

You guys ready to get after it?

Okay, we've got some work to do theologically here in God's Word.

If you're just joining us, I'll tell you, we've been walking since the beginning of this year through the book of Exodus, this incredible historical narrative of how God has worked

covenantally in the lives of his people.

It's amazing.

And last week, we began what will be a six-week journey through the account of the plagues.

Now, you know, you think back to Sunday school and flannel graphs and all the stuff, and you think about the plagues and all that.

And

And there's so much there that's rich and beneficial for our lives.

And as we prayed as elders, as pastors, about how we might handle the account of the plagues, we thought about the fact that...

There are all these rich theological lessons, these areas of doctrine, of theology that underlie everything that's happening in the account of the plagues.

And so what we thought to do...

was instead of just kind of reading, like just walking through the plagues and just reading, you know, an account and then moving on to the next plague and talk about this like repetitive work that God's doing to, you know, harden Pharaoh's heart and all of that.

We thought instead of that, what we'll do is just identify six of the key areas of doctrine that are underlying these plagues and then just work to unpack those in ways that are more applicable for our lives.

Okay?

And that feels right on Mother's Day, to be honest, because if I was preaching about frogs this morning, Dana, it might be weird for some people.

And that's okay, right?

There's so much to glean there.

But the point is, is there's stuff happening underneath the plagues that we want to get to that's really rich theologically for our lives.

And so here's the idea, here's the pattern, is that we just each week identify an area of doctrine.

We talk about how we see that at work in Exodus and specifically in the plagues.

And then we work to unpack it in a more general way through God's word.

And the goal of this, I want to say this very clearly, the goal of this is practical application in our lives.

Not just thinking theologically or intellectually about these things, but making the theology as accessible as we can so that we treasure Jesus and enjoy His presence.

That's the point of theology, just in case you didn't know.

It's to actually fall more deeply in love with Jesus and treasure His presence.

The image that I used last week was the cookies in the cookie jar.

We don't want to just...

point to the cookie jar on the very top shelf that we can't actually reach, but we want to take that and we want to get that down to the lowest shelf so that we can actually partake and enjoy together.

I love, so John Wesley spoke of this at one point and he said this, and I love the quote.

He said, there may exist in us a right opinion of God without either love or a right temper towards him.

Satan is proof of this.

Boom.

It's one of those where you're like, wow.

Think about what he said.

He said that you can have right theology, right opinions about God, but not have a love for God or a right disposition towards God.

And that is very problematic.

In fact, I think that points to what James says in his letter where he says the demons, even the demons believe and shudder.

The truth is, is that Satan and his demons have way better theology than we do.

They know exactly what's true of God, but they don't have a love for God and they don't have a right disposition towards God.

And so the point has to be for us in theological lessons and learning is to love God more and see our hearts pointed more towards him in correct disposition.

You guys tracking with me on that?

It's very, very important.

This is about...

Tasting and knowing the inner sweetness of a God who loves us passionately.

That's what theology should do and that's what we want to do throughout these six weeks.

So last week we kicked off things by talking about monotheism.

monotheism the theological understanding that there is one god which is in a real it's a really important place for us to start because we aren't going to get very far unless we believe and embrace and operate from the fact that there is only one god and that god has made us to be with him

You were made to be in right relationship with God and where you're not, life will not make sense.

That's a pretty existential important conversation.

And that was the whole point that we were driving at last weekend is that because of the fall and the inherent indwelling sin inside of us, we are all of us practical polytheists.

What that means is that we all take created things and we live as though those things are better than God.

So you can remember it this way.

We take good things given to us by God.

We take good things and we try to make them God things by elevating them over God in our worship, our trust, our affection, our hope.

And that's called idolatry.

That's the theological term for that.

It's called idolatry.

Now the gospel...

which is God's power for salvation, the good news of the substitutionary work of Jesus, which is our only hope for salvation.

The gospel is working to unbend what has been bent in the fall.

Namely, it's bending our worship back to God where he has our whole heart.

And that conversation about monotheism,

And having a heart that's pointed exclusively at Jesus is so helpful in leading us into the topic that we're going to explore this morning, which I think is a perfect topic to explore on Mother's Day.

We are talking about God's covenant faithfulness.

The covenant faithfulness of God.

By the way, you can tell we're kind of, we're easing into things with these theological topics because we sort of, you know, we're wading into the shallow end of the pool with monotheism.

Most people in the room are like, yep, understand.

Great, unpack it.

See it more fully.

That's wonderful.

And then we get into the covenant faithfulness of God, and you're just going to, like...

Everything we're going to explore today is so incredibly gospelicious that you're just like, who's going to argue with this, right?

Because it's just straight grace and mercy and love.

And you walk out like you're floating in the Shekinah glory of God.

You just see His work.

So that's kind of the shallow end of the pool.

I want you to know we're getting into the deeper end of it.

So next week we're talking about divine sovereignty.

Now, then I'll get in people's kitchens.

So right now you're like, come on in, Jeff.

This is great.

Let's have a theological conversation in the family room.

We're going into the kitchen next week with divine sovereignty.

And then we're getting into like divine justice and we're getting into some other things.

And then I don't know where that is.

We're going into the bedroom or the closet or something, but it's going to ruffle feathers because theology should ruffle our feathers, by the way.

You know why?

Why?

