

SARAH . . . who laughed at God
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(Genesis 18 :9-1 5)

The Lord said unto Abraham, "Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And the Lord said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him . . . Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being, old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Thou shalt have a son, and shalt call his name Isaac

Poor Sarah! She could hardly believe her ears as she stood in the doorway of her tent. She was preparing her meal, but the apparent stupidity of the visitor had momentarily halted her activities. The words were still ringing in her ears Sarah thy wife shall have a son! Amazed, she turned to look toward the strangers; and then her old shoulders silently shook. It was funny! The old lady tried hard to suppress her mirth, but the task was almost beyond her capabilities. She remembered the long years when the joys of motherhood had been denied, and the thought of nursing a baby now seemed ridiculous. Quietly she stole away, lest her silent laughter should become more boisterous; but even as her hands prepared the meal, her wrinkled face betrayed the humour of her soul.

"Sarah thy wife shall have a son." What nonsense! The stranger had taken leave of his senses. Then suddenly she was afraid, for beyond the door a voice was asking, "Wherefore did Sarah laugh? " Abraham's eyes were wrathful as they silently searched for his wife. The Stranger was also displeased; and instantly embarrassed and guilty, Sarah said, "I laughed not." The Lord quietly replied, "Nay, but thou didst laugh," and Sarah was glad to escape from the tent. She realized now that God had spoken: but it was impossible-or was it?

Thou shalt have a son, and shalt call his name John
Poor Elisabeth! She was old and very disappointed. Her greatest longings had never been realized, for a baby's smiles had never thrilled her soul. The home had remained silent and empty. Her husband was a priest, and together they walked uprightly before the Lord. They had persistently presented their request for a Child, but alas, their prayers had not been answered. "They had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years" (Luke 1: 7). And while she sat at home patiently trusting in God, Zacharias went to follow his high and holy calling in the sanctuary. "And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense . . . and said, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son." He was astonished as he muttered to himself, "Impossible! I am an old man, and my wife is well stricken in years. A son! I'm dreaming." And if old Sarah could have been present, she would have laughed again: but this time her mirth would have been unrestrained. And when she recovered she would probably have looked at the priest and asked,

Didn't you hear about me? Priest, you have lots to learn." "And the angel answering said unto Zacharias . . . Behold thou shalt be dumb, and not able, to speak

SARAH . . . who laughed at God
... because thou believest not my words . .
Thou shalt have a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus
Poor Mary! She was greatly troubled, for the angel
had said unto her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found
favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in
thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name
Jesus. .. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be,
seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and
said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and
the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore
also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be
called the Son of God" (Luke 1:29-35). It 'was fantastic;
it was impossible- or was it? Then Mary laughed, but
hers was the laugh of faith. She said, "Behold the hand-
maid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."
Her heart was filled with joy as she sang, "My soul doth
magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God
my Saviour."
Sarah, Elisabeth and Zacharias, Mary. They all
laughed; but she "who laughed last, laughed best

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