

□□□□□ SARAH □□□□□

Genesis 16:1-16; 18:1-15; 21:1-15

"I've waited long enough. It's time to take matters into my own hands!"

Sarah, the wife of Abraham, had a problem with which many of us are familiar. The prayer, "Lord, give me patience and give it to me right now!" fits her very well. Patience, a philosopher told us, is a virtue. The Bible, in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, calls it a fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22 Yet for Sarah, the woman God chose to be the mother of the Jewish nation, it was very difficult.

At the age of 76, Sarah had given up on building a family by bearing her own children. While this was a painful acknowledgment of her own physical inadequacy, perhaps, she thought, she could use another method of building a family. Having children of her own was a woman's deepest desire, and a childless woman thought of herself as being unfulfilled, perhaps even cursed. Sarah thought she could use her Egyptian maid, Hagar, as a surrogate mother. It was Sarah's idea to build her family this way. The Bible tells us she initiated this plan when she said to Abraham, *'The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.'* Genesis 16:2 NIV Abraham agreed to this plan and Hagar became pregnant. During her pregnancy, Hagar became arrogant and began to despise Sarah. Sarah's impatience now bore fruit she found very hard to live with. Not only was she childless and past the normal childbearing years, but her maidservant deliberately belittled and despised her. In her distress, Sarah confronted Abraham, blaming him for her misery. She told him, *'You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.'* Genesis 16:5 NIV Abraham then told Sarah, *"Do with her whatever you think best."* Genesis 16:6b NIV Sarah began to mistreat Hagar, who then fled. The Lord intervened by saving Hagar from death in the desert and telling her to return to Sarah and be submissive to her. Hagar did what the angel told her to do, and bore Abraham a son, who was named Ishmael.

Thirteen years later, God's promise to Abraham that he would have a child by Sarah came true. In a miraculous way, Sarah, who was now near 90 and certainly past the normal childbearing years, was told that, by this time the following year, she would have a son. Both Abraham and Sarah, who were aware of God's promise of a son, must often have thought God was ever so slow in keeping His Word!

But Sarah became the mother of Isaac as God promised. What a happy event this was! The Bible tells us Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." Genesis 21:6-7 NIV One might think their problems were over. Not so! Ishmael was by now a teenager and Sarah saw him mocking Isaac. This angered her, and she demanded that Abraham exile his son, Ishmael, and Ishmael's mother, Hagar. With a heavy heart, Abraham agreed to send them away.

What pain and anxiety Sarah's impatience and anger caused her! And how often does it cause us grief. So many of us, like Sarah, feel the need for control ... making sure everything is in a certain order. Sometimes God's timetable, the amount of time He takes to respond to our call, is so frustrating! We make our plans, we save our money, we're ready to go—and then something happens! Our plans have to be changed or perhaps even canceled. Charges of unfairness are leveled at God. We need someone to blame...and God is right there, so we blame Him. Isn't it good that we have a patient God, a God who listens to us, loves us, and then always forgives us when we come to Him? As we look around our world today, it seems our nation is much like the nation of Israel was prior to its exile. How many times does the Bible tell us that the nation of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord! God surely knows He is way down on the list of priorities in the majority of our homes today, and yet He patiently awaits our return. He may even permit trials and hardship to come as a reminder that we need Him, but He waits patiently and loving.

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Prayer: Dear Lord, when impatience and anger trouble us, we ask for Your forgiveness. Be with us as we struggle with our daily schedules. When we find it hard to wait for an answer from You, draw us to Your Word. Make Your promises clear to us, knowing that You love us with an everlasting love. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen

SARAH - *Written by* Lu Garchow

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The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country. It is a very interesting and informative study of the country's development. The author has done a great deal of research and has gathered a wealth of material. The report is well written and is a valuable contribution to the study of the country's development.

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The third part of the report deals with the social situation of the country. It is a very interesting and informative study of the country's social development. The author has done a great deal of research and has gathered a wealth of material. The report is well written and is a valuable contribution to the study of the country's social development.