

November Review

“For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s,

And He has set the world upon them.

9 He will guard the feet of His saints,

But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. ~ 1 Samuel 2:8-9

As we review the lessons in this month, we can see the Lord working in the lives of these women regardless of their flaws, position, or background. Who they are in the flesh matters very little because the Lord worked in their lives to accomplish His wondrous works. As we review the lives of each of these women, let us remember that they, except for Eve, were imperfect beings in an imperfect world chosen by a mighty God to bring about His perfect will.

Appreciate the Lord’s Blessings

Appreciation for the lives we have been given is a challenge for some. Eve was the only perfect woman in a perfect world, and yet she took her eyes off the Lord’s blessings and listened to the serpent. There will always be people in our lives who will question the will of God in our lives, who will criticize our walk with Lord, who will discourage you by saying you’re too much or not enough, who will attempt to manipulate you to do things their way. The serpent questioned the will of God, “Has God indeed said...?” (Genesis 3:1). He criticized the Lord’s commandment, “You will not surely die.” (Genesis 3:2). He discouraged Eve by making her feel like she was not enough, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.” (Genesis 3:2). Ultimately, he manipulated her into doubting the Lord’s will for her life, and she took her eyes off of all the blessings in the Garden of Eden and focused on the one thing she did not have. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.” (Genesis 3:3) And thus her disobedience caused the fall of all mankind.

We’ve discussed several things that she could have done to prevent her from falling: she could have cried out to God, she could have asked more questions, or she could have clarified with Adam. One more thing that could have kept her from falling was to appreciate the blessings the Lord had given her. If she had stopped to look around at all that the Lord had already given her, the one tree in the middle of the Garden would not have mattered. There will be times in our lives when we feel like something is missing: a child, a husband, a bigger house, a nicer car, a better job, better skills, the list can go on. When that desire starts to overwhelm us, let’s stop and think about all the blessings that the Lord has given us up until now and lay that desire at the Lord’s feet and pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. "Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks." Philippians 4:6.

Be Patient and Wait on the Lord

We can see in both Sarah and Rebekah's life the importance of being patient and waiting on the Lord rather than taking things into our own hands. Although Sarah knew that the Lord had promised Abraham a son, she grew impatient and began to doubt. She looked at her husband and herself and thought that a son wasn't humanly possible given their age. So, doubt crept into her heart and mind, and she decided to step in and offer her maidservant as a "surrogate" for her to have a child (Genesis 16:1-2). The end result was disastrous, not only for herself but also for her maidservant, the child, and all of their descendants. Jealousy and envy took a foothold in both Sarah and Hagar's hearts. The Lord's promise to Abraham to make a great nation through his first-born son became a source of bitterness.

Sarah took things into her own hands thinking that she was helping the Lord accomplish His will. Although the Lord had rescued her from being defiled on more than one occasion, she still thought that she needed to intervene. She had waited patiently for many years, but her patience ran out.

Rebekah also experienced the same type of doubt as Sarah. The Lord had prepared a husband for her in a faraway land (Genesis 24:11-21). She was obedient and hopeful and went willingly to fulfill the Lord's promise. She was barren, but the Lord opened her womb so that she could conceive. When her pregnancy was painful and doubt filled her mind, she inquired of the Lord, and He spoke to her (Genesis 25: 21-24).

But still, at the end of Isaac's life, she took matters into her own hands and manipulated the situation in order to "fulfill" the Lord's promise that "the older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). Esau had already given up his birthright for a bowl of soup. He had also married from the daughters of Heth which was not likely to please the Lord. Rebekah's manipulation was not necessary, but God allowed it. He could have intervened at any moment, but He did not. Instead, Rebekah accepted the consequences of her actions by losing the family that the Lord had blessed her with. She broke trust with her son Esau and her husband Isaac, plus she sent her favored son Jacob away for his protection.

Although both women had seen the Lord move, Sarah ran out of patience, and Rebekah stepped in without hesitation. Both did not wait on the Lord and long-term ripple effects of their sin was felt for generations. Psalms 27:14 tells us, "Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!" Sometimes we do grow weary of waiting for the Lord to fulfill His promise, but we can trust that at His perfect time, He will fulfill His promise with or without us.

