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Genesis

Chapter 18 - God's Merciful Visitation

What's So Funny (vs. 9-15)

Genesis 18:9-15: Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” He said, “I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’ “Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” Sarah denied it however, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

So, what's so funny? Why would she be laughing? An interesting question, isn't it? In fact, it's the question that's asked within the passage, "Why did Sarah laugh?" And that's what we're going to be looking at specifically today. As we follow this narrative that's been going on with Abraham, as we've seen him called in Chapter 12, and we will follow him all the way to Chapter 25. Think about that, 13 chapters with Abraham, 1 chapter of all creation. One chapter, all of creation, 13 chapters, Abraham. God is telling us something. And obviously, as He begins to reveal to us, the relationship aspect that He has with us is what's most important to Him. And we know that Abraham becomes that man of faith as God begins to bring him into understanding and comprehending what faith is really all about. We don't immediately come into terms or come to terms with an individual that is perfect in faith, obviously. But as we go, he begins to understand what faith means, and he does ultimately trust in God. Therefore, as Romans 4 will tell

us, he becomes that man of faith or that paragon of faith for us.

In this chapter, we come to not only Abraham, but his wife. And what's interesting about this is that God has been telling him all along that he's going to be a great nation. Of course, that was a great promise that's made to him in Genesis 12, and that "I'm going to make your name great." And he begins to try to reason out exactly how that's going to take place and how is God going to protect him. And of course, as we've been going through, we've seen him try to work those things out himself. Even Sarah perceiving that, "Well, you know, I'm barren." Actually, Genesis 11 says before he's called, "And Sarah was barren." That is to say, she wasn't able to have children. So, right off the bat, he's coming in this thing with God saying, "You're going to be a great nation" with other ideas, because obviously it's not going to be through Sarah. Nevertheless, God will ultimately reveal to him, "No, it's going to be through Sarah. It's going to be through Sarah." And it is in Chapter 17 that God visits Abraham, and in that visit, He tells him that not only is the

child going to come through you, Abraham, but it's going to come through Sarah as well. Now, Abraham's response was that he laughed.

And if you back up into Chapter 17, as God comes before him, it says in verse 15,

(Genesis 17:15) “Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.”

(Genesis 17:16) I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

(Genesis 17:17) Then Abraham fell on his face...”

So, he wasn't even subtle about it, as Sarah will be more subtle.

“... Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?””

It's ridiculous to even think that that's going to take place, especially the fact that we already know that she was

barren. Now, she's barren **and** old. So, you have things that are far more complicated at this particular juncture.

As it says in verse 17,

“Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed...”

“*Ṣāḥaḳ*” is the word where we get the word “Isaac”. So, Isaac comes from that particular word. And as they will actually call his name Isaac, which will constantly remind them every time they call him, “Well, I did laugh. I did laugh about this.”

So, as we come to Chapter 18, we actually have another visit from God to the tent of Abraham. And it is in this visit that they begin to inquire about Sarah. This is a very interesting thing, because I've oftentimes reflected on the different wives of the individuals, and we don't even know Noah's wife's name. Don't you think that's interesting? I mean, she was the mother of literally the whole world, and we don't even know her name. And yet, as we follow with Abraham and Sarah, Sarah actually takes a prominent position in the relationship with God. And it is at this point that he literally comes down to earth to visit her.

Now, the passage starts off, if you look in Chapter 18, (Genesis 18:1) “Now the LORD appeared to him (Abraham) by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door...”

It goes on to describe. And you realize, wow, this is fantastic. This is marvelous. How could something like this actually happen, that God would visit? Now, what's also interesting is that Abraham doesn't know it's God.

Because we know that, and I just want to reiterate, and I know that we have told you this before, but just to once again make sure that it solidifies in your mind,

“Now the LORD appeared to him...”

Once again, every time you see in your Bibles, and this would be true of most of the Bibles anyway, “LORD,” it is actually the name Yehovah or Yahweh, tetragrammaton, the name of God. So, what that means is that this is God. God says in Isaiah, “I do not give My Name to another.” So, if in fact you see those capital letters, that's Him. Now, you might have a “Lord,” that could be “Adonai,” and that could be “Lord” or “master”. You could have a “god,” which would be small, that would be “Elohim,” that would

be “strong one”. So, it could be a strong one, it could be a master, but in this case, clearly it is God Himself that is visiting. Once again, a magnificent thing. What's interesting in the passage is that he will not call him “God”. He will call him a master, and it would actually be a way of really respect to somebody that's coming because he doesn't recognize who He is. Now, what we know according to the passage is that there are three men that are together.

