

Genesis 16 - Ishmael: Struggling to Rest in the Promise of a Son

To Read:

- Genesis 3
- Galatians 4

I. Introduction

A. Some of you may have read the sixth book in the Chronicles of Narnia - 'The Magician's Nephew'

1. In it is told the story of a boy named Digory who witness the creation of Narnia but also the arrival of a great sorceress and is sent to go bring an apple back that would guard Narnia from the White Witch. The apple, which has clear comparisons to the tree of life, sits in a garden with a golden gate:
When he had come close up to them he saw words written on the gold with silver letters; something like this: Come in by the gold gate or not at all, Take of my fruit for others or forbear, For those who steal or those who climb my wall Shall find their hearts' desire and find despair.
2. Digory goes in and picks one of the fruits to take back, but then he notices something:
Digory was just turning to go back to the gates when he stopped to have one last look round. He got a terrible shock. He was not alone. There, only a few yards away from him stood the Witch. She was just throwing away the core of an apple which she had eaten. The juice was darker than you would expect and had made a horrid stain around her mouth. Digory guessed at once that she must have climbed in over the wall. An he began to see that there might be some sense in that last line about getting your heart's desire and getting despair along with it. For the Witch looked stronger and prouder than ever, and even, in a way, triumphant; but her face was deadly white, white as salt.
3. When Digory returns to Aslan, he plants the fruit of the tree and Aslan explains:
*"Son of Adam," said Aslan, "you have sown well. And you, Narnians, let it be your first care go guard this Tree, for it is your Shield. The Witch of whom I told you has fled far away into the North of the world; she will live on there, growing stronger in dark Magic. But while that Tree flourishes she will never come down into Narnia. She dare not come within a hundred miles of the Tree, for its smell, which is joy and life and health to you, is death and horror and despair to her."
"Aslan, sir," said Digory, turning red, "I forgot to tell you. The Witch has already eaten one of those apples, one of the same kind that Tree grew from." He hadn't really said all he was thinking, but Polly at once said it for him. "So we thought, Aslan," she said, "that there must be some mistake, and she can't really mind the smell of those apples." "Why do you think that, Daughter of Eve?" asked the Lion. "Well, she ate one."
"Child," he replied, "that is why all the rest are now a horror to her. That is what happens to those who pluck and eat fruits at the wrong time and in the wrong way. The fruit is good, but they loathe it ever after."
"Oh I see," said Polly. "And I suppose because she took it in the wrong way it won't work for her. I mean it won't make her always young and all that?" "Alas," said Aslan, shaking his head. "It will. Things always work according to their nature. She has won her heart's desire; she has unweariing strength and endless days like a goddess. But length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery and already she begins to know it. All get what they want; they do not always like it."*
4. The White Witch tried to grasp the apple given by Aslan, but do it by her own power, and she got what she wanted - she got what was promised, but in the end, it turned out only to be a parody of the promises that brought despair - something similar happens in our text this morning

B. When we come to Genesis 16, again we come to a story where Abraham fails in faith

1. Remember in each section of the story of Abraham, after a great promise of God and initial faith, Abraham fails in faith - we saw this in the last cycle as Abraham went down to Egypt
2. Despite the great promises to Abraham, the curse of sin still persisted until the promise would be fulfilled
3. And the curse of sin comes to the forefront this morning as Abraham and Sarah look to alternative means for getting God's promise of a son

C. Our passage this morning continues a theme from last week that is present through this whole cycle

1. A central part of the Abrahamic covenant is the promise of righteousness through faith for Abraham
2. And righteousness is a theme of each story in this cycle from chapter 15 through chapter 19
3. But the word righteousness isn't used at all in this passage - so where is the righteousness theme here?
4. The theme is not in the word but the concept of 'counting', Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness
5. So, Abraham should not work to gain the promises of God, but rest in God's promise
6. This is exactly what Abraham does not do this morning, let's read the story (Genesis 16)

D. As I teach on this passage this morning, I want to consider its purpose in the story of Abraham

1. Our passage this morning has a three-fold purpose: it is a precaution, a polemic and a pointer
2. It is a precaution (a warning) to God's people of the danger of failing to trust God's promises
3. It is a polemic (a stand against another religion) against seeking to earn God's promises by our power
4. It is a pointer calling us to look for one who would break the curse of sin

