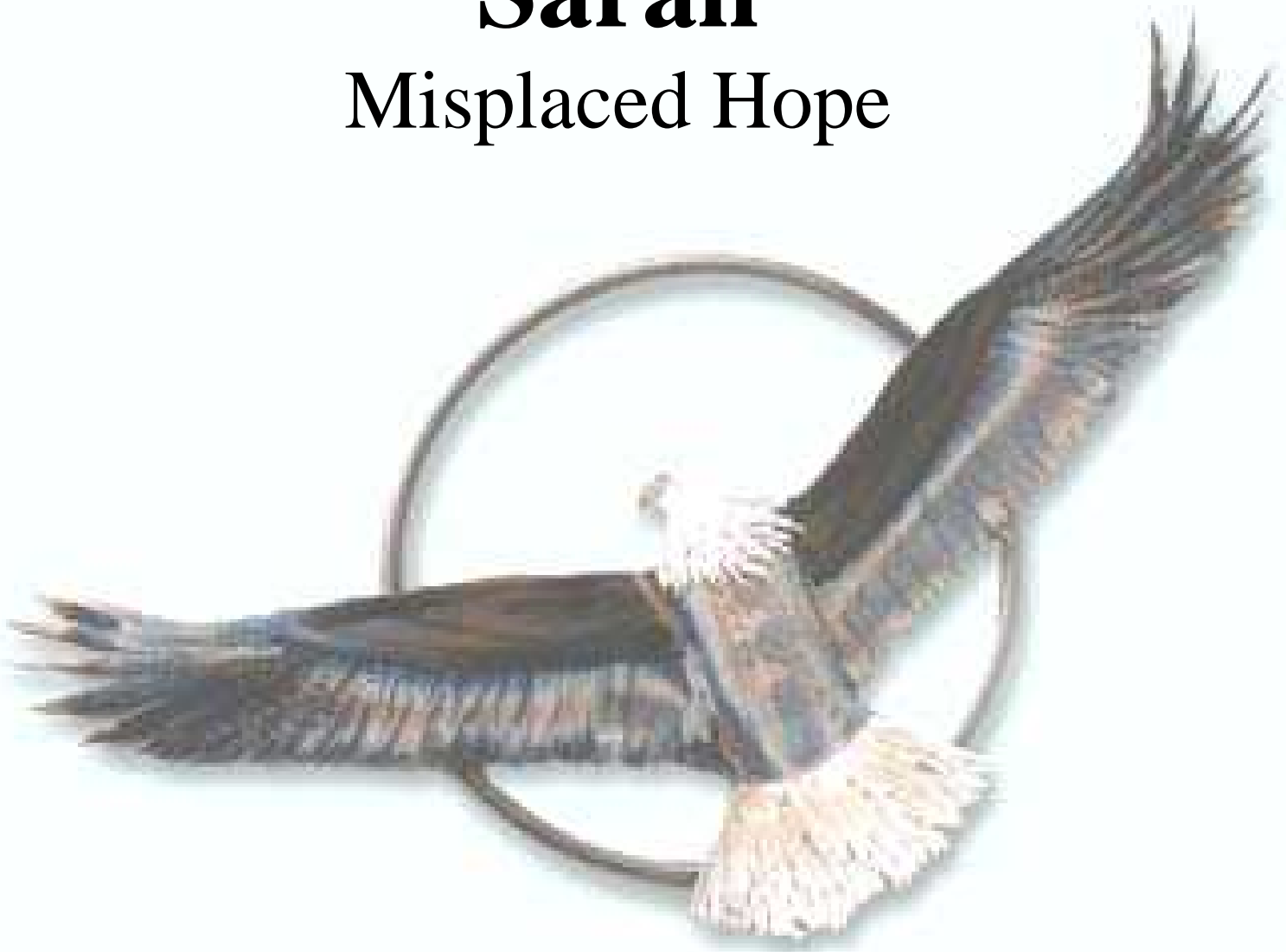


With wings *of an eagle*

Part 3 of 12

Sarah

Misplaced Hope

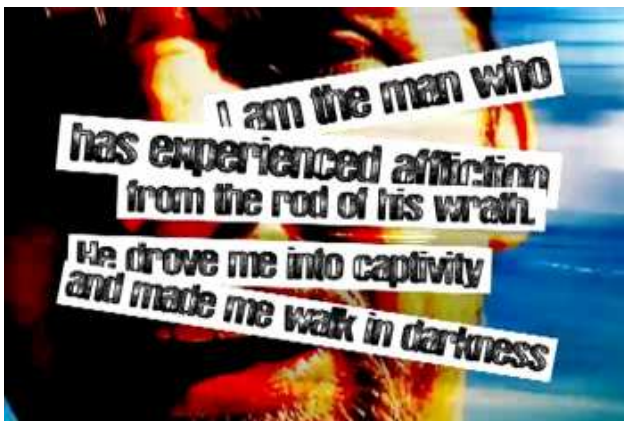


Full credit given to: To Run and Not Grow Tired: By Fran Sciacca.
Navpress – Navigators 1991

Ps Roger Spackman
May 2008

Slide # 02 – Video – Lamentations

Available for free previewing from www.TeAtatuBaptist.com



- 1 ¶ I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.
- 2 He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.
- 3 Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day.
- 4 My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.

5 He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail.

6 He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old.

7 He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.

8 Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

9 He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.

19 Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

20 My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

21 ¶ This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

22 It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

THEREFORE – I *WILL* hope in the Lord!

What are you hoping for today?

Actually, a more important question is this: **For what have you lost hope today?**

Welcome to our 3rd interactive Bible Workshop – where you get to shape and contribute to the direct of the sermon.

Today we are looking at the Bible character Sarah – on the topic of Misplaced Hope.

Slide # 03 – Abiding Principle

And this is our ABIDING PRINCIPLE for today:

Hope that is grounded in anything other than the unchanging character of God will cause you to become disillusioned and discouraged.

Because, when you say a *situation or a person is hopeless* – you are slamming the door shut on the face of God.

Literature, television, books and movies abound with stories of hope!

Heroes and heroines who brave life's storms, beat the odds, and save the day.

We all have our favourites!

But usually, these accounts are merely isolated shrines to a select few who somehow, for a brief few moments, possessed unusual cunning, fortitude or stamina.

But the reality for most people, is that life often contains a long line of dashed dreams and shattered hopes.

Let's be real.

