



## Faith's Hurdles

### Grace Reigns: God's Gospel for All Peoples Series # 29

Genesis 20-21

David Sunday

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Lord, as our souls cling to You, we thank You that Your right hand is upholding us. You are holding us fast, and we pray that we would listen to Your Word. We know You are near and are using this Word to preserve us and keep us from stumbling, making us more ready to stand in Your presence faultless and with great joy.

We're confident that You are here and are working now by Your Spirit to conform us more to the image of Your Son until we finally behold You—our Father and our God—with the Son and Holy Spirit in glory forever. We thank You for Your Word that abides forever. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Achilles is one of the greatest heroes of Greek mythology, but he had a weakness, a hidden point of vulnerability. Legend has it that when he was a baby, his mother—fearing for her son's mortality—dipped him into the River Styx, which was supposed to confer immortality. But she held him by the heel, so it remained dry and therefore vulnerable. Later on in life, his enemy Paris found Achilles' hidden weakness at the end of the siege of Troy and aimed an arrow into his "Achilles' heel." Paris touched Achilles at his weakest point and killed him.

Each of us has an enemy who is prowling around like a roaring lion seeking to devour us (1 Peter 5:8), shooting his fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16) in our direction. We all have an Achilles' heel. Do you know what yours is? Do you know what your point of greatest vulnerability is? If Satan were to try to disable you, what would he aim for in your life?

### Prone to Wander, Lord I Feel It – Genesis 20

We sing, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love," and we're going to see that truth in the life of Abraham. We're going to see that the best of men are men at best. Let's read together Genesis 20, beginning at verse one:

*From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. <sup>2</sup> And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. <sup>3</sup> But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." <sup>4</sup> Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent people? <sup>5</sup> Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." <sup>6</sup> Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. <sup>7</sup> Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you, and all who are yours."*

*<sup>8</sup> So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. <sup>9</sup> Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done." <sup>10</sup> And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see, that you did this thing?" <sup>11</sup> Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. <sup>12</sup> Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. <sup>13</sup> And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother.'"*

*<sup>14</sup> Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. <sup>15</sup> And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you." <sup>16</sup> To Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated." <sup>17</sup> Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. <sup>18</sup> For the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.*

This is God's Word.

This account is so surprising to read that a lot of liberal scholars and critics of the Bible have said this must be a duplicate of Genesis 12, which contains a very similar incident. Abraham, who was going down to Egypt because of a famine, realized his wife was very beautiful

and had attracted the notice of Pharaoh's servants. The servants brought her into Pharaoh's household to become part of his harem. Abraham had told her to tell them she was his sister, not his wife.

So this has happened before in Abraham's life. Critics say it's unthinkable that a man of Abraham's stature would repeat a mistake like this, so they conclude this must be an editorial duplicate. But only a person completely lacking in self-awareness would arrive at such a conclusion. After all, who among us has not found himself repeating the same sin over and over and over again?

Is there anyone here who cannot feel for Abraham and his Achilles' heel? Has anyone besides me ever found yourself disgusted with yourself for returning like a dog to its vomit? Is there anyone here who cannot resonate with the experience described by Ray Ortlund when he says:

We ourselves sin, and then sin again in the same way and think, "That was stupid." And then we commit the same sin again and think, "I need to be more careful." And then we do it again and think, "I wonder if anyone else has this problem." And then we do it again and think, "I'd better take myself seriously in hand and stop this." And then we do it again and think, "I have a problem." And then we do it again and think, "I guess this is just the way I am." And then we do it again and think, "I am such a failure, God has probably put me on the shelf." And then we do it again and again until, with the psalmist, we cry out "Out of the depths"—not from the height of a victorious Christian life but out of the depths of my sin and misery and failure I cry to you, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Who has not experienced that kind of failure in the life of belief and faith? A realistic view of the Christian life leads us not to be shocked, nor to be dismayed, at the failures of other believers—or at our own. We shouldn't be surprised to find the experience of the Apostle Paul in Romans 7 the ongoing experience of our lives as long as we're in this flesh. We're always going to find a law at work within ourselves: when we want to do good, evil lies close at hand. We're always going to be crying out until the day we stand with Christ in glory, "*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" (Romans 7:24). And we are always going to sing, "Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, for He is able to keep us."

Now, you could say Abraham should have known better. Abraham did know better. He's experienced great promises from God. God said to him, "I am your shield. You can trust me to protect you. Your reward will be very great. You're going to have descendants as many as the stars in the sky." And God confirmed that promise to Abraham again and again. Even when

Abraham failed, God would come back and say, "I'm going to be faithful to My promise to you." He has just told Abraham, "At this time next year Sarah, your wife—who is in her old age—will bear you a son."

