign of the Covenant and the Circumcision of the Heart, looking at the physical sign God commanded, but emphasizing the deeper spiritual reality it pointed to—the cutting away of the flesh so that we might walk in the Spirit rather than relying on religious rituals.

Finally, we will look at The Promise of Laughter and the Miracle of Grace, as God changes their names to Abraham and Sarah, and promises them a son named Isaac—a promise so staggering that Abraham falls on his face in joyful laughter, affirming that God's redemptive plan is always birthed by His grace, not our striving.

Bible Study

The Covenant of El Shaddai

Genesis 17:1-27

I. The Almighty God (Genesis 17:1-8)

In verse 1, the Lord says to Abram, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless." This is the first time in Scripture we see the name El Shaddai. It means the All-Sufficient One. God is telling Abram, "I am enough. You don't need to help Me; you just need to walk with Me."

He promises to multiply Abram exceedingly and changes his name from Abram ("high father") to Abraham, which means "father of many nations." At ninety-nine years old, with no children by his wife, this was a radical declaration! But God's covenant is an everlasting one. He promises the land of Canaan to Abraham's seed forever. This land belongs to them by divine decree.

II. The Sign of the Heart (Genesis 17:9-14)

God then establishes the rite of circumcision. Now, for the Jewish people, this became the ultimate badge of identity. But we have to be careful here. The physical act was meant to be a symbol of a spiritual reality—the "cutting away" of the fleshly life to live after the Spirit.

The danger, then and now, is identifying the ritual for the reality.

- The Ritual: An outward act (circumcision, water baptism).
- The Reality: A heart surrendered to Jesus Christ.

You can be baptized a dozen times, but if your heart hasn't been changed by the Spirit, you're just getting wet. God is looking for a people who serve Him in the Spirit, not those who just check off religious boxes.

III. Laughter and the Promise (Genesis 17:15-27)

Then God turns to Sarai. He changes her name to Sarah, which means "Princess." I love that. Husbands, that's a good word for us—treat your wife like the princess God says she is!

When God tells Abraham that Sarah will bear a son, Abraham falls on his face and laughs (Genesis 17:17). Now, this wasn't a laugh of doubt; it was a laugh of pure, joyful excitement! "Lord, are You serious? This is incredible!" Later, Sarah laughs too, but hers is a bit more skeptical. That's why the boy's name is Isaac, which means "Laughter."

Abraham tries one more time to offer a substitute: "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" (Genesis 17:18). But God is firm. While He promises to bless Ishmael and make him a great nation, the Covenant—the Messianic line that leads to the Savior—would come through Isaac.

Practical Application

1. Stop "Helping" God: If you are in a season of waiting, don't try to manufacture a Hagar. Trust that El Shaddai is sufficient to fulfill His Word in His time.
2. Check Your Heart: Are you relying on a religious ritual for your standing with God? Examine whether you are walking after the flesh or after the Spirit.

A Challenge for the Believer

Are you walking "blameless" before Him? Not perfect—because none of us are—but sincere. Abraham's faith wasn't perfect, but he kept falling on his face before God. I challenge you this week to spend time on your knees, acknowledging that He is your All-Sufficient God.

An Invitation to New Life

Maybe you're reading this and you realize you've been trying to earn God's favor through your own efforts. You can't do it. None of us can. But 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ—the promised seed of Abraham—came to do for you what you couldn't do for yourself.

Jesus saved us when He shed His precious blood on the cross to pay for our sins. And the resurrection is the ultimate proof! It declares to the whole world that He is God, Savior, and Lord. If

you will turn from your "fleshly" ways and put your trust in Him today, He will give you a new heart and a new life.