"SHE DID IT HER WAY"
Genesis 16:1-16

6/14/98

Introduction:

Sarah's attempt to fulfill God's plan her way created big problems for her and for her posterity.

Learn to trust God and wait on His timing!

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Introduction:

In chapter 15 God gave a promise that Abraham would have a son (an heir). Now in chapter 16, that promise still has not come to pass; so rather than wiating on God's timing and plan, Sarah responds impulsively and devises a plan outside of God's will. A scheme of her own will. One that will bring grief and hardship.

One feature of the Bible that demonstrates this book to be God's Word is its relentless willingness to show the failures of even its greatest heroes.

Sarah's attempt to fulfill God's plan <u>her way</u> created big problems for her and for her posterity.

Learn to trust God and wait on His timing!

I. <u>Waiting</u> is difficult (v. 1)

"Handmaid" – a housekeeping servant

God promised Abraham a son, but He didn't say "when."

In chapter 15, He made it clear that the heir would not be the household steward Eliezer, but rather a son out of Abraham's own loins (15:4).

None of us enjoys waiting; it's not easy to be patient. But God's timetable is best.

God always does what He promises to do, but He does it when He wants, not necessarily when we want.

Why did God wait so long? He wanted Abraham and Sarah to be physically "as good as dead" (Heb. 11:12), so that God alone would get the glory.

What do Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth all have in common? They were all barren until God opened their wombs.

II. <u>Worldly Scheming</u> is dangerous (v. 2-6)

A. The human solution (v. 2-3)

v. 2
"The LORD hath restrained me from bearing" – Sarah recognized that conception was an act of God; that He opened and closed the womb (Ruth 4:13 – "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.")

Perhaps Sarah reflects a big of bitterness toward God (certainly she is blaming Him) for not giving her a child.

Satan's lie is often this: God is keeping something from you . . . you can have it anyway. . . go ahead and get it . . . do it your way.

v. 2-3
"God had specifically named Abraham as the father of the promised heir, but <u>He had not yet identified the mother</u>. Logically, it would be Abraham's wife; but perhaps God had other plans. Sarah was 'second guessing' God, and this is a dangerous thing to do." (Wiersbe, p. 55)

"It may be" – Sarah is acting on a "maybe" rather than on a "thus saith the Lord."

Don't act on "maybe's" but on God's clearly revealed Word.

"If it's doubtful, it's dirty."

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23)

"I may obtain children by her" – According to the legal codes and customs of Abraham's day, this was a common practice (cp. Gen. 20:17).

"A married woman who could not have children was shamed by her peers and was often required to give a female servant to her husband in order to produce heirs. The children born to the servant woman were considered the children of the wife" (Life Application Bible note, p. 32).

Cp. Law # 46 in Hammurabi's Code.

Things that are legal or lawful are not necessarily right!

"Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai" - The last time recorded in Scripture when a husband submitted to the suggestion of his wife was when Adam took from Eve's hand the forbidden fruit and ate it, plunging the entire human race into sin (Gen. 3:6).

A wife can influence her husband for much good or for much evil.

v. 3
"Sarai . . . <u>took</u> Hagar . . . <u>gave</u> her to her husband" – Sarah, determined to get what she wants, took the initiative and forced a situation to work.

Often it is best if we simply leave our hands off of a situation and continue to wait on God, rather than forcing His will by our schemes.

When we resort to worldly solutions or rely on human ingenuity, we always muddle the situation and create complicated problems bigger than the problem we started with.

It is dangerous to depend on our own wisdom (Prov. 3:5-6).

"Sarah took matters into her own hands by giving Hagar to Abraham. Like Abraham, she had trouble believing God's promise that was apparently directed specifically toward Abraham and Sarah. Out of this lack of faith came a series of problems. This invariably happens when we take over for God, trying to make his promise come true through efforts that are not in line with his specific directions. In this case, time was the greatest test of Abraham and Sarah's willingness to let God work in their lives. Sometimes we too must simply wait. When we ask God for something and have to wait, it is a temptation to take matters into our own hands and interfere with God's plans." (Life Application Bible note, p. 32).

"Faith is living without scheming." (Wiersbe, p. 55).

Whenever we have to manipulate people or circumstances or resort to lying, cheating, or stealing or some other immoral means to get what we want, we are striving in the flesh to get what we want. And we may get the "flesh to eat" but also get "leanness to our souls."

"In whatever man does without God, he must fail miserably, or succeeed more miserably" (Scottish novelist George MacDonald, cited by Wiersbe, p. 56).