So Abraham knew better. He knew the promises of God. He knew the sovereignty of God. He knew the provision of God. But often, believers, when we fail—it's not because we don't know the doctrine. It's because we don't apply the doctrine to the point of fear or difficulty that we're going through today. One pastor says, "We fail because doctrinal faith does not become daily faith." That was Abraham's experience.

So here he is at an important point of transition. He's traveling and is coming down to the territory of Gerar which later becomes the territory of the Philistines (20:1). As he's making this transition, he fears the new people he's encountering—and thus his Achilles' heel is exposed. In Abraham's fear, he is prone to wander, prone to depend on his own resources and strategies to protect himself.

As he approaches this Philistine territory, he worries about these people who don't fear God. He reminds Sarah of a policy they had established some 24 years earlier back in Egypt. Verse 13, "Hey, Sarah. You remember what you did for me back in Egypt? This is the kindness you need to do for me, your husband. *At every place to which we come, say of me, 'He is my brother.'*"

What a manipulative abuse of authority that was, to put his wife in harm's way like that and to lie about the true nature of their relationship. I don't know what particular weakness easily entangles you, what peculiar weakness of character, what sin you're vulnerable to be repeating over and over and over again. It may even be something you haven't done in 24 years and you think, "I'll never do that again." Don't be so sure of yourself.

For some it may be a short fuse of anger that can explode like that. For others, it might be that you like fine foods or drink too much. For most of us there's some sexual vulnerability we have to wrestle against. For many of us there's a bit of arrogance that causes us to judge other people too harshly or look down on them. For some of us it's an unguarded tongue. Whatever that point of weakness is there's usually a raw nerve underneath many of these sins.

In Abraham's case, and in many of our cases, it's fear. Abraham was afraid. When the choice came between his own security and his obedience to and trust in God, Abraham said, "I'm going to go with my safety."

It's fear that causes us to hold back money we should be giving because we want to make sure we're going to be okay in the future. It's fear that leads us to be deceptive when we should be telling the truth. It's fear that leads us to put down others when we sense they're a threat to

us, or misjudge them when we feel they're getting on our turf. It's fear that leads us to protect ourselves when we should be entrusting our safety to God. Fear makes us closed and guarded when we should be open and truthful and honest.

There's a lot at stake if we don't guard our Achilles' heel. Just think what would have happened in the case of Sarah and Abimelech. Remember what God has promised. "Sarah, you're going to conceive and this time next year you'll have a son. ." She's 90 years old. And Abraham looks at her and says, "You're still beautiful at 90. I know what those guys are going to be thinking about you."

So he puts her in this vulnerable position. What would have happened if Sarah would have spent just one night in Abimelech's bedroom? The whole promise God has made to bring about this promised offspring—the seed of the woman who will one day bring about the Messiah, who will crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15)—could have been called into question. "Well, is this the seed of Abimelech, the serpent? Or is this the seed of Abraham, God's chosen servant?" People would have wondered. We would not have known.

Satan is always trying to frustrate God's sovereign purposes, and thanks be to God he's always failing. God intervenes in Abraham's life, and the way He does this ought to turn our doctrinal faith into daily faith. We should see from God's intervention that we're never more secure than when we are wholly trusting and obeying God.

Commentator Phil Moore points out three ways God intervenes remarkably in this story:

1. God intervened to insure that King Abimelech took Sarah to his harem but not to his bedroom. He says to Abimelech, "I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I Who kept you from sinning against me" (Genesis 20:6). That's something we should pray often for the Lord to do, that we should be kept from sinning and not overcome by adversity. We ought to pray, "Lord, keep me from sinning today, this hour."

There's a strong hint in verse 17 that God kept Abimelech from sinning by temporarily giving him some kind of disease from which he needed to be healed and which might have prevented him from engaging in sexual activity for a time. God made him sick to keep him from sinning.

When we're sick, we pray that God would heal us. But do you ever pause in a time of sickness to say, "What are You keeping me from right now? How are You using this sickness to protect me from maybe going down a hurtful path?" Do you realize that God in His sovereign grace uses sickness and affliction and adversity and difficulty to keep you from sinning? It's one of His gracious ways in your lives.