II. A Precaution: Abraham and Sarah's Failures (Genesis 16)

A. This story is well-crafted to draw our minds to another story in Genesis - the fall of man

1. Abraham and Sarah act out the roles of Adam and Eve, calling us to see that though there is a new beginning with Abraham, Abraham and Sarah are still bound by the curse of sin
2. So, like Eve, Sarah entices Abraham with a way to gain the promise of God by their own effort
3. And, like Adam, Abraham listens Sarah and marches wholeheartedly into sin
4. And, like Adam and Eve, when the consequences of sin become evident Sarah and Abraham blame each other
5. The promise of God to Adam and Eve was to destroy the curse of sin and the promise to Abraham and Sarah is the same promise - but this episode calls us to see that the promise has not been effected yet - it is a promise, not a reality

B. Faith is fixing our eyes on the promise of God, not the foolishness of man (vs. 1-4)

1. In both accounts Adam and Eve and Abraham and Sarah turned their eyes from the good pronouncements of God to foolish talk
 - a. Eve listened to the serpent and Adam listened to Eve, instead of either of them pointing to the word of God
 - b. And Abraham listened to Sarah instead of holding fast to God's promise to provide an heir
 - c. Abraham should have focused on the promise and the power of God to give him what was promised instead of listening to the worldly-wise, but spiritually-foolish suggestions of his wife
2. So, we shouldn't focus on what the foolishness of man would tell us, but instead focus our eyes on God's promises
 - a. II Peter 1:3-4 - *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*
 - b. Peter tells us that the promises of God are at the center of God's plan - we focus on them because it is through God's promises that we become partakers of the divine nature

C. Faith is trusting God's promises, not our own works (vs. 1-4)

1. It's hard to know exactly what was going on in Sarah's mind when she made this proposal to Abraham
 - a. In some ways, she seems to be trying to advance the promise - the promise was a son from Abraham's body, she hadn't been mentioned specifically
 - b. Ten years had passed since they had come to the promised land and there was no sign that God was going to fulfill His promise through her - perhaps the time of waiting was past, maybe they needed to try a different course
 - c. And surrogate marriage to produce an heir was apparently a wide-spread practice in Abraham's time
 - d. So, on the one hand, it may look like Sarah is merely trying to work within the bounds of the promise to advance God's promise
2. But there was the problem, she was trying to work to obtain the promises
 - a. She wasn't resting in the promise and she was calling Abraham not to rest and wait for the promise
 - b. She took her eyes off the God who can do the impossible and put her eyes on herself and Abraham who could not gain the promise of God
 - c. The sinful nature of even this possibly 'good' motive is seen as Sarah blames God for keeping her from having children (vs. 2)
3. Scripture consistently calls us to do the opposite - to rest in God's promises and renounce our works
 - a. Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

D. Faith is exerting and submitting to proper authority, not ignoring it for the sake of expedience (vs. 1-4)

1. In verse 2, when it says, "Abraham listened to the voice of Sarah," the word listened there has the connotation of obedience - Abraham listened to and obeyed the voice of Sarah
2. Just like Genesis 3, the burden of this passage is that there was a reversal of the created order
 - a. The husband listened to and obeyed his wife, not the wife listening to and obeying the husband
 - b. This was a failure on both of their parts
 - c. Abraham didn't take the initiative and lead and point his wife to the promise
 - d. Sarah didn't wait for her husband to lead and guide their family after God's promises
 - e. Instead Sarah takes initiative and Abraham follows
3. The surprising thing is that this is all done in the name of seeking the promises of God
 - a. They reversed the created order because they thought by throwing off regulation perhaps they could advance the promises
 - b. Maybe the created order isn't that important and if we feel we can gain something good by throwing it off we should
4. But, expediency is never in Scripture a reason to ignore the order and rule of God
 - a. God established authority within the family and meant for it to be used to guide people to the promises of God - instead of gaining the promises, when Abraham and Sarah ignored authority they lost sight of the promises
 - b. So husbands should use their authority to help their wives rest in the promises of God
Ephesians 5:25-28 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.
 - c. And wives should submit to their husbands to point to the promises of God - I Peter 3:1-2 - *Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.*

