

WHEN GOD IS SILENT

(Genesis 16:1-9)

I. The account.

- a. Genesis 16:1
 - i. Sarah had been unable to have children.
 - ii. At this time, she was about 75 years of age.
 - iii. No doubt, she felt as if it was not going to happen for her.
- b. At 75, there was little optimism in her mind she was going to have a child.
 - i. What was probably the most frustrating part for her was that about 10 years before this, God had told Abraham that he would have a son.
 - ii. Genesis 15:5.
- c. The problem was 10 years had passed and she was still yet to bear a child.
 - i. She was getting older every day and felt like it was an impossibility for her to bear children.
 - ii. God had been silent for 10 years about this situation and you can imagine how frustrating it must have been for them.
 - iii. You can imagine their conversations:
 1. God we want a child so badly!
 2. Where are you God?
 3. When are you going to keep your promise?
- d. One of the hardest things to do in life is to wait on God.
 - i. It has been said that God is never in a hurry, but yet He is never late.
 - ii. We have to understand that God's view of time is quite different than ours.
 - iii. To Him, a thousand years is like a day because time means nothing to Him.
 - iv. So we know that 10 years is nothing for sure, but it was an eternity for Sarah.
- e. A 4 yr old was sitting in his car seat on what was supposed to be a four hour trip.
 - i. Of course, he asked when are we going to get there, or are we almost there yet non-stop.
 - ii. Finally, a fed up mother said, "We still have 90 miles to go so don't ask me again when we're going to get there."
 - iii. The boy was silent for a while, but then quietly asked, "Will I still be 4 when we get there?"
- f. To that 4 yr old, a 4 hr car ride is an eternity.
 - i. To an adult it is not so long because we have experience time.
 - ii. To God, a few years on earth is like a few seconds to us because He has experienced eternity.

II. The solution.

- a. Genesis 16:1-4.
- b. Sarah couldn't wait on God any longer so she came up with a plan.
 - i. She came up with a terrible plan at that.
 - ii. Desperation can make us do stupid things.
 - iii. She gave her husband permission to have sex with her handmaid.
 - iv. Abraham, in a dumb moment, agreed to the plan, and Hagar became pregnant.
 - v. Custom in those days allowed this to be done.
 - vi. A barren wife often would offer her servant as a substitute, and as a result, the child born in that situation would become the legal heir.
- c. In reality, Sarah did what a lot of us would do and took matters into her own hands.
 - i. She took action when it appeared that God was silent.
 - ii. Surely somewhere in scripture it reads "God helps those who help themselves" doesn't it?
 - iii. No it doesn't, does it?
 - iv. Rather, we read Psalm 27:14; 37:7.
 - v. Sarah was tired of God's silence, so she decided to do something about it.
- d. This made things all better didn't it?
 - i. Notice Genesis 16:5.
 - ii. She now resents the maid and Abraham.
 - iii. Why should she be mad at Abraham when she said it was ok?
 - iv. Probably because she wanted him to say something like: "No dear, if you and I can't have a child together, then we just won't have one".
 - v. Abraham failed to take charge and let his guy instincts take over, allowing this dumb plan to go forward.
- e. Sarah mistreated Hagar so that she left and that is often what happens when we do something dumb.
 - i. We take out our frustrations on others.
 - ii. Hagar had done nothing wrong.
 - iii. She was a piece of property and really had no say in the matter.
 - iv. Hagar eventually came back and gave birth to Ishmael, who became the father of the Arabs.
 - v. The Jews, the descendants of the son God had planned for, and the Arabs are still fighting today.
 - vi. All because of a rash decision by Sarah and a dumb one by Abraham to go along with it.

III. Some lessons learned.

- a. When God seems silent, expect it to be difficult.
 - i. 10 years probably seemed like an eternity to Sarah.

- ii. She had waited 65 years without a child but was then told she would have one.
 - iii. It had to be difficult.
 - iv. God is sometimes silent when we go through difficulties because He is testing us.
 - v. Harold Wilke was born with no arms and one time, when he was a preschooler, was struggling to get his shirt over his head and shoulders.
 - vi. He wrote about it this way: "I was grunting and sweating and my mother just stood there and watched. A relative turned to my mother and said Ida, why don't you help the child? My mother responded through gritted teeth, "I am helping him".
 - vii. Sometimes God is silent because it helps us mature (James 1:2).
 - viii. It may have been that God was testing Abraham and Sarah.
 - ix. How else do we know if we trust God if that trust isn't tested from time to time?
- b.** When God seems silent, don't get ahead of Him.
- i. When we go against God's timing and get ahead of Him, it almost always ends tragically.
 - ii. Teenagers can't wait for marriage to have sex and end up pregnant or with a disease.
 - iii. We come up with our own plans for things instead of doing things God's way and we end up lost.
 - iv. There was a church sign that said: If you want to make God laugh, just show Him your plans.
 - v. Isaiah 30:1.
 - vi. Someone has said that spiritual ends are never achieved by carnal means.
 - vii. Sometimes, the best way to find out what God's will is, is to sit back and wait.
 - viii. Believe me, I know this is hard to do and have failed to do it at times, but it is the wisest thing we can do.
 - ix. Again, we need to be like the Psalmist (Psalm 130:5).
 - x. We must be people of prayer while we are waiting.
 - xi. Prayer will keep us from poor planning.
 - xii. Proverbs 3:6.
- c.** When God is silent, we can't try to understand Him.
- i. Sarah assumed she understood God.
 - ii. She even said, the Lord has kept me from having children.
 - iii. Just because God was silent didn't mean she wasn't having a child.
 - iv. We can't try to understand God in that sense because God's ways aren't ours.
 - v. Isaiah 55:8.

- vi.** God's ways are beyond our comprehension.
- vii.** It may be that we never figure out God's plan for us until we reach heaven.
- viii.** A missionary during WWII was imprisoned and placed in a concentration camp.
- ix.** The barracks into which she was placed reeked of body odor but was also infested with fleas.
- x.** The missionary complained to God about the fleas and could not understand why God would allow this one last indignity.
- xi.** The missionary started a bible study in the cabin with other prisoners, mostly Jews.
- xii.** If they had been caught they would have been killed.
- xiii.** However, the guards never came in the barracks.
- xiv.** One day the missionary overheard one of the guards say why this was the case.
- xv.** The guard said we don't do go in there because of the fleas.
- xvi.** The missionary then understood why God allowed the fleas.
- xvii.** We don't know what God is planning for us.
- xviii.** He is behind the scenes through His providence.
- xix.** We have to trust that He knows what He is doing.

Sermon outline from an unknown source