2. God closed up every womb in Abimelech's household. As one commentator notes, this was done "with such supercharged protection toward Abraham and Sarah that every other woman in the royal palace became part of his collateral damage." It was

like God was saying, "All right. We've got a problem here in Abimelech's house, and until this problem is resolved, no one's getting pregnant in this place. No babies are going to be born. I'm going to insure that the promised offspring is clearly seen to be a miracle of My grace."

3. God came by night to Abimelech in a dream, saying, "I'm going to kill you—you're dead meat, Abimelech—unless you give back Abraham's wife." By the end of the chapter, not only are Sarah and Abraham free, they're given any part of the land that pleases them. Do you see that in verse 15? "*Dwell where it pleases you.*" God's fulfilling His promise of land to His servant Abraham, and He's also giving him a thousand pieces of silver, along with sheep and oxen and male servants and female servants. Then He says, "Abraham, even though you have failed and sinned, you're going to pray for Abimelech because My work in and through you does not depend on your obedience, but entirely on My grace. I'm going to continue working through you."

It's a very humbling scene because what happens is Abraham grossly misjudges Abimelech and the people of Gerar. Abimelech demonstrates fear of the Lord in this passage. He listens when God speaks to him in a dream. He acknowledges, "This would be a great sin against You, God, for me to take another man's wife. Adultery would be a great sin." And he does whatever is in his power to remedy the situation. He and his servants are greatly afraid of what God is doing.

What does Abraham say to Abimelech when the king asks him, "Why have you treated us like this? Why have you exposed us to the wrath of your God? What did you see in me that made you do this thing?" Abraham's answer reveals the hypocrisy that can get in our hearts as believers. Abraham says, "*I did it because I thought, There is no fear of God at all in this place*" (Genesis 20:11). "None of you people fear God."

It's like Abraham is saying, "Abimelech, I lied to you because I was afraid of you because you don't fear God." Think about that. "I lied because I was afraid because you don't fear God." Who are the only people in this chapter who are fearing God? It's the pagans, not Abraham. They're demonstrating the fear of the Lord and Abraham is not.

In fact, Derek Kidner says the literal translation of verse 13 goes like this: "When the gods caused me to wander." He comments, "It's the language and wry attitude of the pagan, as if one man of the world is just speaking to another." Abraham is failing in his witness at this point, and God is using a pagan king to reprove and correct him.

I remember a conversation a while back with an unbelieving relative for whom I've prayed that I might be a witness leading to his salvation. I remember saying something foolish—I can't quite remember what it was—and I remember how I felt after God used that unbelieving relative

to really correct me in what I was saying. He demonstrated more grace and compassion in the way he spoke about whatever it was we were talking about than I did, and I realized, "Holy Spirit, You're convicting me right now through an unbeliever."

Has that ever happened to you? Isn't it surprising sometimes how people of the world at times can actually be more in sync with what's righteous than we can be? God speaks through Abimelech to correct and reprove Abraham. But even when Abraham's faith fails, God continues to hold him fast. "*The Lord will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage*" (Psalm 94:14).

He protects Sarah from being defiled by Abimelech. He protects Abraham from his own foolish fears. He protects His chosen seed, Isaac, from becoming the seed of the serpent, so that through Abraham the promised Messiah might come for all nations. I love the way Dale Davis summarizes this chapter: "There will be times when faith doesn't show up." This is one of those times—his Achilles' heel is attacked and faith does not show up. Davis continues: "But Genesis 20 tells us more. It says that there will be times when faith doesn't show up—but God does!" God still is at work here.

### **When We Are Faithless, God Remains Faithful – Genesis 21**

As we look at this chapter, I've been asking: how do we get up and get moving again after a time of failure? How do we build that resilience that's so necessary to a life of faith? I've been discovering something that is a little different about me in mid-life than when I was younger. When I was really young, I think I was more impatient than I am now. I think I've gotten a little more patient in my 40s. But now that I'm older I also think I've become a little more cautious than I should be.

Caution isn't always born out of wisdom; it can be born out of self-protection. We've seen ourselves fail over and over again. We don't want to blow that again. So our *modus operandi* in the Christian life can be just, "I don't want to mess up. I don't want to fail. so I'm not going to try very hard. I'm going to have mediocre expectations so I don't mess up." But God wants us to live a life that's higher than that. He wants our faith and expectation to be more than just, "I'm going to try really hard not to make a mistake and to avoid sin." Instead of leading us to settle for mediocrity, our failures should chasten us to depend more fully on the Lord to fulfill His promises in and through us. We should be more ready to get back on our feet and keep on moving.