E. Faith is seeking repentance, not shifting blame (vs. 5-6)

1. Just as in Adam and Eve's story, this episode ends with everyone pointing fingers at everyone else
 - a. Sarah points the finger at Abraham - "May the wrong done to me be on you!"
 - b. Abraham points the finger back at Sarah - "Your servant is in your power"
 - c. Sarah points the finger at Hagar - Then Sarai dealt harshly with her
2. This contrasts with what we saw in chapter 13, when Abraham recognized his error and turned around, that is repented, and came back to the land of Canaan and called on the name of the Lord
 - a. Instead of turning around from his error this time, Abraham doubled down
 - b. He tried to claim it wasn't his fault and Sarah clearly felt it wasn't her fault
 - c. They didn't acknowledge their sin, they blamed everyone else for their sin
3. But faith requires that we are honest about our sin before God, not try to bolster our self-righteousness before others
 - a. Matthew 9:9-13 - *As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."*
 - b. Christ's salvation is for those who recognize their sin, not try to point the finger at others

III. A Polemic: The Result of Grasping the Promise by Human Hands

A. A grotesque parody of the promise (16:10, 17:18-20, 21:13, 25:12-18)

1. Ishmael, as Abraham's son, was given promises
 - a. Genesis 16:10 - *The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude."*
 - b. Gen. 17:20-21 - *As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year."*
2. These promises both were and were not the promises made to Abraham in chapters 12 and 15
 - a. They are the same promises - multiply offspring, bless him, make him a great nation
 - b. The result is even the same - there will be twelve princes of Ishmael set against twelve sons of Jacob
 - c. But, God's covenant was not with Ishmael - it is with Isaac, the son of Sarah, the son of promise
 - d. The promises to Ishmael are really a parody - they look like the promises but they are only a fake
3. This shouldn't be surprising because it's the same thing that happened to Adam and Eve in the parallel story
 - a. Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, but they tried to grasp the image of God
 - b. When they tried to be like God with the knowledge of good and evil, they gained that, in a way
 - c. But it was shown only to be a parody of the promise - they had become 'like God' and received death
4. When we try to grasp God's promises in our power, sometimes it looks like we have grasped them
 - a. But really we only grasp a parody of the promise - we can never grasp God's promises on our own

B. A promise of enduring enmity (16:12, 21:8-10, 25:18)

1. A promise and pattern of enmity was made to Ishmael
 - a. Genesis 16:12 - *He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."*
 - b. Genesis 21:9-10 - *But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac."*
2. With the birth of Ishmael there are again two lines - Isaac, the promised one, and Ishmael, human works
 - a. And God promises enmity between the lines - Ishmael's hand will be against everyone
 - b. He will dwell over against his brothers - both a reference to location, but also to attitude - he will be set in opposition to his brother, the line of promise
3. Again, this shouldn't be surprising because the same thing happened in Genesis 3
 - a. G. 3:15 - *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring;*
 - b. When the promises were grasped by human power, two lines developed in enmity with each other
 - c. This enmity was worked out between Cain and Able, and between the Cain's line and the Seth's line
4. Seeking God's promises by human power only ends with enmity with the promise

C. A distraction from God's promises (16:16-17:1, 17:15-19, 21:10)

1. Fourteen years lapsed between the birth of Ishmael and the birth of Isaac, and Abraham was tempted to look for the promise in Ishmael instead of the promised son
 - a. Genesis 17:15-18 - *And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." ... And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!"*
2. Since Ishmael received a parody of the promises, he ended up a perpetual stumbling block for Abraham
 - a. Even in the face of a renewal of God's promise, Abraham looks to Ishmael instead of God's promise
3. Abraham grew attached to what he had gained in his own power, he found it hard to turn away from it
 - a. When we try to grasp the promise in our power, we fall into the power of the false promise
 - b. This is also in Genesis 3 - Adam and Eve died - they grasped a false promise and couldn't escape
 - c. Our own efforts only bring us into captivity and distract us from God's promises

