

Turn in your Bible to Genesis Chapter 15. What we saw a couple of weeks ago is that Abram was once again placed in a couple of situations where he had decisions to make. Ultimately his decisions again were based off of whether or not he was going to trust God, follow God or trust in his own reasoning and follow the way of the world.

Abram had just experienced a great victory! Remember Chedorlaomer and the three kings that joined him had come through the Jordan Valley region and the Valley of Siddim and defeated the Kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. In that battle Chedorlaomer captured many of the people of Sodom and their possessions along with Lot, his nephew.

Abram sprang into action and with 318 men went after these armies of these kings and defeated them returning with Lot, the people of Sodom and all the possessions that had been captured as well.

On their return trip home after this great victory Abram encountered two kings, in the Valley of Shaveh. King and priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek and the King of Sodom. There Abram was faced with the decision placed before him from Melchizedek to give thanks, give praise, worship the Lord, God Most High possessor of heaven and earth. In doing so realizing his victory and all he had was because of God's faithfulness and God continuing to fulfill his promises to Abram.

Or, as was presented to him by the King of Sodom, take the things of the world. Follow after the pleasures of the world and all the spoils that come with that worldview. Go after the world Abram, though it will all burn one day, though it all passes away, get what you can, while you can, before you kick the can.

What did Abram say, ***“Not even a thread, or sandal strap will I take from you! I have raised my hand to the Lord, Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. I am going after God.”***

In that statement of faith, Abram not only had a great physical victory in winning the battle, but he had a great spiritual victory as he refused to be tempted by Satan and the ways of the world. As I mentioned though, after our greatest victories can come some of our greatest challenges.

Why is that?

The obvious:

- Satan is going to attack!
- Life happens – We go back to our routines. After the battle, where did Abram go? Home! What did he go back to do? Taking care of his home, taking care of his family!
- Praying, worshiping the Lord!

You ever watched a movie, or documentary where there are a couple of plots going on and the show is focused on one plot and then if there is some narration, the narrator comes on and says, “Meanwhile that was going on, this is going on!” Meanwhile as Abram was back in Mamre, taking care of his home and his family, a thought comes to his mind.

Let's read our verses and see what that thought might have been!

Genesis 15:1

¹ After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”

First of all, what does it mean, “After these things?” It is everything we just talked about. The battle, the return home, the meeting of King Melchizedek and the King of Sodom. Here Abram is back at home and the Lord comes to Abram in a vision and says, “Fear not, Abram!”

Now, why would the Lord, Jehovah, say to Abram, “Fear not!” Because a concern, a burden, has come upon Abram that has brought fear into his life! Abram was afraid!

God created us as a people with emotions! He created us male, and female and we are very different in our genetic makeup and our emotional make up in how we react to certain circumstances. Fear is an emotion that we all have or will exhibit in our lives. It was not to be so at the beginning.

When God created Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, the first couple to be married, establishing the covenant of marriage between a man and woman. Fear was not part of their make up! Love is the emotion that is at the core of who we were when mankind was created. There was nothing to fear living in the Garden of Eden and walking and talking with God in the cool of the day in the garden.

When did fear come into their lives and therefore into mankind? After they sinned! In Genesis 3 verse 7 we begin to watch this transpire. They took the bite of the fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What did they recognize first? They were naked! Then they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves! Then what? God comes into the garden, and they hid from God! God, says “Where are you?”

What did Adam say? ***“I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself!”***

Is fear sin? Well, it depends. You are probably saying, “Thanks a lot Dale!”

There is the basic fear or phobia’s we have of certain things, like snakes, spiders, heights, flying, riding with the person that talks a lot while they drive and feel it necessary to look at you while they are driving instead of the road. Being fearful of the dark! Walking down a dark alley and the hair on the back of your neck stands up and you say, “I am getting out of here!”

I am not talking about that kind of fear. Some of those are natural reactions because of the emotion of fear.

Proverbs 1:7

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

This is a reverential fear, a fear of being in awe because God is so awesome, how can he be so good, so faithful, so loving, so merciful, and it drives us towards him! It is in those times of questioning, doubt, concern, heartache, brokenness, in one of those spiritual dry places I mentioned sometime back, we lean in to God and we say, Help!!!! Listen to this short and simple verse, ***Psalm 56:3 – When I am afraid, I will trust in you!***

Fear becomes sin when it drives us away from God. Fear becomes sin when it causes us to mistrust or not believe God and his promises.

Promises like this!

Isaiah 41:10

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.

Psalm 91:1-4

¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." ³ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴ He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

1 John 4:18-19

¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

I could go on and on and on about God's commands to, Fear not, which always coincides with the fact that he is with us, and he is there to help us, and he is there to help us overcome the fear! Here is another thing. Is it okay to question God? Yes? Psalm 79 to Psalm 81. God is big enough, powerful enough, loving enough to handle your questions. What is even better than that is this! God will answer your questions.