The reason, as we're going to see in chapter 21, is this: when we are faithless, God remains faithful. When we see God's faithfulness in our lives even in the face of our failures, our response

should be, "Lord, I'm going to trust You and keep moving forward. I'm not giving up. Yes, I will probably hit some hurdles."

When I was in second grade we had to do track and field at Southport Elementary School. I remember running up to a hurdle and I'd stop because I was afraid I couldn't jump over it. I had to learn how to jump over that thing, and a lot of times I knocked it down. But I had to keep on going, keep on going, keep on going. That's what the Christian life is: keep crossing faith's hurdles. Yes, you'll knock some down. Yes, you'll fail. But don't give up, because God doesn't give up on you. When we are faithless, He remains faithful.

I want to draw four illustrations out of chapter 21 that will help us rely more on God and be more resilient in our faith—and at the same time more chastened by our failures.

### **Lesson #1. God keeps His promises (21:1-7)**

*"The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him."* The whole emphasis in the first seven verses is God did it. God did it. He did the impossible. He brought about the miracle child. He gave the ability for a 90-year-old woman and a 100-year-old man to have a promised offspring. God did it.

At the end—when we see our Lord and Savior riding on a white horse Whose name is Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11)—we're going to be saying of our Lord Jesus, "You did everything You promised. You never failed us once." There's not going to be any tears in heaven and God is going to wipe away our regrets.

When we get to the end of our lives, I don't think we're ever going to regret that we tried too many daring exploits of faith, that we took too many risks in obedience to God, that we trusted Him too much. I don't think we're going to regret that. If anything—at the end of our lives—I think we're going to say, "Oh, I wish I had trusted Him more. I wish I had stepped out more courageously. I wish I had been less cautious, less protective of my own safety, and more trusting in the God of promise."

God keeps His promises. He does the impossible, and we laugh in joy at it. Look at verses six and seven. Sarah says, *"God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me."* And she said, *'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.'* Forever, for all eternity, we are going to rejoice at God's great faithfulness through Jesus. So let that inspire resilience in you.



## **Lesson #2. Sin brings unavoidable pain, but by grace you can move forward (21:10-14)**

We see this in the next little episode. In the midst of their highest joy, while laughter over Isaac is taking place, the child grows and is weaned. So he's about three years old and Abraham makes a great feast on the day that Isaac is weaned. It's one of the great celebrations of their lives.

But right in the midst of laughter, there's going to be heartache. Right in the midst of joy there's going to be sorrow and difficulty. Ishmael's rivalry is provoked. Here his father—who has loved him for about 16 years so far—now has another son who is getting all the attention. Sarah's jealousy is aroused when she sees the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing and mocking the situation (verse nine).

Abraham's affections are torn as he's forced to send his son away, who's now around 16 years old. The words we read in verse ten from Sarah's angry lips are interpreted in Galatians 4:30 as an inspired demand: *"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.'"*

What God is saying through this is that there are only two ways to live. There's the way of faith in God's promise, and there's the way of dependence on our own efforts. The way of faith and the way of self-reliance cannot ultimately coexist. Hagar and her son had to be sent away so that the gospel could be clearly illustrated. God brings salvation by faith and by faith alone.

Isaac's birth was a miracle. God takes a barren woman and made her more fruitful than Hagar, for she becomes the mother of a multitude of nations. Salvation belongs to the Lord and it comes about through an even more miraculous birth—the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and His perfect life, death and resurrection for our sins. No one can be declared righteous with God by our works, by our efforts, by what we've done. It must be by faith alone. Hagar and Ishmael have to go so that the promise can be front and center, so that God's promised offspring and His purposes can go forward through Isaac.

But what a painful thing this was for Abraham! Can you imagine what it was like for him?

<sup>11</sup> *The thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son.*

<sup>12</sup> *But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. <sup>13</sup> And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." <sup>14</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.*

I'm not sure, but I don't think Abraham will see Ishmael anymore. What a painful, painful experience! Whenever we try to do God's work for Him, whenever we fail to let God be God and instead take matters into our own hands, there's wreckage.

Here's something I really pray you'll hear today. This is the application I'm really praying God will use to liberate some of you. Sometimes when God's bringing us out of our messes, there's no painless way to get out of the mess. It's going to hurt. There's going to be trouble. There's going to be wreckage.

Listen to these words from Dale Ralph Davis of First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina: "Some of us have such a 'we can fix this' attitude that it's hard to realize that we can't. Some consequences are not reversible; some messes are not totally cleanable. In Abraham-mold, we are called to walk on from the broken pieces, from the circumstances that can't be rectified and seek to be faithful from that point." Here's the key: Move forward.