And ultimately, if you'll go a little bit further in Genesis 19:1, we know that two of them are what? Angels. Well, two of them are angels. One is “L-O-R-D”. So, it is the Messiah there with them. He does not recognize them as such, so the conversation is, and as we have seen, there's great hospitality that he shows to these individuals because there's clearly a connection that he makes with them, not knowing exactly who they're from, but clearly these are men that are different. And so, it's because of this that he begins serving them. And he actually stands over them and makes sure that they get enough to eat as the passage ends.

So, if you look in verse 8,

(Genesis 18:8) “He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.”

Now, the question is, at this juncture, where does the conversation go? Or is Abraham just standing over them? (I don't like people hovering over me while I'm eating, but that's neither here nor there. Somebody needs to talk to Abraham about that.) But there he is standing, just once again, I think, always wanting to make sure that they have enough, that they have what they need, and really taking on a servant's role. And they begin to stir up a conversation.

And what's interesting to me is, in verse 9, as it starts off, it says,

(Genesis 18:9) “Then they said to him...”

So, they're initiating a conversation at this particular juncture. And it's in the plural, which means “they,” that is not only to say that the LORD, but also the two angels are talking about this particular event. Now, what they

begin to introduce is their concern for Sarah. And this is where the whole narrative actually picks up. Now, this passage is actually tied to all the things that have been happening up to this point, and that is clearly that God has come to appear before Abraham for a specific reason. At this juncture, we actually begin to understand one of the main reasons why He does appear to Abraham, and that is to talk to him about his wife. That's pretty interesting, isn't it? You wouldn't think that God would be coming and visiting Abraham for that specific purpose. And yet, that is the focus at this particular point. Now, I would say all of this at this point is that there has been background involved in this. Abraham was called some 25 years ago, as we go back to Genesis 12, "I'm going to make you great." So, the promise was given some 25 years ago. 10 years later, from the time that he's called, Sarah's going, "You know what? There's no great nation. We don't have any kids." So, she begins to work through the process, and she goes, "I guess I'm going to have to be the selfless one. I'm going to offer my maid and he's going to have a relationship with my maid, Hagar. And so, through her, that's where the great nation's going to

come.” And so, of course, you know the compromise in which Abraham listened to his wife, and instead of doing what God told him to do, that is wait, which we're not really good at, he begins to do the things that his wife wants out of impatience. Of course, her anger begins to stir because Hagar begins to think that she's something, and now she doesn't even like this woman in her house, and she begins to treat her harshly, which is very human, in a respect. And it's one of the things I love about Scripture as it begins to reveal just the human nature of people. We think of our own ideas of how we're going to help God out, and by the process of helping God out, we make a mess of things, and then we get angry at everybody. And we wonder, “Why is my life so miserable?” And God goes, “Because you try to do what I'm supposed to do.” So, she finds herself clearly in a position. So, now, we're not only 10 years later, we're 15 years after that. So, you can imagine at this juncture that the biological clock is ticking, and not only was she barren from the very start, but now she's at an old age, and it is at this point that God decides to visit them. And we know that that's not a mistake in and of itself, because it's at

the point when Abraham decides that he's going to be all in, and Abraham will clearly obey, and he does that in the prior chapter, obeys immediately everything that God says. So, God then comes and visits him. Sometimes we wonder, "What's taking God so long?" And God says, "You." Because the whole process is that He's waiting for us to totally trust in Him. But we say all kinds of stuff like, "Well, we're working on it," and stuff like that. And God says, "Just do it."

So, as we come to this, we realize that there's been a lot of emotions stirring in this. And Sarah feels plain worn out. I mean, she's 90 years old. And in this particular setting, God is going to say, "You're going to have a child." Now, what's interesting to me, and I just have to throw this in, it seems as if, though God had told this to Abraham, that he had not discussed it with Sarah. So, there was no discussion at this point between Abraham and Sarah, as we see at all, about the whole process. And in this particular passage, she seems clearly surprised that this would happen by virtue of her laughter, that though internal, not like Abraham's that falls on his face and

