

20240616_IshmailToSarahDeath

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Preacher: Roger Phipps

[0 : 00] Amen. We are thankful for that. Now, when we left chapter 18, remember, God spoke to Abraham. What did he tell him?

Okay, well, let's look at the background. Look at those first, really, we're starting with chapter 18, verse 9 this morning.

That's where we left off at, verse 8. But if we look at that, this is where Abraham's sitting in the door of his tent, right?

He looks up. He sees three men out there. So he takes off to them. He said, hey, come on here. Come in.

So they fix him a meal. And the three men refused the meal, right? Okay, I just wanted to see if we were listening.

[1 : 09] No, they didn't refuse the meal. They ate with him. So this is, we are very soon, in verses 9 through 15 especially, is where we're going to concentrate right now.

Well, it's either during or soon after the meal. Now, God reiterates to Abraham that Isaac will be born, right?

When is this to be? Right. He's very specific about it here. By my covenant, I established, this is from chapter 17.

Remember, when he just got through talking to him. I have established it with Isaac. And Sarah will bear a son to you about this time next year.

Now, this time, he says, I will return and you will have a son according to the time of life.

[2 : 25] So Sarah is going to bear a son. Now, what happens? She what? She laughed.

All right. Why did she laugh? Well, what does she say? I'm past this time.

And the old man, he's way past the time too. She laughed.

Now, remember just a chapter ago, Abraham did the same thing, didn't he? What did Abraham do? He laughed. Why? Because I'm old. Sarah's old. This doesn't, you know, this isn't, we're too old for this business.

[3 : 32] And so Abraham laughed as well. Sarah has laughed. By the way, Isaac's name means laughter.

Okay. And we want to keep remembering God told Abraham that it was because Abraham had asked about, well, maybe Ishmael.

Oh, that Ishmael may live before you. And God said, I'm going to bless Ishmael. I've blessed him.

But my covenant that I establish with you is going to be carried through whom?

Through Isaac and his descendants. So, the covenant to Abraham, which was, this is your land and you're going to be a blessing.

And those that bless you all bless. And those that curse you all curse. That was to come through. We just said it.

[4 : 46] Through Isaac and Isaac's descendants. Right? So, that covenant is going to be carried through Isaac.

Yeah? I don't know. But, it fits. They both laughed. But, here, now, whether Sarah doubted or not, I don't know.

She probably is a little bit incredulous, as was Abraham. You know, how can this be? Now, we're going to come on. What does God say?

Yeah. Now, is anything too hard for the Lord? You know, he said, why did Sarah laugh? And, at first, she says, I didn't laugh. He said, no, yeah, you did.

Yeah, you did. Now, I'm never caught in that kind of a position where I try to tell God, no, I didn't really do that.

[6 : 08] I didn't really mean that. Why was it so important to you? For God to point out the fact that she lied, that she did laugh.

The main point made out of that here, why was that an important point? Well, if it's a main point, it might be obvious. But, what is the point of it?

That's a big deal. And commensurate with that is God does know.

Psalm 139. Right? Psalm 139. Let's just look at those first few verses in there. Give me some things about God.

Now, it's given, David, by inspiration, is writing this. And he's writing it kind of as rhetorical questions.

[7 : 16] And what's he say? Where will I go to hide from God? If I go, where? Name some of them. If I go into the sea.

What? You're there. If I go into heaven. If I go to Sheol or hell or Hades, whichever your translation says.

What? The light. The light and the dark are alike to you.

Where shall I go from your presence? So, the idea is God knows. Actually, he says that he knows what you're thinking before I know it.

Another important thing. And remember that song that Roger played for us this morning?

Remember justification. Because this is important in this dispensation as we are saved by grace through faith.

[8 : 32] And that not of ourselves. It's a gift. It's important. So, God knows my motives better than I do.

God knows what I do and what I want. In fact, he's going to say that it's similar to about Abraham in just a couple of sentences here.

So, the two things that are pointed out there are God knows. And then this one that John said was.

What's God say in response to Sarah's thought question? Well, okay, yeah, you did laugh.

But her question was. Can an old woman bear a child? And the old man. And what's God say?

[9 : 43] What? Nothing is too difficult. Now, let's chase this one just a little bit. Have you ever heard that used out of context? I have.

You. Think about a couple. Can you think of some others that are used in the same way? What context have you heard that used that's out of this context?

Okay, let me. Let me rephrase it. I'm not making. Okay. What's this context?

God said this is going to happen. And then God responds. Is anything too hard for me? Now, I have heard it used that if I have enough faith, nothing's too hard for God.

I know you've never heard it. I have. I have. What are some others you've heard taken out of the context? Christ. Let's use a couple.

[10 : 52] I mean, let's use a couple that we've just sat under and we are continuing to sit under.