Some of you are staring at the painful wreckage of sin in your life. There are broken pieces you can't glue back together. There are estranged relationships you can't repair. There are consequences you cannot evade. There are stains you cannot hide. You have regrets, and I beg you on the authority of God's Word, don't let your life be defined by those regrets. Don't let your future be controlled by your failures. Don't let your faith be paralyzed by the mistakes and sins, and the consequences of those sins.

God is not finished with you. There's always the hope of a new beginning for the believer in Christ, and there's grace that is greater than all our sins. It doesn't mean you ignore the pain or pretend it doesn't exist. It doesn't mean you don't try to be reconciled or restored. But it does mean this: you leave the broken pieces in the hands of God, trust Him to carry what you've relinquished, get back up on your feet and move forward in faith.

### **Lesson # 3. God's compassion never fails (21:15-21)**

When we've really messed things up and have to leave what we can't control in God's hands, isn't it comforting to know what kind of God He is? Doesn't it help to know that He's able to care for whatever concerns we have, that He's able to reach our children when they're far from home?

*<sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. <sup>16</sup> Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, "Let me not look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept.*

I love verse 17, “*And God heard the voice of the boy.*” His name is never mentioned in chapter 21 of Genesis, but Ishmael means “God hears.” Moses wants us to understand that while Hagar was weeping, God was hearing the voice of her son. He wants this mother to know, “What is outside your control is in Mine. The compassion you feel for your child I feel for him and I hear him when he calls to Me.”

Then the angel of God called to her, “*What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.*” Then God provided a well and we’re told in verse 20, “*God was with the boy.*” Though his father Abraham could not be with him any longer, God was with him. God was with Abraham; God was with Ishmael. God is with you; God is with your children. His compassions never fail. We can trust Him with that.

#### **Lesson #4. God’s not done with us until we’re with Him forever in glory (21:22-34)**

Verses 22-34 are another account involving Abraham and Abimelech, which is encouraging. Their relationship doesn’t end in chapter 20. There are three encouraging evidences of God’s ongoing sovereignty in this encounter.

1. Abraham gets another opportunity to be a witness. Verse 22: “*At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, ‘God is with you in all that you do.’*” He sees God is with Abraham and says, “I want to bless you. I want to enter into a peace treaty with you, because whoever blesses you will be blessed.”

That’s encouraging. You may have really blown it with a neighbor this week, someone you’ve been trying to witness to. Have you ever had this experience? You’re trying to reach your neighbors, then you have a big fight at home. It gets loud and you notice the window’s open—and who’s in the backyard watching? Your neighbor. And you think, “That does it. I’ll never witness to them again. I’ve blown it.”

Satan wants to muzzle you. God says, “No, I’m not done with you. I’m still going to use you. I’m still going to work through you. My favor still rests upon you, and you are in that neighborhood to be a blessing.” Abraham is in this neighborhood to be a blessing and in spite of his failure God is going to make him a blessing to the nations. In spite of our failures, God’s not done with His purposes to make us a blessing to the nations. So repent of your failures, make right what you’ve wronged, if you can, then get up and be a light for Jesus where He’s put you.

2. Another encouraging evidence of grace is this: as Abraham is a peacemaker, a dispute is resolved concerning a well of water. We might think, “Why did God give Abraham a well?” He gave him a well because that’s what he needed in this desert

place. In giving him this well and making a covenant at this place called Beersheba, God is saying to Abraham, "I'm going to provide for you. I'm going to give you the land" (21:32). So we see God's provision.

3. We're encouraged by the last two verses where we read these words: "*Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of Yahweh, the Everlasting God.*" God reaches as far back into the past as our minds can see and then beyond, and the God Who is far into the future. The God of eternity—past, present and future.

We are a vapor,  
You are Eternal;  
Love everlasting,  
Reigning on high.

(Be Unto Your Name by Gary Sadler and Lynn DeShazo)

Verse 34: "*Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines.*" We're just sojourners here on the earth. "*As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more*" (Psalm 103:15-16). That's humanity. We are finite. We are frail.

But we worship the everlasting God Who says, "Surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life, and then you're going to dwell in My house forever" (Psalm 23:6). So even though in our journey of faith we knock over a few hurdles, and we land on our face, and we mess up, and our Achilles' heel is bruised, we get back up on our feet and keep running the race with endurance (Hebrews 12:1) because He is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us in the presence of His glory, faultless and with great joy (Jude 1:24). Let's praise our God Who keeps us, and let's endeavor to live faithfully for Him.

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