

FROM LAMENTATION TO THE BIRTH OF LAUGHTER
Move from longing, anxiety, disappointment and unfulfilling substitutes, to the birth of laughter—to receiving the amazingness of the covenant of God.

KEY POINTS

- ▶ We laugh for a lot of different reasons. In Genesis 17, Abraham laughed because the very thought of what God had just said was pretty much impossible. Impossible to the point of being ridiculous. Ridiculous almost to the point of being cruel.
- ▶ Let’s look at Genesis 18:1-15. Abram’s name had been changed to Abraham (a change that occurred in chapter 17).
- ▶ In these two chapters, his wife’s name was changed from Sarai (“quarrelsome” according to some dictionaries; the same as Sarah, according to others) to Sarah (princess or happiness). In the passage we just read, Sarah laughed at the thought of having a child.
- ▶ But she was not the first to laugh. We saw in chapter 17 that Abraham had fallen down laughing. God responded in verse 21 by saying, “But My covenant I will establish with [laughter].”
- ▶ The name we call ‘Isaac’ in English is ‘Yitzhak’ in Hebrew. It means ‘laughter’. In Hebrew, this is an onomatopoeic word—it sounds like what it means—and sounds like someone erupting with outlandish laughter. The kind of laugh you’re not supposed to do in polite company. It is the kind of laughter that happens when something is just too funny for words. When it’s ridiculous, preposterous, when it couldn’t even be possible. Yitzhak!
- ▶ So why would our very proper God, the Judge of all the earth, the only wise God, choose this—laughter—to say that in this He would establish His covenant?
- ▶ Maybe because His promises to us are so ridiculously amazing, so impossible, so big, so undeserved, so unimaginable, so over-the-top, that if we really understood what He was talking about, if we really got what He was saying, our most appropriate response would be like Abraham’s—to break out laughing. So God indeed said, “My covenant I will establish with laughter.”
- ▶ A covenant established with laughter. Can this be real? Is it established in the mouth of two or three witnesses? Let’s take a look.
- ▶ As God’s people repeatedly reject Him and are being taken away into captivity, we get the Book of Lamentations. But as they turn their hearts to God and God delivers them, we get the glorious declarations of Psalm 126:
When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
²Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
³The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.
- ▶ We hear an echo of this in Isaiah 51 (KJV): Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.
- ▶ God is glorified when in the face of everything that would have you frowning, you find the way to laughter.
- ▶ You remember the promises of God. You remember that our God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there’s nothing He

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Genesis 17:15-22

- ▶ You remember that you are in a covenant with the only One in this universe who is Almighty. And you remember what the song says to do: “Are you weary, are you heavy-hearted? Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus.”
- ▶ Have you considered making an exchange today? Maybe you had given up on the promises of God. But maybe you are finally ready to exchange your dependence on yourself for total dependence on God.
- ▶ Are you satisfied to stay in the place of mourning and depression? Is it easier to see yourself as a victim?
- ▶ Or do you want to take God at His word and step into the life of an Overcomer? Are you willing to receive the oil of joy instead of mourning? The Spirit of God can do this.
- ▶ If you have experienced the birth of Isaac in your life, if you have known the birth of laughter and rejoicing, if you are living in this great, ridiculously amazing covenant of grace, somebody near you needs you. Take that oil of joy that you have received, take the garment of praise that you have received, and share it with someone else.
- ▶ When you feel that freedom that God is giving you, begin to rejoice. When you realize that no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, you can afford to laugh at every circumstance. So go ahead and laugh. God has you in His hand. You are in covenant with Him. Let this affect the way you live. Let this affect the way you pray (Philippians 4:6-7).
- ▶ “Come let us sing, let us rejoice, come let us sing, let us rejoice. Messiah’s come, and He brought life, and He put laughter into my soul...”

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

- 1) Are there or have there been situations in your life that were so insurmountable that the only answer was to “tell it to Jesus”? In these situations, was your first response to rely on the Lord, or did you try to fix the situation yourself? What were the results when you relied on self/the Lord?
- 2) Did your response change when your situation(s) seemed not to be changing?
- 3) What are the methods one can employ to move from a place of anxiety to one of laughter when faced with a trying situation? What has worked for you to restore your joy/soul?
- 4) What are the scriptures in your arsenal that help you smile/take comfort in difficult situations?
- 5) Take the time to “tell it to Jesus”. Tell God your situations, your worries and cares. Then laugh/smile as you give God thanks.

Prayer Time

Thank You, Lord, that no matter what situations may come, You are the One who puts “laughter into my soul”.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2017

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week’s message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms)
 (New idea)
 (Think about)
 (Do this)
 (Speaks to my heart)
 (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Life Group Icebreaker: When the weather got unseasonably warm, what were some of the things you did that you normally wouldn’t do during winter?