The teaching from Mark, right? Remember the rich young man that came to Jesus?

Okay. What did he say? How do I enter the kingdom of heaven or of God? Jesus says, give it away. He goes away.

The young man goes away sorrowful because he was wealthy. The disciples say, or he says to the disciples, it's easier what?

Well, it's easier for a camel to cross through the eye of a needle than for a wealthy man to enter the kingdom. Now, here's the question.

Or here's the context. What do the disciples say among themselves? Well, how? How can anybody get in?

[11 : 57] And what's Jesus say? Nothing is impossible for God. Now, have you ever heard that one pulled out of context? In the same way we heard this one pulled out of context, isn't it?

Usually. Usually, that's why it's very important for us. I don't want to overuse the phrase because sometimes it can become trite, but it's important.

Rightly dividing the word of truth. Because if we don't make a straight cut, if we don't watch out, this is the context. This is how it's delivered.

I can't make equivocations dangerous. Because it can't take it out from here and then say, therefore it applies that if I have the faith, you know.

That's right. Go ahead. He was using a phrase. You can do miracles if you have enough faith. So, it's important to keep it in the context it's delivered.

[13 : 16] To whom? To what end? For whom? It's for us, but it's not necessarily to us. See, we're studying about Abraham.

But that doesn't mean everybody in their old age is going to have children. Right? Nor that they should. It doesn't mean that I have the promises delivered to Abraham.

There used to be, in the 50s, there was a... If you were raised in certain circles in the 50s, there's a little ditty sung in the church.

Every promise in the book is mine. Every chapter, every verse, every line. All the blessings of his love divine. Every promise in the book is mine.

It's not true. It sounds good. But it isn't true, is it? The promises of the kingdom are not my promises.

[14 : 26] There are lots of things that are going to happen in the millennial kingdom when Christ reigns on the earth that aren't happening now and aren't supposed to happen now. I didn't mean to chase that that far.

But, okay. Okay. So, God says, is anything too hard? Now, that's a rhetorical question. The answer is, I created all this.

Out of nothing. As a matter of fact, this is incidental too, but I'm going to say it just to remind ourselves, because we hear it a lot from some circles today.

And that is kind of a denial of, if you were even in public school 50, 60 years ago, you learned it in ninth grade.

You learned some things in ninth grade science. You know, thermodynamics and some of the laws that now are being denied. Right?

[15 : 41] Right? And some things weren't even taught because everybody knew them. Men and women.

Right? Nobody even thought about, well, there's, we're going to have to teach that. Why?

Why in the Renaissance did the scientific, what we call now the age, the scientific age, how it came to be, most of those persons were Christian in their philosophy.

And they assumed an orderly universe because it was created by an orderly God.

You know, if the philosophy that we hear bantered about today was bantered about then, you'd still be in the dark ages.

[16 : 55] It would make scientific inquiry impossible because you don't have to be able to replicate it. I mean, scientific inquiry is based on the idea that you can replicate and experiment and test it in a hypothesis.

But if everything's fluid, that's impossible. So, in my opinion, the people who espouse that should quit riding in cars and airplanes and stuff because those are all based upon scientific law.

So, if you were really being honest, you'd quit doing that. Right.

Right. That's exactly right. And what in this dispensation do we have as the promise to our prayer of faith?

We have this promise. Be anxious, but in everything, with thanksgiving, by prayer and supplication or begging, make your request be made known unto God and he'll give it to you.

[18 : 32] No. What's he say? And the peace of God, which passes understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Is that not wonderful? We don't have the promise. The apostle Paul asked to be relieved of a physical weakness.

Now, we usually don't get an answer from God that says no. But we'll not. I'm not going to chase that one, Sherry.

I won't chase it. But, you know, it comes from Romans and 1 John. But anyway, that's just a hint that you can chase it.

But Paul did. And God said, no, you're going to live with this. You're going to have this weakness. But I'll tell you what.

[19 : 34] What's he say? What did he say to Paul? My grace is sufficient for you.

Okay? My grace is sufficient. Now, here's my temptation. Not yours, but mine. When I pray, I'm not looking for grace.

I'm looking for relief. Now, you've never been tempted that way, I know. But, now, does he say it's wrong to ask for relief?

No. Go back. All your petitions. Everything brought. But, the prayer, the promise we have, is that we'll have the peace of God, which passes understanding. His grace is indeed sufficient. And one of the failings becomes, if I take my eyes, metaphorically, if I take my eyes from the cross, and what happened there?
[20 : 53] And what he did, by taking my sin upon himself, and giving his righteousness applied to me.

