

Women's Devo Study: Hagar Devo #4

Theme: The Sovereign Lord

Text: Genesis 21

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"The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights." Habakkuk 3:19

Welcome back to my devo series on Hagar! We left off on Sarah telling Abraham to send Hagar & Ishmael away, and stating that Ishmael wouldn't share in her son's inheritance. In the last devo we also delved into the topic of identity. But for this devo, we will go into the topic of the Lord's sovereignty. As humans, we have freewill, but the Lord's sovereignty still exists, and we live in this balance. For example: Abraham and Sarah's act of disobedience & attempt to manipulate the blessing was an act of their free will. However, this rebellious act still didn't change the original promise of the Lord; his sovereign will to establish a covenant through Isaac. Their act did bring about unnecessary consequences, but God's original plan still prevailed. As for Ishmael, God also holds the sovereign will that Ishmael will be blessed too, though differently than Isaac. And nothing, not even Sarah's request to have them leave, could block the Lord's blessing from coming to pass.

"Many are the plans in the heart of man, but it's the Lord word that prevails."
Proverbs 19:21

As we touched on in the previous devo, it's clear that Sarah no longer considers Ishmael to be her son. If we go back to Genesis 17 (before Isaac came along,) Abraham and Sarah still wanted to get God's promise through Ishmael. Abraham even told God **"if only Ishmael might live under your blessing."** - Genesis 17:18 But God tells Abraham: **"And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."** - Genesis 17:20 The Lord fulfilled his promise to Abraham and Sarah. And now the same God who was good and faithful to Sarah, is going to be good and faithful to Hagar. The bible says the Lord shows no favoritism, - **Romans 2:11**, and that he **"works everything for the good of those who he loves, and who he calls according to his purpose."** - **Romans 8:28** After her encounter with the Lord, it is implied that Hagar now knows and follows the Lord, and thus has become his servant. Her very obedience to God in going back is proof of this. And the Lord doesn't fall short of the promises for those who serve him. Ishmael's very name was a reminder of God's goodness towards Hagar, and of his promise to bless him, because his name means **"The Lord has heard of our misery."**

Even Ishmael getting named Ishmael serves as an example of God's sovereignty, because we don't know if Hagar ever told her Masters that God said that would be his name. This reminds me of another story in the bible where God's sovereignty for a name comes to pass: the birth of John the Baptist. John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, was told what to name his son while he was in the temple, after learning that his wife would conceive in her old age. (Similar to Sarai.) But because he doubted he became mute for a time. Months later, while still mute, his wife Elizabeth knew to name their baby John. And when they asked Zechariah, he wrote John, and his voice came back. When God has a sovereign will, nothing can stop it, and we can rest in that. But getting back to Hagar. Whether she told her masters or not about Ishmael being the name, the Lord made sure they would name him Ishmael. And Hagar was certainly honored by the Lord, for obeying the Lord, in coming back, and submitting to Sarai. We also don't even know if Hagar told them about her encounter with God. However it's very likely that even if she didn't that her transformation was evident, because once we have a real encounter with God, we are not the same. And without God instructing her Hagar wouldn't even have gone back.

If Sarai did find out that Hagar was given a promise from the Lord, we can imagine that Sarai probably didn't like that very much. And now, in Genesis 21, we see Sarah, once again, set herself up against God's will, but this time, as it relates to Hagar. But just as Sarah's promise was secure in the Lord, so is Hagar's. And as we touched on, God didn't just promise Hagar that Ishmael, but He also promised Abraham as well. At the end of the day, Sarah isn't powerful enough to remove God's favor from Hagar. The best she can do in the physical, is demand Hagar be sent away, and because of this put Hagar in a situation where some suffering will come to her. But her blessing would still come too. Technically Ishmael wasn't going to share in Sarah's inheritance to begin with, because God decided to give Ishmael his own inheritance to live out.

"The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving to all he has made." - Psalms 145:13

Another thing that Sarah wouldn't be able to change is the fact that, even though she rejected Ishmael as her son, he would still always be Abraham's son. And Ishmael being Abraham's son is part of the reason why he would be blessed. Her request to Abraham to send Ishmael & Hagar away put Abraham in a tough spot. The text hinted that he was distressed over both Hagar & Ishmael. Sarah's request was almost the same as asking Abraham to reject his own son. (A test that he would later pass with the Lord on Isaac.) The text states that the matter ***"distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son."*** - Genesis 21:11 In this messy situation, God showed up with comfort and instruction for Abraham. First, God told Abraham not to worry. (A typical first instruction we hear from God throughout the whole bible.) And then God instructed Abraham to listen to his wife, and reminded him that Ishmael would still be blessed. God said: ***"Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring."*** - Genesis 21:12 Abraham's a character who has made many costly mistakes, so his distress is valid.