B. The domestic tension (v. 4)

Abraham had a son at 86, and didn't need the drug "viagra" to solve an impotence problem.

"Her mistress (Sarah) **was despised** (belittled) **in her eyes" –** Hagar, having become pregnant immediately, entertained feelings of superiority over Sarah, who for almost eight decades could not get pregnant.

So now, Hagar despised Sarah; that is, she viewed her lightly or with insignificance.

Hagar (the servant) was now in a position where she looked down upon her superior (Sarah).

How well do you handle success, power, and privilege? Beware of <u>pride</u>.

C. The attempted resolution (v. 5-6)

v. 5
"My wrong be upon thee" – i.e. May you pay for what I did.

Here Sarah, rather than taking responsibility for her decision, shifts the blame and desires all of the consequences to fall upon Abraham. She says in effect, "Now look at what you did; because of you, she thinks she is better than me."

Blame-shifting has gone on ever since the Fall of Adam and Eve.

"The LORD judge between me and thee" – i.e. May God show who is more guilty for the mess we got ourselves into.

v. 6
Sarah, filled with jealous rage, made life difficult for Hagar. She no doubt increased her tasks, giving her more work than she could handle and not with commensurate pay. Such an overbearing work load forced Hagar to run away.

III. <u>Running</u> is not the answer (v. 7-9)

v. 7
Apparently Hagar was heading south, back down to Egypt.

The hot, barren, Negev desert is no place for a runaway pregnant woman.

"The angel of the LORD" – lit. the messenger of Yahweh. A pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ (a Christophany).

Cp. Gen. 16:7-14; 21:17-21; 22:11-18; 31:11, 13; Exod. 3:2; Jud. 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; II Sam. 24:16; Is. 63:9; Zech. 1:12; 3:1; 12:8.

v. 8
Running from or ignoring a problem is not the right way to solve the problem.

Hagar's first course of action should have been to humbly and lovingly confront Sarah face to face, rather than fleeing from her face. Then Hagar should have apologized for her prideful feelings of superiority and requested forgiveness.

Running from a problem almost never solves it.

Many encounter a difficulty in a relationship (whether it be employment, church, marriage, etc.) and rather than squarely dealing with the problem, they run from it.

Poem: "I Stayed . . . I Left"

v. 9
"Return. . . submit" – the Lord's solution to Hagar is: Go back to the point of departure and submit to the authority from which you departed. – A good solution applicable to runaway and renegade teenagers.

IV. God can be trusted (v. 10-14)

A. God can do all (v. 10)

The messenger of Yahweh here identifies Himself as equal to God by claiming to have the power of God and exercising the prerogatives of God. He says, **"I will multiply thy seed"** – something only God can do.

Hagar knows she has come face to face with God, as evidenced by her response in verse 13.

Here the Lord Jesus promises to built a numerous people from her child. God's promise to Abraham that he would be the "father of many nations" is being fulfilled.

B. God hears all (v. 11)

"Ishmael" – "God hears" or "Elohim listens."

God knows what hardships we face.

Song: "Jesus knows all about our struggles"

Hagar's son would be the forefather of many Arab nations.

C. God knows all (v. 12)

"He will be a wild man" – lit. a wild donkey. A strong, untameable and undomesticated donkey.

"His hand will be against every man" – He will be aggressive, always looking for a fight, always involved in conflict.

Even to this day, many nations in the Arab world cannot get alone with anyone, not even among themselves.

"He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" – The Arab Palestinians of today who live in Israel are living proof of the faithfulness of God's prophecy. Arab and Jew still live in each other's presence, both claiming Abraham as their father and both claiming rights to the land of Canaan.

The Palestinian conflict is not something new. It all started with the conflict of Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, the 12 sons of Jacob and the 12 sons of Ishmael.

D. God sees all (v. 13-14)

v. 13
"Thou God seest me" – lit. El Roi.

Hagar saw Him who saw her. Jesus Christ still sees all!

EL Roi - "The Strong One Who Sees me" (Gen.16:13)

His eye is on the sparrow (Mt. 10:29-31)

See Ps. 33:18; 34:15.

Nothing escapes God's notice.

He looks with favor upon the righteous and guides them (Ps. 32:8)

El Roi watches out for us!

v. 14
"Beer-Lahai-Roi" = Well of the Living One who sees me.

Conclusion: Verses 15-16

Hymn: "Trust & Obey" "Not My Will"