D. A pattern of unexpected, sovereign grace (16:7-11, 13-14, 21:15-21)

1. I'm going to talk about the meaning of this in a few minutes, but right now I just want to see the unexpected grace shown to Ishmael and Hagar
 - a. Genesis 16:7-9, 13-14 - *The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." ... So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.*
 - b. In Genesis 21, Hagar again flees into the dessert and again God intervenes to protect her and Ishmael
2. If everything I've said above about Ishmael and his line is true, then these interventions should surprise us
 - a. It seems as though God should destroy Ishmael - the parody of the promises and the stumbling block
 - b. But, instead God specifically intervenes *twice* to save Ishmael
 - c. God shows unexpected grace even to Ishmael - God's grace is greater than all the evil of this situation
3. And Hagar's response to God is important as well
 - a. Hagar listens to the angel and then says that God is a "God of seeing"
 - b. In all of this, God was still sovereign - when the plan seems really messed up by the birth of Ishmael, we must not be tempted to think that somehow this wasn't in God's plan
 - c. All of this was under God's eye and God was watching over the situation and His promises

E. A warning repeated in Israel's response to Christ (Galatians 4:21-31)

1. Paul understands that this polemic is applied to anytime humanity tries to grasp the promise and applies it to another grasping of the promise and rejecting of the promised son
 - a. Galatians 4:21-26 - *Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.*
 - b. The Jews rejected Christ, and Paul says they rejected Christ because they trusted their own works - they thought they could live under the law so well they could earn the promises of Abraham
 - c. Just like Abraham, they ended up turning away from God's promises to their own works
2. And those who turn from the promise of God to works ended up at enmity with the promised son
 - a. Gal. 4:28-29 - *Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.*
 - b. Paul understood the persecution of the early church by the Jews as a repeat of the pattern of Ishmael
3. When the Jews rejected Christ, they ended up with all the same characteristics
 - a. A grotesque parody of the promises - they claim to be the true heir of Abraham's promise
 - b. An enduring enmity with the promised line - the first two or three centuries of Christian persecution was primarily from the Jews who were at enmity with the true promise
 - c. A distraction from God's promises - the book of Hebrews was written to guard especially Jewish believers from being entrapped by the parody of the promises in Judaism and to see Christ as better

F. So, all three great monotheistic religions are all portrayed here with only one being shown true

1. Ishmael, Isaac and Christ all claim the promises of Abraham - Islam, Judaism and Christianity
2. But, in conjunction with Galatians 4, this passage is a polemic against the first two and a call to rest in Christ
3. Islam and Judaism still continue in Abraham's failure, they seek to earn the promise of God by their own efforts and they reject the promise of a son
4. But the promise of a son has been fulfilled by God's power in Christ and He has called us to cease our efforts to earn the promise and run to Christ who has earned the promises of God
5. The big difference between Christianity and the other monotheistic religions is exactly that - we trust in the promise of a son while they trust in their own efforts to earn God's promises

IV. A Pointer: Where is Christ?

A. Christ is the one who will break the curse of sin

1. The entire story of Hagar and Ishmael calls us to see the continued effects of sin even in Abraham's life
2. We've heard the promises made to Abraham, but the promises haven't been fulfilled yet and Abraham is still a sinner - justified before God, but still a sinner who needs a mediator before God
3. This continued presence of sin ought to make us long for a new development in the promises, a development that promises that sin will be conquered forever and will not always be marring the recipients of God's promises
4. So, this passage points to Christ in that way - it ought to build our anticipation and hope for the one who will come to crush the serpent's head - it is not accident that this passage is written in parallel to Genesis 3
5. Abraham's promises will be wrapped up in Adam's promise - these aren't new promises, they are the development and revelation of that promise - a son will need to come who will crush the serpent's head and destroy the power and the curse of sin
6. This negative passage connects this promised son, the offspring of Abraham, to a son already promised, the offspring of Adam - the two promises are one, the promised son will bring blessings to Abraham and to all the families of the earth by destroying the power of sin
7. Where is Christ? Christ is the one longed for in this passage!

B. Christ is what Ishmael is not

1. Christ is God's gift, not man's effort
 - a. Romans 3:23-24 - *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*
 - b. The gift of Christ can never be earned, Christ can be and must be received as an unmerited gift
2. Christ is the perfect fulfillment of God's promises, not a grotesque parody
 - a. Luke 1:54-55 - *He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*
 - b. Romans 15:8-9 - *For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*
 - c. Ishmael was a parody of the promise that will never save, but Christ has fulfilled the promise perfectly
3. Christ is the one who intercedes for and brings peace to his brothers, not enmity
 - a. Hebrews 2:10-18 - *For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*
4. Christ is the author and object of faith, not a distraction from God's promises
 - a. Hebrews 12:1-2 - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
 - b. Unlike Ishmael, looking to Christ is looking to the gift and promise of God and fixing our eyes on him increases our faith - Christ is no distraction from faith but the very author and object of faith!