Life can be difficult.

And for some people it just seems to get more and more difficult all the time.

So – how on earth can we maintain a sense of hope in the face of constant difficulty and disappointment.

In fact – do we even know what hope is????

Help me out on this one – give me some descriptions of what hope is?

What is HOPE?

Hope is:
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Sarah, wife of the patriarch Abraham, was challenged to hope against overwhelming odds.

God promised her husband that he would be the father of many nations.

But – Sarah was old and barren!

The study of her life reveals a pattern of behaviour that is typical and familiar to all of us here today.

Sarah finally rested her hope in the only proper place, but not until she had exhausted nearly every other possibility first.

This morning we will take a fascinating journey with Sarah – over a span of 25 years of her life – as she wrestles with the whole issue of hope and trust.

Before we begin, can we just turn to Proverbs 13:12

12 ¶ Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life. (NKJV)

I did a synonym search on the word deferred, and came up with the following exposition of this verse:

When our hope has been *lost* or *disappointed*, when we see nothing positive or can no longer believe that our situation/relationship/health or finances will improve – we become *defeated* and *depressed* in our hearts – we loose the strength to carry on. But when a glimmer of hope that things will improve *comes again* – it is like a fresh green tree of life that invigorates and sustains us – empowering us with new energy and a positive outlook for the future!

So – with this in mind, lets look at the life of Sarah, *over a 25 year span*.

In fact, I need you to tell me *in your own words*, how Sarah might have felt when she found out what God had told her husband at four significant points in her life – at ages 65, 70, 76 and 90!

Age 65 is found in Genesis chapter 12

1 ¶ The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

4 ¶ So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

5 He took his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Slide # 06

How do you think Sarah was feeling about the journey and promises given by God at this point (65 years of age)?