God knows what you are going through right now, he knows how you feel. That is obvious because we just read that God comes to Abram and says, "Fear not, I am your shield!" He obviously knew what Abram was fearful about because God then said, "Your reward shall be very great!" We see next in verses 2 through 6 Abram questions God and we see God answer the question.

Genesis 15:2-6

² But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁴ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

From Genesis 12 to now in Genesis 15, there had been some time that has passed, we don't know how long, but it could have been years since God called Abram out of the land of Ur and told him to go to a land where he would show Abram. When time passes and we don't get an answer we do get a little concerned don't we.

Abram was concerned but we see the word God used was fearful! The promise God made to Abram was not that only was land going to be given but it was to be given, passed on as an inheritance to his offspring. Meaning that the offspring would be a biological son from he and Sarai. As we read, what did Abram not have right now? A son! Abram mentions a person within his household. Eliezer of Damascus.

It was a custom and practiced during that time that if a couple was childless then they would choose the heir, and this was usually a servant that is very close to them. Remember, Abram was 75 when God came to him with the promise of land and a great nation. He needed help with all that God had blessed him with and Eliezer was definitely a close confidant and head servant of Abram's and helped with many matters within taking care of the land, the livestock, the family. Was my heir to not be part of my family?

Now Abram is full of questions here. God came to him. The word of the Lord came to Abram, reminding him to not fear, your reward will be great. Again, it is okay and good that we bring our questions, our concerns before God because we will get an answer. Abram gets his answer. Look at verses 4 to 6 again.

Genesis 15:4-6

⁴ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

I would be amiss if I didn't mention that the, "Word of the Lord" coming to Abram was used two times in the first 4 verses. God speaks to answer Abram and to show Abram again how faithful he is. Now, did Abram have the Old Testament? No! He had direct communication with God. Just as with Adam, just as with Noah, and here with Abram, God communicated they were to obey his Word and how they were to worship and show reverence to God through bringing an offering to God.

I don't believe we can articulate or remind us enough that we have in the Bible, God's Word, directly communicated to us from God as truth, for all people, for all time, and for all circumstances.

Well, God tells Abram go outside. Look toward heaven! Here is our first graphic from the beginning of this series.



What do you see Abram? Stars? Number them! If you are able to! So shall your offspring be. Verse 6 is very important! How did Abram react? He heard God's Word, he looked up! He believed! Believed what? God's Word! God's Promise and it was counted to him as righteousness!

Let's be clear, Abram did not become righteous, his belief, his faith in God's Word was counted to him, deposited to his account, that wonderful doctrinal word, God's righteousness was imputed to him.

Just as Abram, we have no righteousness of our own. We are sinners by nature, and we cannot make ourselves righteous! We cannot place ourselves in right standing with God. Therefore, we need Christ's righteousness imputed, Jesus' holiness before God credited to our account.

Using the word righteousness, what does that mean? There has to be a standard that is placed before us to even know what we are talking about when it comes to this word righteous.

When someone says they are a good person if you say someone is good. Compared to what?

When it comes to human beings, the standard is the very character of God! Who penned the first 5 books of the Bible? Moses! As we look at the names of God used from Adam up to this time with Abram and we will see beyond this study. The names, the promises, the actions, the Word of God show the very character of God that he is Holy, and he expects nothing less.

I was listening to a Podcast by R.C. Sproul, who has since gone to be with the Lord Jesus. It was titled The Standard of Goodness. Listen to what he said.

The law reveals the righteousness of God Himself because the law is an expression coming forth from God's own character. Why did the Old Testament psalmist have an affection for the law when he would say, "O, how I love Your law"? When's the last time you heard a Christian say, "O, how I love Your law"? And even when the Apostle Paul rejoiced in being brought out from under the curse of the law, not being beneath the law anymore, he still would say, "The law is holy," and never disparaged it. Because the first function of the law is to reveal the righteous character of God, which is the mirror in which we examine ourselves for the standard of righteousness. And if you've ever looked into that mirror, what did you see? You not only saw the righteousness of God, but instantly your unrighteousness became apparent. R.C. Sproul

The Bible is the Word of God given to us to reveal his Holy Character and our unrighteousness. We cannot say we are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and we cannot say Jesus is our Lord, our Savior, and say I do not accept the Bible as God's absolute truth when it comes to salvation, creation, marriage, lifestyles that God's Word calls sin in following the Lord Jesus.

Abram's belief was not just, okay, I believe. It was a belief that brought him to the point to say God, you are holy, I am not, and I need you to save me and help me live holy before you!

God once again reminds Abram of his power, and he keeps his promises. What we see from Abram though is another question. After seeing that he believes God at his Word and it is counted as righteousness to Abram. Abram shows this reaction that many of us probably have displayed in our lives as well. Jesus encountered this type of reaction as penned by Mark in Chapter 9 of the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus had been up on a mountain where he was transfigured and Peter, James, and John were privileged to see Jesus in his glory. They come down and there is this man with his son, who was demon possessed. The father had asked the disciples to heal his son, they couldn't. An argument arose and Jesus has to take over the situation. The father asks Jesus if he can heal his son and Jesus says, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes!" What did the father **CRY OUT!** "I believe, help my unbelief!"