begins to laugh, there she is truly laughing. It's kind of like an overload. Things begin to happen. What we understand is that she's feeling worn out, she's feeling tired, she's feeling like it's not going to happen. I mean, we've read the promises of God and our thoughts are, "Well, it's probably not going to happen to me." I mean, the way that our faith is organized is that we're very selective in our faith. In many respects, our faith is very impersonal because we think in terms of, "God can do great things for great nations and great people, but not for me." And our faith in many respects as well, when you consider with Abraham in this particular passage, is oftentimes irresponsible. I mean, you have a responsibility. If in fact you actually believe something, you have a responsibility to tell somebody else what the truth is. If you don't believe that's true, read passages like Psalm 115, where God says, "Why should the nations ask, 'Where's your God?' You should be telling people where I am." And as you go through, of course, the great commission is, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." But not only that, when you consider Ephesians 6, where it says, you know, you ought to be teaching your

children these things. And I oftentimes hear parents go, “It's kind of up to them, you know, whatever they want to do.” And I'm not reading that. You have a responsibility. According to Ezekiel, it's very clear. If you say nothing, their blood is on your hands. You have a responsibility. Now, they decide to not choose. That's up to them. You can't force them. But even when you come to Titus 1, when it's talking about the elders of the church, the overseers, what does it say? It says, “Must have children who believe.” So, it's clearly a responsibility that we have. And when you go to Ephesians 5, it talks about the husband and wife relationship. So, there is culpability in this as far as Abraham is concerned, and that is to say that he should have been talking to her about this. And I think in many respects, the question that arises is, “Where is Sarah; not only in proxemics, but where is she in her faith? What does she believe? Have you talked to her about these things?” So, as we come to the passage, we begin to realize that.

We know that she's feeling worn out. I know I've thrown that out there several times, but the reason I say that is if you drop on down to verse 12,

(Genesis 18:12) “Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old...”

That phrase, “become old” in the Hebrew actually is, “I've worn out like an old garment.” So, we know that she feels worn out and she feels weary. If you've ever had a time in your life where you come to that point of going, “You know, I'm just plain tired. I don't even feel like I can go on anymore.” That's kind of where Sarah is. And what begins to settle in our minds is we become skeptics and even to the point of becoming cynics. It's hard for us to believe that any good is going to come.

I remember that Psalm 4:6, where the passage actually starts off,

“Many are saying, “Who will show us any good?” ...”

And the point is that we've become highly cynical about any good happening to us, because it hasn't. I mean, we've virtually begun to live out Murphy's Law in our own

life, and not even Tony Robbins can help us at this particular juncture. They have this thing in psychology called the Pygmalion effect. The Pygmalion effect is fundamentally, if in fact I begin to elevate in some way expectations for you; in other words, you say, "Well, I don't think I can do that much." And I say, "Oh, I believe that you can even do better." That you begin to rally around those expectations and you'll do better. And in some respects, I guess that's true. There's another "Galatea" effect that says if you actually say within yourself, you're going to do better. Remember that old book, the little train that said it could? "I think I can, I think I can." That's basically the "Galatea" effect. And fundamentally, it's you saying, "I think I can do this." But you know, in both instances, somewhere along the line, you're going to find the end of that rope. And you're going to find yourself extremely disappointed. Either you can't meet the expectations of others, or you couldn't meet the expectation of yourself. And this is where Sarah finds herself. Now, the wonderful thing about this is that though Sarah was trying to meet the expectations through going through Hagar, she now comes to the point

of realizing that not only is she barren, but she's way too old. And so, at this juncture, she's going, "It's not going to happen because I can't make it happen." And this is what God is waiting for in your life and my life, for us to finally say, "I can't make it happen." Because the thought is, somehow, we amalgamate our perception of our influence in God's working and we go, "God can work as long as I'm helping Him out." And it is fundamentally, as we oftentimes go to that passage in 2 Corinthians 1, where Paul said, literally, "I came to the end of myself, that I might not trust in myself, but in God who raises from the dead." Now, that's an interesting picture because what it's literally saying is that when you're dead, there's nothing you can do. I mean, a dead person isn't sitting there going, "I wonder when I'm going to raise," because he's dead. But it's God that has to raise him. And Paul says, "I had to come to that point that I didn't trust in myself, but in God who raises from the dead." And this is where Sarah begins to find herself in this particular passage.

If you read with me in verse 9,

(Genesis 18:9) “Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” ...”

