

Dear Christian Friends,

From time to time you hear someone say that God must have a sense of humor. We know the word *joy* is found frequently in the Scriptures. What about *laugh*?

Laughter is mentioned 33 times in the OT and 6 times in the NT. Sometimes laughter is brought about by doubt and unbelief, almost a laughter to scorn. At other times, there is, for lack of a better term, a laughter to salvation. This is a laughter of joy over the salvation God has won for us.

God wants us to laugh out of joy for the salvation he has won for us. Jesus tells us in his own words, ***Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh (Lk 6:21)***. There may be sorrow in our earthly lives, reasons for us to weep. But there will come a time when the weeping will be replaced by laughter over all that God has done for us, and we will weep no more.

In our text we find reference to Sarah laughing. Just before this, in Gn 17 we hear that Abraham laughed. Like them, we laugh in response to God's promises, sometimes in Christian joy and sometimes in unbelief. And, of course, the world laughs at our faith. The question is *Who Gets the Last Laugh?* After all, the adage says, *He who laughs last laughs best*.

Take for example, Abraham laughing at God's promise. When God promised Abraham a son ***Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at an age of ninety (Gn 17:17)?*** Abraham didn't think it could be possible. Oh, Abraham *had* had a son by Sarah's maid. Maybe God was talking about him. But God wasn't. God was talking about Sarah, his wife. God had invited Abraham to ***look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can***

count them. So shall your offspring be (Gn 15:5). Is it surprising that at 100 Abraham laughed at such a promise? Yet, God would work a miracle. Abraham laughed in doubt when the promise was made. But God would keep the promise and Abraham would laugh again—this time, though, not in doubt but in joy over the birth of his son. God would keep his promise.

In our text for tonight, three visitors have come to Abraham. We know that one was the Lord himself. The other two were angels. God was now going to let Sarah in on the so-called joke. Because you see, just like you and me, God wanted Sarah to laugh for joy at the very thought of his precious promises.

And so God tells the events that will occur. Sarah would have a child by the time he returned a year later. ***I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son (Gn 18:10)***. All the while Sarah is listening behind the tent flap. When she hears these words she couldn't help but laugh. Only, it was not a laughter of joy. By no means! It was the laughter of doubt. And it angered God. The laughter of unbelief always angers God. He asked, ***Why did Sarah laugh?*** To Sarah, the promise seemed utterly ridiculous. Sarah was just *too old* to have children. It couldn't be possible. Sarah didn't believe. To her, God's promise brought the laughter of unbelief, not the laughter of joy.

But that's not so uncommon is it? No, people laughed at the Savior too. Remember how he came to the house of Jairus, whose daughter had died? When Jesus told them she was just sleeping, they laughed in unbelief. But the laughter of unbelief changed to laughter of joy when the Lord Jesus raised the little girl from death.

Do we laugh at God's promises? Do we laugh in unbelief that sinful people like us will actually wind up in heaven—then why do we so often doubt that God could

love us? Do we laugh at the promise that Christ has done *all* to save us—then why do we pat ourselves on the back after we've come to church, or read the Bible at home, or resisted a temptation, or helped someone in need? Do we laugh when we think God will provide for all we need every day—then why do we worry about money, job, relationships? We at times have laughed at the promises of God. When we worry, when we are beaten down by the world, when we are sick, when we are fighting financial troubles, we laugh inside at God's promises. *They just can't be. They're too good to be true. No way! He needs my help.* God asked Sarah and Abraham a question and this question is for you and me too: ***Is anything too hard for the Lord?***

Sarah and Abraham would soon be laughing for joy. You see, in time, they came to believe the promise made. For the writer of Hebrews says, ***By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-- and Sarah herself was barren-- was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise (Hb 11:11).*** How was that again? By faith! By faith in the promises of God, promises he always keeps, the laughter of unbelief is changed to the laughter of joy. And Abraham and Sarah did indeed laugh for joy when their son was born.

But there would be another special Son born. A Son of promise! Promised by God to the world. In him all nations of the world would be blessed. This, too, was the promise to Abraham. From his seed would come forth one who would be a blessing to all people. Yes, they would laugh at this Son. They would laugh because he said he was the Son of God. They would laugh at him when he would not come down from the cross. They laughed in unbelief, scorn, and mockery. Still the promise is sure, ***Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will***

raise him up at the last day (Jn 6:40). *No way*, they said. Yet, once again God keeps his promises. The most astonishing, unique promise is that through Jesus Christ you have eternal life.

Through faith in Christ you are sons and daughters of God. Just as a son of promise was born to Abraham and Sarah, so we are children of the promise made to us in Jesus Christ. He was the Promised One from Abraham's line, from David's line. He has conquered our unbelief! His is living proof that God keeps his promises, for he rose again on the third day and is alive today. ***To those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (Jn 1:12).***

And today God wants you to laugh for joy. He wants you to know he will keep his promises made to you. Sarah confessed, ***God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me (Gn 21:6).*** God has brought you to laughter too. Others laugh at your faith, your witness in this world. But who cares! You are laughing for joy in his promises. You will stand before the throne of God someday and laugh for joy for you are in heaven forever. God fulfills his promises so that over and over again now and forever we can laugh for joy.

Now back to our original question: Who got the last laugh? Sarah laughed at God, and Abraham did too. But God got the last laugh. For he said the name of the son born to them would be Isaac. In this we find a touch of God's sense of humor, because the Hebrew name *Isaac* is translated *he laughed*. God got the last laugh. But God will give you the joy of the last laugh, eternal laughter in his forgiveness, in his salvation, and in his promises. Yes, he who laughs last laughs best—and in your case, for all eternity. God grant it. **AMEN.**