

Be Patient!

Purpose: to show that if we patiently endure difficulties, we will eventually receive whatever God has promised us.

Why does it seem to take so long? I pray and pray; yet God seems to not answer. I try to do right, yet my problem still persists! Then I make a mistake and feel guilty.

Do you feel this way sometimes? Well, we can't always explain what God is doing, but we can be sure that if we are patient and endure we will eventually receive whatever God has promised us. Let's see what happens to Abram as he reaches the age of 99 – (read chapter 17)

God makes a covenant with Abram that is very different from what happened earlier:

- In chapter 12, God said what He was going to do:

Genesis 12:2,3

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

- In Chapter 15, God makes a covenant concerning the **land**:

Genesis 15:18

On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates–

- In Chapter 17, God makes a covenant concerning his **descendants**:

Genesis 17:7

And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you

When Abram was told to leave (Gen. 12:4) he was 75 years old.

He was 86 when Ishmael was born (Gen. 16:16).

He was 99 when this covenant began.

Why so long from the time He told Abram to the time he actually made the covenant? Because he had to be moulded! This is what happened to him:

- He had to leave his country, family and father's house
- He had to go into Egypt (where he lied about his wife)
- He had to get away from his nephew, Lot (when his humility was tested)
- He had to rescue his nephew (where he learned warfare)
- He had to deal with strife in his family (Sarai and Hagar)

In all of these difficult things, he learned to have faith in God!

- Don't be surprised if it takes you a little while to learn to trust God.
- Don't be surprised if you make a mistake or two on the way.
- Whatever God calls you to do, He will prepare you for it:

Be patient!

This is what the Apostle Paul wrote about Abraham:

Hebrews 6:13-15

*For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "SURELY BLESSING I WILL BLESS YOU, AND MULTIPLYING I WILL MULTIPLY YOU." And so, after he had **patiently endured**, he obtained the promise.*

Later, he said this:

Hebrews 10:35,36

*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of **endurance**, so that **after you have done the will of God**, you may receive the promise:*

What happened to Abram at the age of 99?

God reveals Himself to Abram:

Genesis 17:1

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

- Previously he had revealed Himself as his shield and exceedingly great reward, which meant that God would protect him and honour him. At that time in his life, Abram needed to know God in this way.
- This time God reveals Himself as the All Powerful One, which means that He can do anything. Abram is learning more about the God that he serves.

God changed his name:

Genesis 17:5

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

- Abram – exalted (high) father
- Abraham – father of a multitude

God established his covenant with Abraham, with the outward symbol of circumcision:

Genesis 17:10

This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;

Why do we not circumcise today?

- Because circumcision was an outward symbol of what God would do to the heart. Perhaps we will be able to consider this more fully another time.

God changes his wife's name:

Genesis 17:15

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name."

- Sarai - princesses (one among many)
- Sarah – princess, noblewoman (implies chief princess)

God stated that Sarah would have a son:

Genesis 17:16

And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

- Up to this point, God had never told them this
- Sarah was 89 years old at the time of this announcement!
- Abraham thought that God meant Ishmael!

God named the baby:

Genesis 17:19

Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him."

- Isaac means "laughter"
- He would always be a reminder of what God did for them

How did Abraham respond?

- Faith – he believed all that God told him
- Obedience – he circumcised himself, his son and all were in his house.

Conclusion

It was 24 years after Abraham received the promise to the beginning of its fulfilment.

During that time, God moulded him and taught him to live by trusting Him.

If we patiently endure our trials, we will receive what God has promised for us as well!