And once again, I don't believe that they're concerned with just where she is in the realm physically, but I think that they're asking beyond that, “Where is she?” And in many respects, once again, they're reminding him of a couple of things. One is, “Hagar's not your wife. So, you went around this one time.” You know how God has those subtle reminders? “You did the wrong thing. I just want to remind you that you don't want to stick your finger in this again.” So, “Where is Sarah your wife?” They are emphasizing that in the passage. They're also emphasizing, “You have a responsibility to say something to her, but you didn't. So, now we're going to have to talk to her.” A very interesting, once again, subtle thing, nuance that comes in with the passage.

“Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “There, in the tent.””

“*Ōhel*” is the Hebrew word that is used in the passage. It's oftentimes translated “tabernacle,” which is interesting. And we know that the tabernacle that was

built at the time that the children of Israel were coming out were just made of tents. And it's a great picture of looking forward to the Christ coming to earth Who would actually come in skins. So, it's one of the why's God says, "I never asked for Solomon's temple. The reason why I had you build the tabernacle out of tents was it was pointing to the Christ."

"... And he said, "There, in the tent."

(Genesis 18:10) He said..."

And I'm not sure why it's not capitalized (in the King James version), but I actually believe that it's God Himself now speaking at this juncture, taking the conversation upon Himself.

And it says,

(Genesis 18:10) "He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year..."

Underlining the phrase, "at this time next year," it probably literally translated, would make reference to the time that is revived. And another way of putting it would be the time of life, or when life begins to happen, which

seems to convey that it's around springtime, as well as giving reference to the fact that He's controlling the life in the world.

You know, John 1:1-4,

(John 1:1) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(John 1:2) He was in the beginning with God.

(John 1:3) All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

(John 1:4) In Him was life...”

They're having a visit from Life, and that Life is promising them something.

The great comfort that I have with God making promises, of course, His promises will be established. I like the phrase, “I will,” because once God says that, it's done.

A great passage in Isaiah 46:10,

“... ‘My purpose will be established,
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’.”

Simply put, in Psalm 33:9,

“For He spoke, and it was done...”

It's one of my favorite verses. You know, I talk about things for a long time, but they don't seem to get done all the time just because I'm talking about them. But when God says something, and what it's literally saying is nothing is going to subvert, undermine, overturn, impair, thwart anything that God is going to do. Not even, not even our failures. And this is very interesting. You know, we talk about even our salvation, which Paul will say, the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. So, if in fact He called you, if in fact He saved you, it's irreversible. That's amazing. You've been born again. You're not unborn. And He gives you everlasting life. When does everlasting life end? So, He's given you that which is eternal, and He promised you that it's going to happen. Now, once again, you can't be disingenuous about the decision you make, and of course, no one can confess Christ as Lord except by the Spirit of God. But how wonderful it is to know that nothing can separate me

from the love of God, as Romans 8 says. So, the promise is very clear. God is going to do it. It's going to happen.

“He said, “I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door...”

We would call that eavesdropping. And that doesn't go back to Adam's eavesdropping. But actually, that word, strangely enough, comes from water coming off the side of a roof on the edge of the eaves. And so, the water dropping is eavesdropping. And people used to stand there to listen into the house. So, that's why they call it eavesdropping.

But anyway, she was standing at the edge of the tent, and He said, “It's going to happen.” And there she is behind him.

It says in verse 11,

(Genesis 18:11) “Now Abraham and Sarah were old...”

Sometimes we turn to God and go, “You do know I'm old?” He goes, “No, no, I already know that.” So, this is kind of God going, “I already know that you're old.”

“Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.”

Now, once again, Scripture's already told us that she was barren, but now it's saying that she's on top of that past childbearing.

Now, verse 12 then really is the hub of the text in which Sarah begins to respond. And she responds in a sense of laughter. Sometimes people laugh and they laugh because something's funny. But the Scripture reminds us that you don't always laugh just because something's funny.

Proverbs reads this way in Proverbs 14:13,

“Even in laughter the heart may be in pain...”

