

**THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM:
SARAH / ISAAC & ISHMAEL / REBEKAH / JACOB
North River Church of Christ: 8, 15, 22, 29 July 2009**

Abraham & Sarah, people of faith:

1. **Faith overcomes fear** (1 Peter 3:1-6).
 1. True beauty is spiritual.
 2. Sarah's daughters (1 Peter 3:6) correspond to Abraham's sons (Galatians 3:7).
 3. Culture of shame surrounding childlessness (Genesis 21:6-7, 30:1-2; 1 Samuel 1:5).
2. **Faith keeps moving** (Genesis 11:31, 12:1).
 1. Though the main application is to moving *spiritually*, still the question remains: Have I ever moved for spiritual reasons? How willing am I to step out of my comfort zone – even literally moving? We go forward, or we go backward! Am I stepping out in faith?
 2. Where am I, spiritually?
 1. **Ur?** Spending time in the world, holding back? (See Joshua 24:2.)
 2. **Haran?** Compromising on the faithful life God has called me to? (Gen 11:31)
 3. **Canaan?** Delighting in radical decisions, willing to push myself, open to risks?
3. **Faith embraces God's promises.**
 1. The Triple Promise (Genesis 12:1ff): *land*, fulfilled in Joshua 21:43; *nation*, fulfilled in Exodus 14; 19:6; *spiritual*, fulfilled in Christ. See Psalm 117, Zech 8, Isaiah 49:6, etc.
 2. This is a key passage for biblical study. The theme of the whole Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the *partial* fulfillment of these promises.
4. **Faith believes the unbelievable** (Genesis 15).
 1. Abraham's faith is credited as righteousness even *before* he has been circumcised.
 - Paul bases his argument on justification by faith (Romans 4) on this point.
 - Sarah too was a woman of faith (Hebrews 11:11).
 2. This does not mean a perfect faith.
 - Abraham and Sarah tried to take short-cuts on more than one occasion (Genesis 15:2; 16:1ff; 17:18).
 - Sarah laughs at the promise of God (Genesis 18).
 - Furthermore, on two occasions Abraham and Sarah told a lie -- or, technically, a half-truth (12:13; 20:2).
 3. Do we believe the unbelievable? For example, that we can change (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), or that this world will someday come to an end (2 Peter 3)?

Conclusion

- To follow in the steps of Sarah and Abraham is to be on the move, lacking security.
- To believe, even when the facts don't paint a pretty picture.
- To obey, even with only partial understanding.

Some things we learn about God:

- The Lord will fulfill his promises, but he is in no rush. We get impatient after minutes. With God, decades fly past in the blink of an eye. (See Psalm 90.) Consider Sarah, Rebekah, Joseph, Jesus...
- Sometimes his plans just *happen* to coincide with our selfish preferences.
- He showers his grace even on the fickle in faith, who may take matters into their own hands.

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