When I take my eyes from that, I start getting caught up in this, in my circumstance. We need to keep our eyes on what really is eternally important. Now, that's hard to do. Especially when I'm, you know, it's easy for me to say when I stand in good health and everything's easy. And, very frankly, my prayer is regularly, God, help me to remember in the darkness what I know to be true in the light. Because the days will be dark sometimes, won't they? Some days will get dark. So, back, let's get back to Genesis here. Okay, is anything too hard for the Lord? Now, moving on toward 16 through 22. Look, give attention to those verses.

[22 : 14] Now, after their little respite, the men, in air quotes there, the angels, stand up and they do what?

Well, they, it says literally, they looked toward Sodom and Abram, Abraham, got up with them and walked with them away, didn't he?

Okay, yeah, kind of a send-off. Now, excuse me, God says, shall I hide from Abraham what I'm planning to do?

That, he, it's, it's as though he's talking to himself here, it sounds to me like. But, God says, I'm not going to, essentially, I'm not going to hide from Abraham what I'm planning to do.

I've made him this promise. I'm going to make of him a great nation. And I know that he's going to instruct his children, his family, to obey me and do righteousness and judgment.

[23 : 27] So, at this point, by the way, at this point in God's plan, the requirements for men for righteousness was pretty plain.

Be fair. Be fair. Be fair. Now, later on, he's going to get very explicit in the Mosaic Covenant, in the law. We call it the Mosaic Covenant.

Moses didn't make it up. God gave it to Moses. It's instituted through the mediation of Moses, but Moses did not write it. God wrote it.

God wrote it. God wrote it. He's going to get very explicit as to what those things are going to entail. The heart of it's going to be the same.

As we reiterated this, was it last week? What, on this hang all the, on the prophets, right? Everything hangs on this.

[24 : 29] But at this point, the revelation is, I require justice and good judgment.

Right? Walking with God. Now, that, like I said, that's going to be very explicitly laid out in the Mosaic Covenant.

But we know it, just in case that Roger has a hard time remembering it. Well, not Roger now, but Roger Fifth. Has a hard time remembering or discerning, you know, when Jesus says, love your neighbor as yourself.

Well, what's the question? Who is, you know, where's this line drawn exactly? You know what I mean? Well, you don't know, but you know somebody who does.

Where's the line drawn? How far, how close can I get to the edge without going over? And to Israel, God will say, you don't pervert justice for the wealthy, and you don't pervert justice for the poor.

[25 : 41] He's not innocent because he's wealthy. He's not guilty because he's wealthy. He's not innocent because he's, and he's not guilty because he's, right.

He's saying, if you want to understand justice, it's fair. Everybody the same. Now, we're supposed to be founded upon the principle of equal justice under the law.

Not equal outcome under the law, equal justice under the law. When you go the other way, there is no justice. It's a perversion.

And that's where, woe to those who call evil good and good evil. That's part of all that business. So, God's going to talk to Abraham and tell him what?

What is his plan? That is, what is God's plan? So, what does God say? What does God say? What does God say? Well, the men rose up from hence and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went

with them.

[26 : 54] And the Lord said, shall I hide from him? I know him. And I'm going to bring about this stuff. Now, God speaks to him about what he's going to do.

What does he say? This would be verse 20. The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great.

It's come up before me. And I'm going to do what? I'm going to go down there and see if it's really that bad.

Now, that sounds a whole lot like what he did at Babel, doesn't it? Remember, at Babel, it says the Lord came down and saw. Now, Psalm 139, did God know?

Yes. This is kind of an anthropomorphism. God's saying, I'm going to go see. Now, we know that because did God go with them?

[28 : 02] I'm going to test you ahead because it's not very far. And I know that almost everyone here, probably everyone here, is pretty familiar with this whole scenario.

Does God go with the other two men? No. And think about this. I'm not going to ask for the answer, but think about it. Did the other two men go to check out to see if it was as bad as what God had heard?

You think about that. Because we're going to get there, God willing. Not today. I don't think we're getting to Sodom today. I'm sure of it.

Now, so God has told Abraham that he's going to make a judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, right?

I'm going to go check it out. Does Abraham have any doubt how this judgment's going to play out?

None at all. Now, right away he goes into what?

[29 : 20] Okay. Now, he asks a question that you've heard someplace. At least in some form. Shall the judge of the earth not do righteously?

Right? In some form you've heard that. I heard or read, I don't remember now, it stated something along this line.

Well, the Bible basically is a handbook for slavery. You know, they were using the law, the Mosaic Covenant and the laws about slavery, about how you treated slaves and so on.

And they were using that. Now, I'm fairly sure that the person who said that didn't care a bit about what the Scripture said. They were trying to disparage it.

I have heard it said, usually, you've heard these kinds of things used to try to make you doubt your faith.

[30 : 39] Or the veracity of God. How about, well, God condoned killing everybody. Look what he did when Israel entered Canaan.

