

**Main Idea: God's grace is *always* at work in “what is” in our families.**

Though family dynamics are important in and of themselves, like everything else in life, like our jobs, the family's primary purpose is to facilitate a deeper trust in and more intimate connection with the Lord. Our family life is perhaps the tool He uses most frequently to that end. It's like a **hammer** to a carpenter, **wire cutters** to an electrician, or **socket wrenches** to a mechanic.

**Text Romans 4:18-25** <sup>18</sup> *Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”*<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>19</sup> *Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead.* <sup>20</sup> *Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,* <sup>21</sup> *being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.* <sup>22</sup> *This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”* <sup>23</sup> *The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone,* <sup>24</sup> *but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.* <sup>25</sup> *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Reading this passage you would think Abraham and Sarah just sailed through their faith challenges without a hitch, but then there's the rest of the story, which is found in Genesis chapters 12-25.

- Abram lied and said Sarai was his sister and Sarai was taken into the palace for Pharaoh's pleasure.
- Sarai talked Abram into sleeping with her handmaiden, Hagar, and when Hagar got pregnant she began to despise Sarai. Sarai blamed Abram. Abram washed his hands of the matter. Sarai mistreated Hagar so intensely that Hagar fled.
- Sarai laughed at the Lord's promise that she would have a child and then lied about it.

*1 Peter 3:1-6 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,* <sup>2</sup> *when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.* <sup>3</sup> *Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes.* <sup>4</sup> *Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.* <sup>5</sup> *For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands,* <sup>6</sup> **like Sarah**, *who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.*

How do we reconcile Abraham's missteps and human foibles with Paul's statement “without wavering in faith?” And the rest of Sarah's story with the description from Peter?

***It's not that Abraham and Sarah weren't all that Paul and Peter described it's just that they were also more than what Paul and Peter described.***

- What we need to understand is a steadfast faith does not mean a perfect life.

- What we need to understand is a lapse in judgment is not the same as wavering faith.
- A lack of courage is not an abandonment of faith.
- Abraham never wavered in who was His God.
- There is a difference between failing a test and failing the course.
- There is a difference between failing a course and dropping out of school.
- Sometimes the evil one wants to discourage us to the point where we want to quit school.

Like every other family in the Bible we are going to fail some tests in our families. God's grace is *always* at work in what is in our families. The good times and the bad times. He supports and sustains our good choices, and He redeems our bad ones.

## **Conclusion**

I have come to realize that God's richest blessings are often not packaged in my plans.

The Bible is full of examples of this truth. From Abraham to Joseph, from Ruth to Elizabeth, incredible treasures were excavated from the most unlikely of circumstances. And when we take the time to think about it, no doubt most of us could add an episode or two from our own life to the record. I certainly can!

I became a believer, not in a church as a result of an altar call, but on an ordinary weeknight on the streets of East Lansing, Michigan and from a place of confusion and disillusionment with life. From that barren wilderness the Lord presented me with the greatest and most incredible gift of my life. And that was just the glorious introduction to His surprising ways.

Remembering His gifts often come in strange packages brings me tremendous peace in the midst of the desperation, frustration and fear that causes me to press and stress trying to make things turn out the way I want them to or think they *\*ought\** to. And it is a blessing of consolation and hope when they don't.

God's faithfulness is a certainty, even though the way He chooses to display it is often a mystery. In the words of Asaph the psalmist, "Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen" (Psalm 77:19).

Our families are one of those strange packages and God's amazing grace is at work in what is in them.