A few points to consider: Whose call was this – Abrahams or Sarah's? Did Sarah have the faith to believe at this stage? Who is the main player in this story – Abraham or Sarah?

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Then, five years later – when Sarah was 70 years of age, God continues the journey in Genesis 15

1 ¶ After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

2 ¶ But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless?"

3 And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir!"

4 Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."

5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Bearing in mind that this is five years after Abraham and Sarah arrived in the promised land – and still no offspring!

Slide # 07

How do you think Sarah would be feeling at this stage of the journey? – In relation to her husband, her faith and God???

A few points to consider: How would her faith be holding out at this stage? How might Sarah be feeling about how Abraham felt about her – i.e. might she have felt responsible for not fulfilling the promise? Was this fair of God to expect this of Sarah?

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Now, at age 76!!! Genesis chapter 16:

1 ¶ Now Sarah, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;
2 so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarah said.

4 ¶ He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

15 ¶ So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.

16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Slide # 08

Oh boy! Tell me what Sarah was thinking to come up with this plan!!!

A few points to consider: Why did Sarah take matters into her own hands? What should Abraham have done? What was the outcome years (even 1000’s of years) later for these actions?

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Now, we read of Sarah at age 90 – in Genesis chapter 17 and 18!

Chapter 17:

¶ When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.

2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

3 Abram fell face down, and God said to him,

4 ¶ "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.

5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

7 ¶ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

Chapter 18:

The LORD appeared to Abraham *through three visitors*...while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three measures of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread."

7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.

8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

9 ¶ "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said.

10 Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.

12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'"

14 *And the Lord answered:* 'Is anything too hard for the LORD?'

Slide # 09

How is Sarah feeling after 25 long years of deferred and broken hope?

Some points to consider: Maybe cynical? Maybe her faith is really being tested? Might she be despising Abraham or even God???

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Before we continue with Sarah’s journey, I think it is important that we take hold more fully – of the nature of Hope.

Slide # 10

What insights can we glean from Psalm 31:24
about the nature of hope?

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Slide # 11

What insights can we also glean from Romans
8:24

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Slide # 12

And lastly – what insights can we glean from
Hebrews 6:19?

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The prophet Jeremiah gives us two examples of hope – misplaced hope and properly placed hope.

Slide # 13

From Jeremiah 17:5-6, describe *misplaced* hope:

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Slide # 14

Now, from Jeremiah 17:7-8, describe *properly placed* hope:

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Slide # 15

Let's summarise what we have learnt from Sarah today:

Sarah first sought to place her hope in anything but the unchanging character of God.

She trusted in her own ability to conceive and birth God's plans for her life, her husband, her family and her marriage.

But all her plans eventually failed.

Then, Sarah concocted a scheme that allowed her to dictate how and when God's plan and promise would be outworked.

But, that too turned sour.

Finally, Sarah gave up, and concluded that God was wither impotent or deceitful.

It was at precisely at that point, in her disillusionment, that God appeared to Abraham with a message for his wife Sarah.

Sarah would give birth to the plans of God – that she could not conceive on her own.

As she had exhausted her own resources and plans, Sarah came face to face with the sobering truth that it is easy to hope in God when there is a chance we can fulfil His promises on our own strength!

But such hope is not rooted in God's unchanging character.

It is merely an extension of our own abilities, combined with some vague notions about God.

I have some empowering and thoughtful questions for you to answer in your own time – *and perhaps the sooner the better.*

Slide # 16

You see – this whole story isn't just about conceiving and giving birth to a child. It is about conceiving and giving birth to hope and trust in God.

Dear brother or sister – what plans are there in your life that you are trying to control – for which you have lost hope?

Maybe that relationship, marriage, family situation, health or finances?

25 years is a long time for Sarah to learn to hope and trust in God.

In your own time, I want you to explain why it is still possible to maintain hope and trust in God – even though your situation is going from worse to worse.

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Why is it, that hope based on God’s character is the foundation for every other type of hope – i.e. hope for the future, for success, for happiness and health etc...?

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Slide # 17

Our Scripture memory verses for this week are:

Romans 15:4

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Slide # 18

Psalm 39:7

But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.

Slide #19 Closing Video

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