The Scripture is letting us know that there are times that we laugh that, well, psychologists will say sometimes it's just plain nervous laughter, which is used to help reduce the stress in our lives and sometimes that maybe happened. But I actually think that in this particular case, it goes beyond nervous laughter. There's a thing that psychologists call “incongruity resolution”. You've

probably heard of it. But basically, it's when things happen in your life that just don't seem to match up. So, they call it a juxtaposition of incompatible concepts. That is to say that you have two concepts that don't seem to match in your life, and because of that, it makes you laugh. Now, I'll describe what I mean by that. So, you have a woman who's 90 years old and she has a baby. So, it makes you laugh because it's a juxtaposition of two incompatible concepts. 90 years old, having a baby. And because of that, you're going, "Okay, that doesn't match the expectations that I have, and reality is different than the expectations that I have." And so, you start laughing. Now, it's not a matter of the fact that you're necessarily angry or sad, but you're just going, this doesn't seem to match. It's just no way that this could happen. And it is in many respects, the way that we look at many of the promises of God in our own life, that we begin to laugh internally. We don't do it overtly in the sense of rejection overtly, or we don't do it in the realm of dogmatic denial, "You know, I just don't believe that stuff." But if we're honest with ourselves, there is this sense of disbelief that just goes, "This is not compatible with my reality. My

expectations were this; this is the way things should happen. This is the way things have been happening. This can't be happening.” And God goes, “It is going to happen.” And it's just hard for her to fathom.

So, as we come to the passage,

(Genesis 18:12) “Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old...”

(Or worn out like a garment)

“... shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?””

By the way, 1 Peter 3, you know, where it talks about Sarah's gentle and quiet behavior, it'll actually quote this text, that she called him “lord”. This is the passage. You can go through and look. You don't see her doing that in any other passage. But in this particular text she does, which basically is her going, “Nevertheless, if Abraham wants me to do it, I will. I don't understand how this is going to happen.” But she still submitted to the laws of God and she goes, “Nevertheless, I'll do this.” So, Sarah laughed to herself and she says, “How is this going to happen now that I'm old?”

(Genesis 18:13) “And the LORD said to Abraham...”

Which is I think interesting, once again, verse 13, why didn't He talk to Sarah at this juncture? He turns to Abraham and He goes, “What's so funny?”

“... “Why did Sarah laugh...””

I could just imagine Abraham going, “I don't know. I didn't even hear her laugh. I mean, you know, what are You getting after me for?”

“... saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’”

(Genesis 18:14) Is anything too difficult for the LORD? ...”

A great phrase, isn't it? Abraham will later on in the passage give one of those great quotes, “Will not the God of all the earth do right?” And this is another one of those great quotes within the passage.

“Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

And we know basically, I mean, I've gone through this several times myself, that it's going to take nine months. So, “this time next year” ... Why say “this time next year”?

That's interesting. So, it seems like there's going to be three months kind of in between. You know what's going to happen? What's going to happen is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; Abraham is going to want to move because from the Oaks of Mamre, remember he's up about 3,000, 4,000 feet, and looking down upon Sodom and Gomorrah, as you're looking at, you know, maybe 1,000 or so feet below sea level. He's looking down on this horrific thing that begins to happen in which the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah and great sadness overwhelms him. No longer does he think of this as a great place to look over, so he begins to move, and he begins to move south. And he moves almost all the way down to Egypt, then he starts heading back up, realizing that he shouldn't go back to Egypt. He starts heading back up, and he ends up in the land of the Philistines. So, there he is in the land of the Philistines, and he runs into one of the kings of the Philistines, his title being "Abimelech," which basically just means "father king". And as he runs into him, once again he goes through the whole thing of trying to pass his wife off as a sister. Her life will be in jeopardy, but God will rescue him out of that, as he did

with the Pharaoh earlier. And that will take up the three months. And in the very next chapter, “And the Lord visited Sarah, and she had a child.” So, what we see is that God made a promise, and this is what's extremely comforting to me, in spite of the failings of Abraham, He is going to make good on it. And He does. And at that time, the next year, she has a child. You can read it yourself. Actually, we'll read it if you just stick with us as we keep going through the passages.

“Is anything too difficult for the LORD? ... at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

(Genesis 18:15) Sarah denied it however, saying, “I did not laugh” ...”

And of course, I guess in a way you could say, well, that's true, because she didn't laugh out loud. And let me just state this too, that's part of our selective faith. Isn't it bizarre that we actually think that God can see the things that we do, but if we do something secretly in our heart, “Well, He doesn't see that.”

There's an interesting passage in Isaiah 29, if you look there with me. Isaiah 29:13, one that we oftentimes quote.

(Isaiah 29:13) “Then the Lord said,
“Because this people draw near with their words
And honor Me with their lip service...”

Which is all external.

“... But they remove their hearts far from Me...”

How does He know that?

“... And their reverence for Me consists of tradition
learned by rote.”