Be Strong and of Good Courage

As a child, we see that Miriam was courageous. She wasn't afraid to follow her baby brother, Moses, after her mother placed him in the Nile. She wasn't afraid to blend in with the maidens at the riverside, and she wasn't afraid to speak to the Pharaoh's daughter after she found

her baby brother and had compassion for him. (Exodus 2:1-10). She had boldness as a child that followed her into adulthood. She was considered a prophetess and helped to lead alongside her brothers Aaron and Moses (Exodus 15:20-21). But as Winston Churchill once said in a 1906 speech, “Where there is great power there is great responsibility.” Luke 12:42-48 tells us:

42 And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food [h]in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

As prophetess, Miriam had the privilege of helping to lead the Lord’s people through the wilderness because of her relation to Aaron and Moses. However, she felt that she had the right to challenge her baby brother’s decision to marry an Ethiopian, but it did not go well with her. The Lord called all three of them out and cursed Miriam with leprosy. If Moses had not intervened, she surely would have died, but instead, she was shut out of the camp for seven days (Numbers 12:1-16). Miriam used her privilege/power to speak against the Lord’s anointed. She essentially badmouthed Moses with her brother Aaron. Perhaps the Lord may have been displeased with Moses marrying an Ethiopian, but that was not for her to judge. She did not go to the Lord in prayer and ask for wisdom in the situation. She did not wait for the Lord to give her guidance through a dream or through the Spirit. Instead, she went to her brother to vent, and the Lord was displeased. She misused her boldness, and the Lord was quick to correct her.

In contrast, Abigail used her scope of influence or power to help to prevent bloodshed. Her husband was cruel and unkind, and he humiliated David’s soldiers when they asked for provisions. David was on his way to kill them all, but Abigail acted quickly to prevent David from killing her and all her servants along with her husband (1 Samuel 25:2-44). Even though her husband was a fool, she did not badmouth him. She went to him and let him know the situation. The Lord dealt with her husband, and she was given a new life. She used her courage and strength to build up, not to tear down.

The Lord tells his people on more than one occasion to be strong and of good courage. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). But with that boldness, courage, and strength comes a responsibility. We should have good courage to step in when the

Lord calls us or to support those in need. We should not use that boldness to argue with someone simply because we disagree with them. If we have questions, let's take it to the Lord in prayer first and then speak the truth in love.

Trust in the Lord for Restoration

Both Naomi and Hannah were in very difficult situations, but they were able to trust in the Lord, and He restored them. Naomi had been in a foreign land for 10 years where she lost everything and everyone that was dear to her. Her husband and two sons had died, and she had to make the tough decision to return home on her own. However, God had other plans. Ruth insisted on staying with her, and the Lord used Ruth to help restore Naomi's family name and provide an heir (Ruth 4:13-17).

Hannah had spent many years lamenting that she was unable to bear a child. To make matters worse, Peninnah was always there to mock and humiliate her for not bearing children. Although Hannah loved her husband and he favored her, she was still longing to bear a child. She trusted in the Lord, and He heard her cry. He granted her a child, and she returned him to the Lord to serve in the temple. She rejoiced that the Lord had fulfilled his promise and redeemed her situation. "6 The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. 7 The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. 8 He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Samuel 2:6-8).

Despite the many years of suffering, both women were able to rejoice and worship the Lord when He restored them. At times we go through seasons of great suffering for a great number of reasons. Let us remember in that pain that God is still in control, and He can and will restore us.

Have a Heart of Worship

Both Mary and Martha were good friends of Jesus, and they loved and served Him. However, Martha lost sight of why she was serving and became distracted. Mary was able to maintain her focus and worship the Lord with all her heart, soul, and mind. Although Martha stumbled, she was able to redirect her attitude and serve the Lord with a heart of worship. (John 11:1-46).

As we wrap up this semester's lessons so far, let us remember that we can trust in the Lord, we can cry out to Him in our time of trouble, and let us always have a heart of worship for Him no matter the circumstances.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6