However he is safe when he obeys the Lord. Even though there's implicitly some hurt, he could rest in the Lord's instruction, and hold fast to the Lord's promise for Ishmael. Just like Hagar rested in obeying God's instruction to come back the first time. She had been shown God's goodness and believed in God's promise for Ishmael. Obedience in both Abraham & Hagar's case is evidence of their belief and trust in God. So Abraham granted Sarah's request to send Hagar & Ishmael away, but this time, he sent Hagar with resources. Even this is reflective of God's love; that he wouldn't let Hagar leave in the same condition that she had left the last time.

The text says that the next morning Abraham sent Hagar away with food and a skin of water. Then it says she wandered in the Desert of Beersheba. There the God who first met and rescued her in the Desert, would meet her again with his goodness, love, & faithfulness. But we'll cover that in our next and final Devo on Hagar.

Application: Christmas just passed, and one of the verses that I've studied is from Luke 1, and it's also about God fulfilling his promises. In Luke 1, Mary visits Elizabeth. Elizabeth becomes full of the Holy Spirit, and prophesies about Mary giving birth to the Messiah. She also calls her highly favored. And one of the things she says to Mary is ***"Blessed is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her."* - Luke 1:45**

This verse has encouraged me this month, as I've been waiting on the Lord for provision & direction regarding going back to Thailand for missions. The last time I fasted on the matter, I heard the Lord tell me "Do you believe that I'm sovereign?" My struggle had been sometimes overthinking if I'm doing everything I'm supposed to be doing, and wondering if I was disobeying the Lord in not going right away. But the Lord has been faithful in comforting me, encouraging me, and giving me clarity & discernment. He's been teaching me to wait & trust in his timing. As we see from Sarai's story, it's wiser to wait on the Lord's promise, and foolish to try to accelerate ourselves. Today I received a huge answer to my prayers, and I believe there is still much more in store for me from the Lord. And a few weeks back one of my friends encouraged me saying "One thing I know Larissa, is that the Lord will bring you at the right time." The Lord's sovereignty isn't something that I perfectly understand, but I'm marveled by it. When I think of the things that are outside of my control, I find comfort in being reminded of the Lord's sovereignty. I pray that you may find comfort in it too. May the Lord help you be faithful and obedient in what is your part to be faithful and obedient in. And may He help you rest and let go of what only He can take care of. Remember that the Lord is God. What is meant for you will be yours, and God's timing is perfect. As you reflect on God's sovereignty, answer the following:

***"Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted over the nations, I will be exalted over the earth."* - Psalms 46:10**

- 1) What's one testimony of how the Lord's sovereignty came to pass in your life, that can now encourage you, for what you are now waiting on the Lord for?
- 2) What does God's sovereignty mean to you?
- 3) a) Pray and ask God to reveal the areas in your life that you need to take action on,

where you need to be faithful and obedient in.

b) Pray and ask God to reveal the areas that you need to surrender into God's hands and rest.

4) Write down three examples in the bible of the Lord fulfilling promises to people after a long period of waiting.

5) Reflect on how God came through for you, in your life, even after mistakes that you shouldn't have committed. Be encouraged that the Lord has grown you even more now. Be faithful with the little and he will trust you to be faithful with much. - **Luke 16:10**

6) Hagar has been waiting 14 years for God's promise to come to pass for her son, and now in Genesis 21 she is being sent away. The desert may feel like a detour, but it's exactly where she is going to experience breakthrough from the Lord. How has God grown you in your waiting seasons/deserts in the past? If you're currently in a waiting season now, ask the Lord what he wants to grow/prepare in you during this season.

Scriptures to reference:

"He has the key that belonged to David, and when he opens a door, no one can close it, and when he closes it, no one can open it." - Revelations 3:7

"The Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world." - Revelation 13:8

"Your eyes saw my unformed body; all my days were written in your book and ordained for me before one of them came to be." Psalms 139:16

"For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." - Jeremiah 29:11

"So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the Lord. Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel." - Jeremiah 18:3-6

"When the time is right, I, the Lord will make it happen." - Isaiah 60:22

Prayer: I pray that the Lord ministers his sovereignty to you, and points you to more examples of it in the bible, and in the lives of people you know. May you abide daily in Jesus, and rest knowing that nothing escapes the Lord's control. May God direct you on what you need to be doing, and help you to not miss out on everything he is giving you in the present. Rest in him as your refuge, and trust him to care & guide for you as your Shepherd. Your future is taken care of, and your life is safe in his hands. May he strengthen your faith when you doubt, send people to encourage you, lift your spirits, and replenish you. May he give you peace, and remind you of the great plans that he has for you, to his glory. He is with you and will help you. May you rest knowing that what he wills for your life will come to pass. In Jesus name, amen!