C. Christ is the one who is able to show unexpected grace even to the sons of Ishmael

1. If Ishmael receives a parody of the promises to Abraham, then, in the flesh, he is much closer to the promises of Abraham than I am
 - a. This passage is a polemic against the religion of man that seeks to earn the promise of God
 - b. This passage is not a polemic against a people group, the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael
 - c. And Galatians is not a polemic against a people group, the Jews, the descendants of Isaac
 - d. When we come to this point, we must realize that we, in the flesh as gentiles, are even farther away from the promises to Abraham than Ishmael was and certainly farther away than Isaac
2. But if, in Christ, even the gentiles have come to share in the promises, how much more the sons of Ishmael
 - a. Ephesians 2:11-13 - *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*
3. The appearances of the angel of the Lord to Hagar and the promises made to Ishmael are confusing to me, but on much reflection, I've decided that they are confusing because they portray two things
 - a. They portray the parody of the promises as I discussed above
 - b. But they also portray the grace of God that will overcome Abraham's failure
 - c. Ishmael may not be the promised son and Abraham's lack of faith may have brought much hardship into the world for the heirs of the promised son, but Ishmael is not outside the realm of God's grace
 - d. God appears to Hagar twice in the wilderness to save Ishmael - the son's of Ishmael can share in the promise in Christ Jesus just the same as anyone else
 - e. Romans 11:32 - *For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.*
 - f. God's mercy and unexpected grace are the victors in this story - Abraham fails in faith and Ishmael becomes a parody of the promise, but God's grace is greater still and He is sovereign in grace
 - g. So, Ishmael's story warns us of the dangers of trying to earn or grasp the promises of God but it also points us to Christ whose grace is greater than all our sin!

V. Application: Rest in Christ, the Promised Son, not your works before God

A. The promise of a son means we must rest all of our hope in the promised son and cease all of our vain efforts to obtain the promises on our own

1. The world hates the promise of a son because the world hates the fact that God must save them - the world wants to save itself
2. Therefore, the world will always rest on its own efforts and will often parody the promises to Abraham, but will make it them promises gained by our human efforts
3. The birth of Ishmael, the Jews rejection of Christ, the fall of the Catholic Church, the liberalization of Protestantism, and even in many ways secular humanism are all outworkings of this parody - they all have a grotesque parody of the promises to Abraham at the center of their beliefs, but they all reject, in one way or another, the great doctrines of 'In Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone'
4. We need to be on guard against these repeated failures to rest in Christ's grace and we need to recognize the reason for these repeated failures - our human nature longs to reject the promise of a son, each of our sinful natures hates the doctrines of 'in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone'
5. So, we must learn from Abraham's failures that our own efforts will never obtain the promise, we must stop our work and rest in the promise of a son - our own efforts will only gain grotesque parodies of the promise and will distract us from the true promises of God

B. So renounce your efforts to gain God's promise

1. Don't listen to the world's parodied promises that they hold out to you and entice you with - Faith is fixing our eyes on the promises of God not the foolishness of men
2. Don't look to your own righteousness before God, don't be tempted to trust in anything that you could do before God - Faith is trusting God's promises not our works
3. Don't circumvent proper authority in your life, God desires for authority to fix our eyes on His promises - Faith is submitting to and exerting proper authority not ignoring it for the sake of expedience
4. Don't believe that you are without sin before God - Faith is seeking repentance not shifting blame

C. And rest in the promise of a son

1. We can rest because the promise is a gift of God - Christ is God's gift, not man's works
2. We can rest because Christ is the perfect son - Christ is what Ishmael is not - He is God's gift, the perfect fulfillment of the promises, the peace of His brothers and the author of faith
3. We can rest because God's grace is greater than all our sin - Christ is the one able to show unexpected grace even to the sons of Ishmael

Romans 5:20-21 - *Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*