Look what he told them to do. Now, were they concerned with why God did that? No. They were concerned with, see, that doesn't, he can't be, shall not the judge of the earth do righteously?

Really? Now, our answer to that comes from Romans chapter 4.

Where the Apostle Paul writes, There, or no, it's Romans chapter 9, I'm sorry. Where Paul is using God's judgment.

And he says, What shall we say then? Because it says that God ties all men under sin. Right? And what shall we say then?

[31 : 52] Is there unrighteousness with God? You know the answer to this one. Is there unrighteousness with God? What's the next word? God forbid.

Right. I guess the end for me really becomes whether I, my understanding or lack of understanding notwithstanding, God is righteous.

God is just. So, here we get into the exchange. But, so Abraham, we can go through the exchange pretty rapidly because I won't ask every detail.

But he bounces it down, doesn't he? Okay, so he begins. Okay. Okay. God. What if there are 50 righteous people in Sodom?

Will you destroy the unrighteous and the righteous together? Will you destroy all of them for 50?

God says, no, I'll spare it if there are 50.

[33 : 07] Well, okay, Lord. Thank you. What about 45? What about 40? What about 30? What about 20?

What about five? What about 30? What about 30? What about 30? What about 30? What about 30? Now, let's look at this a moment. Because this comes to the righteousness, doesn't it?

Righteousness of God. Jump way ahead in your mind in Israel's history.

The kingdom has split. Assyria has conquered Samaria. Babylon has now conquered Judah. Were all the people of Judah idolaters? Were all the people of Judah, I don't know how to describe it, but unrighteous?

[34 : 22] Ah, okay. You're jumping ahead, too. We will attend to that. But the answer is, well, there are four whose names you know.

Daniel. I took the easy one. Yeah. I usually don't remember the Hebrew names.

When I was a toddler, we were told Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shake the bed, make the bed, and to bed we go.

When I was a toddler, that's how we learned it. Were they unrighteous? No. No.

Well, okay, John, hang on. We'll get there. Relatively, yeah. Did they go into captivity?

[35 : 29] And they never saw Jerusalem again. Some would, not them. Was God unrighteous?

No. No. No. Do I understand everything? Not at all. Not at all.

Does my understanding constrain God? Not a bit. What I believe about Him will not alter God.

That's important to remember. That's important for me to remember. It's also an important encouragement. Because not everyone who you encounter is going to believe in God.

You're going to hear some things, well, I don't believe that way. Now, I don't recommend saying, so what? But really, the answer is, so what?

[36 : 35] You're believing it doesn't make a change. There may be people. Because your three-year-old doesn't believe in gravity and thinks he can fly, you don't throw him off your roof.

Right? Hopefully. Nor let him do it. Why? Why? You know, I heard a person challenge Ravi Zacharias.

I heard it on film. I wasn't in the meeting. I heard it on film. He challenged Ravi Zacharias that he didn't really understand the Eastern mind, the Hindu mind. That by itself was kind of silly.

But he said something to the effect, or was promoting the idea that in the Hindu thinking, you know, opposites can exist at the same moment.

And Zacharias just said, well, I can tell you that even in Delhi, they look both ways before they cross the street. Why?

[37 : 53] Because you can't be in the same place as the bus. That doesn't, it doesn't really hold true in reality. So what you believe about it doesn't really alter the reality.

At all. And I need to remember that. Because there is no such thing as, well, that's true for you. If it's true for you, it's true for?

It's true for me, right? If it's true, it's true. God is truth.

Right? So. Back to the point. No. Not back to the point.

So. I will leave it at this. Is God righteous? Was Jesus guilty of sin?

[38 : 57] No. No. No. No. But he took my sin.

No. Does that seem fair to me? No. No. But that's the marvel of the gospel. That's why Paul to the Corinthians says, look.

To the Jews that Jesus is a stumbling block. The cross is a stumbling block. Because there. He didn't say it here in Corinthians, but you know from Romans especially, because they sought righteousness based upon the law and not upon faith.

So to the Jews, the cross is a stumbling block. And to the Gentile, it's stupid. It's foolishness.

Why? Because he's not the one. Well, yeah.

[40 : 16] Today it's beyond that, I think. Today most of the people you encounter don't think there's anything to earn. And they don't think there's anything to shun.

There's not a heaven to be gained. There's not a hell to lose. Someone has said, I say this carefully, turn this off, Roger. He said, sometimes the church needs to go back to scaring the hell out of people.

You know, because some places you will not hear the gospel.

And why I need a savior. Because if I stand before God on my own righteousness, I'm in trouble.

Yeah, Roger, we're ending with that. We need to scare them out of hell. John.

[41 : 19] I think probably one. I'll mark that.

I'll mark that. I'll mark that.