That is what we see here. Let's read verses 7 to 11.

Genesis 15:7-11

⁷ And he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." ⁸ But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" ⁹ He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

The Lord reminds Abram of who he is and the promises he has already kept in Abram's life. Abram goes, yes, I believe, but how will I know I am going to get this land and it is going to be my own son. ***I believe Lord but help my unbelief.*** Okay, Abram! I am God of Covenants. I am going to make a covenant with you. We just read what God is going to do.

Abram knew what God was getting ready to do. During this time a contract, covenant, was agreed upon by cutting animals in half and the two parties would walk between the animals and the contract, the agreement was sealed with blood. They were also saying if I don't keep this agreement then may I pay with my blood.

God was saying to Abram. Let's get this done once one for all Abram. I am going to make a covenant with you. As I have mentioned several times, we can look over verses when they may seem out of place. I believe we see this again in verse 11.

Genesis 15:11

11 And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

This verse is not out of place as again this is God's Word revealed to mankind and there is nothing out of place. Abram had cut the animals in half except the birds, blood is on the ground. What evidently had not happened yet? God had not come down to complete the covenant. Abram was having to wait again!

We see Abram's faith, belief once again as he drove away the birds of prey. He could have said, "Well, I guess God isn't going to show up! Go ahead birds enjoy your supper!" No! He drives them away expecting God to answer and God to come!

This goes back to this question about ourselves. How are we at waiting? Not very good! God does not work off our timeline. There is a divine timeline with God. Just as we have seen on Sundays through John Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 with Jesus and the divine timeline he was on.

God answers according to his will and his timeline. In Psalm 46:10, that famous verse of "***Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth!***"

This is not telling us just to sit down and become dormant. The Hebrew word here is: rapa – it means to quit striving. To quit trying to do it on our own, don't mistrust God, don't be fearful. As I have said before when it comes to circumstances or situations where we are struggling or seeking God for an answer, don't just stop and wait.

Do what you know to be doing! Keep studying his Word, keep praying, keep sharing the Gospel, keep loving people and let the peace that passes all understanding keep your mind and heart in Christ Jesus!

God shows up to once again prove to Abram that God is faithful.

Genesis 15:12-21

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. 14 But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. 16 And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." 17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18 On that

day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

As God makes this covenant with Abram, he shares with Abram the history of the nation Abram will be the father of.

God puts Abram to sleep and as we read a dreadful and great darkness fell upon Abram. God shares that there will be some dark times that the nation of Israel will go through. Also, Abram is before the very holiness of God as God walks between the sacrifices.

As God makes this covenant with Abram, God describes the enslavement of the Israelites by the Egyptians. God describes the length of years but also God's judgment upon Egypt for the enslavement of God's people and because of God's judgment the Israelites would come out with great possession.

He also tells Abram; you won't see any of that. You will die an old man and then you will come to me and see all your ancestors that had believed in me as well.

I want to point out that in a contract as such usually both parties walk between the animals. We see here that God is the only one that walks between the sacrifices. Saying, this is all on me Abram! Have faith! I will keep my promise! It is the symbol of God coming down to man as God did through Jesus Christ the Son of God for the salvation for mankind. It is the symbol of God's presence, It is a symbol of God's power!

As God fulfills the covenant God chooses to use a smoking fire pot and flaming torch to pass between the sacrifices. This expression of God's presence with smoke and fire is seen through several events in Scripture. God appears as fire in the burning bush, he covers Mt. Sinai with smoke and fire as he gives Moses the Law, As the Israelites leave Egypt and head to the promised land he is seen as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night.

It is the expression that God will walk with his people.

God made the covenant with Abram, in that covenant he gave Abram a history of the nation he was to be the father of, God proved his faithfulness, God proved again his power, and revealed his holiness.

Look at this map:



God showed Abram the land that he would be given! Do not Fear Abram! I've got you! God is a God of covenant.

God made a covenant with:

Adam (within that covenant is the marriage covenant of one man/one woman to become one)

Noah

Abraham (Covenant of Circumcision, that sets the nation apart)

Land Covenant that we just looked at!

Moses

David

The New Covenant - which was the fulfillment of all other covenants! Jesus brought the New Covenant through his sacrifice, the blood that was shed for the forgiveness of sin, the separation of Jesus from his Father as he became sin who knew no sin. No more need of animal sacrifices or priests. Everything now through Jesus!

What do all the covenants tell us about God and what we learned through this Scripture tonight?

God is holy, righteous! God is trustworthy! God keeps his promises! God is big enough to handle your fears, concerns, and questions! Is there fear in your life tonight? How many verses could we find tonight where God says to, Fear Not! How many verses could we find where God says, he is our shield, our buckler, our fortress, our God in who we may trust!

Can I tell you? A bunch!!!

Let's show faith! Let's trust! Let's show faithfulness! The Lord is with us and goes before us!