And once again, that's why I encourage you, don't memorize Scripture. “Hey, you know what my pastor said? He said, “Don't memorize Scripture.” That's right, that's what I said. What I said is, don't go into Scripture memorizing. Fall in love with Scripture; you'll remember it, but anyway. “Thy word have I treasured in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.” And we have all kinds of programs that get us to do these things by rote, but don't get into that.

But it says this in verse 15, great text,

(Isaiah 29:15) “Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD,

And whose deeds are done in a dark place,

And they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?””

(Isaiah 29:16) You turn things around! ...”

“What do you think? That the One that created you doesn't know what you're thinking and doesn't know what you're doing?” So, you know, our faith is very selective. It's very impersonal in the sense that, you know, what's an interesting passage here with Sarah is, “Shall I indeed bear a child?” You know, I mean, she may have thought that maybe it could happen for somebody else, but for her? Could it possibly happen in any way? And with Abraham, he's clearly irresponsible with his faith. He has no sense of obligation towards his wife in bringing her to this point. And what's also interesting as we come to the end of the passage in verse 15, Sarah denied what she said. And oftentimes we're dishonest about our faith. We say that we believe, and we say that our heart's in it, and we say that we're really genuine about it, but we're really

laughing inside. We're really going, "That's not going to happen." I mean, we know that God says that He's going to cause all things to work together for good to those who love Him and walk according to His purpose, but you're not going to try to walk according to His purpose. You're not going to love Him today. You're not going to put Him first and see if all these things will be added unto you because you don't believe it. (Matthew 6:33) You just think that, "Those are nice verses, and I'll memorize them, but I'm not going to live by them." I oftentimes tell people, "Try it for two weeks and see what happens." I mean, the psalmist says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Or Malachi will say, "Bring your whole tithe in and see if I don't open the windows of heaven."

Fundamentally, God is asking us to take that step of faith and to actually walk by those things that we convey that we believe. Scripture tells us that God is a personal God.

You know, you come to the end of Psalm 138:8, and it says that God will involve Himself in things that concern me. We go, "Yeah, right. God's not concerned with the things that concern me." So, the next chapter, 139, you

know what that chapter is about. “He knows when I lie down, when I rise up. He knows, I mean, before there was a word in my mouth, He knows it. He wove me in my mother's womb.” He tells you all that stuff in the Psalm 139 because He knows that you're going to say, “Yeah, right,” at the end of Psalm 138. Because He is concerned for you. He is concerned.

There are times when we come to the end of our rope, and it's understandable. Once again, we live in a world that has copious amounts of broken promises, and so our feelings are, “You know, things aren't going to happen. They're not going to happen good for me.” And you begin to come to a place of just feeling worn out and tired. And you know what you need? You need a visit from God. And that's what happens in this passage, a visit from God, at a time when we need it. And you're asking, “When does that happen?” It just happened just now. Because when we open up the Word of God, what we're doing is we're letting you visit with God. We're coming to you, and you're visiting in His presence.

James will say in James 4, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you. Now, resist your anger and your upset, just for a moment. That's the word "evil" within the Book of James there. He says, "Resist that," because he says in Chapter 1, "The anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God." He says, "Resist that. Resist complaining." He literally says to those that he writes, "Stop complaining." And he says, "Wait on God." But he says, "Draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you." That's a great text, isn't it? "Draw near to Him." So, it begins with you coming before God and admitting that you were laughing. "I haven't been laughing." You have been laughing. You didn't believe what He said. And that's why you haven't put Him first, and that's why you haven't been doing the things that He tells you to do. But if you will, joy will be made full. That's His promise in John 15, right? He'll cause things to work together for good. He'll supply all of your needs according to His riches and glory. I believe those things.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we ask You to work within our hearts. Lord, You see that we're tired, and we're frustrated over many of the things that happen. Quite frankly, if we look at the world, nobody keeps their promise anymore. But You do. And though it's hard for us to believe because we truly have become cynics, we come before You today saying, "We believe. Thanks for the visit."

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I just want you to examine your own heart. Be honest with God. God didn't strike Sarah with a lightning bolt because she even denied that she laughed. God knows our weaknesses. But He comes back, and He says, "No, but you did laugh." He knows. And as we simply come before Him and we confess the truth, and we say, "We want to be close to You," you know what? He actually visits us. And we walk away with an encouragement that we never thought we'd have; with a promise that we know is going to come true.