You and I aren't God.

You and I aren't God.

Did you know, by the way, this is, none of this is in my notes, but it's important.

Did you know, oh, not allowed to go past TV.

I got to keep reminding myself of that.

Did y'all know that we don't have any understanding of who God is, but for what he chooses to reveal to us?

Now, he's made himself known in creation, and that's beautiful.

We read that last week in Romans chapter 1.

But all this is God's revelation to us about who he is and what he's done.

I'm not God, and you're not God, but God reveals himself to us in part.

In part, which means there's never a point.

If you think you've arrived theologically, you are in a dangerous place.

And that's the same thing that's true of me.

God is continually growing us and teaching us and revealing things to us about his character and nature.

And we're just exploring this and it's a beautiful process.

But that's what theology does.

And that's where we're going in this series.

And so we're going to sort of progressively move to the deep end of the pool.

But man, this area, this doctrine of God's covenant faithfulness is so rich, so beautiful for our lives that I'm going to define it as simply as I can.

And you tell me this isn't incredibly good news.

Put this up on the screen.

Here's how I would define it very simply.

God is completely and utterly faithful in keeping his promises even when we fail at keeping ours.

Is that not good news this morning?

Are we incredibly thankful for that or what?

Like, I mean, that none of this depends upon my ability to measure up or get things right.

It's all based on the fact that God is always faithful to what he has purposed to do.

So this area of doctrine gets at the unchanging nature of God.

His steadfast love, His abounding patience, His deep mercy and loving kindness that refuses to give up on His people.

This is about the deep commitment of God to always act in accordance with the greatest good of His people.

Even as we are not good, God is unwavering in His commitment to our good.

Hear that this morning.

When you and I are not good, it does not change God's commitment to operate for our greatest good.

That's what I want to explore with you in the next few minutes.

Now, before we pan out and look at this at another place in Scripture through that broader lens, I want to make sure that we see this and understand it in Exodus.

It's actually really clear in something that we just looked at recently.

If you think back to Exodus chapter 6, Moses and Aaron had just delivered God's word to Pharaoh and things got worse.

Do you remember that happening?

Moses and Aaron roll in.

They're probably like, man, this is going to be amazing.

And they deliver God's word.

And then things just like almost seemingly fell apart.

It got worse.

Pharaoh's like, hmm.

I got a better idea.

How about y'all get back to work, get out of my office, right?

And I'm going to take away your straw, not reduce your brick quota, which is going to effectively double, if not triple the workload on an enslaved people who are already being brutalized.

So things...

It became evident in that moment that this was going to be a whole thing.

And that things would get harder before they got better.

Isn't it interesting, by the way, how that's almost always the case?

Have you found that to be true in your life?

Things tend to get harder...

Before they get better, it's almost like God's orchestrating everything to deepen and develop our faith over time because he's playing the long game and doing a greater work that we have no idea in, right?

Almost like that's happening because that's exactly what's happening.

So things get bad and the people turn to Moses and light him up.

They come after Moses.

And then what happens?

Moses turns to God and lights him up, right?

which is in and of itself a display of God's covenant faithfulness that he doesn't just smoke everybody.

I mean, that's basically the narrative of the Bible.

God just not smoking a bunch of people that he should smoke, okay?

But this is what God responds.

This is God's response to Moses.

And Moses says, I want you to say this to the people.

And this is the passage we dissected on Palm Sunday and on Resurrection Sunday on Easter.

We dissected it into a couple parts.

Let's read it together.

Exodus 6, verses 2 through 8.

God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord.

Now, if you're taking notes, I want you to underline that or circle that or highlight that.

I am the Lord.

By the way, that's monotheism.

He's saying, this is who I am.

There is no other.

I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty.

But by my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them.

I also, this is important for us, I also established my covenant with them that

to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.

Moreover,

I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel, whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.

So God gave the covenant, and God remembers the covenant.

By the way, do you think when we read in Scripture that God remembered something?

Do you think God forgot that thing?

Of course not.

That's not what that means.

Say therefore to the people of Israel, here's our phrase again, by the way, you can underline it again if you want.

I am the Lord.

So you go say to the Israelites, I am the Lord.

And now here's the series of like six or seven I will statements.

And I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians.

And I will deliver you from slavery to them.

And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

I will take you to be my people.

And I will.

Be your God.

And you shall know that I am the Lord your God who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

I will bring you into the land of that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

I will give it to you for a possession.

I am the Lord.

There's the phrase a third time.

God bookends and right in the middle makes the statement, I am the Lord.

So God makes these series of I will statements that help encapsulate his covenant heart for his people because this is who God is.

He's revealing something to us about his covenant faithfulness.

He's the God who establishes covenant, who remembers his covenant, who is faithful to his covenant.

And God wants, this is right before the plagues happen, right before God starts dropping plagues on Egypt, the thing that he wants his people to be reminded of is his covenant faithfulness.

So he says, I'll bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

I will deliver you from slavery.

I'll redeem you with an outstretched arm and by mighty works.

I'll take you to be my people.

I will be your God and I will bring you into the promised land as I give it to you as a possession.

You see that?

That is precisely what God is doing in the plagues.

It's that work.

And listen,

Those I will statements, that's precisely the work that he's doing in your life and in my life today.

God's not about new work right now.

He's doing the same work and it's all based on his faithfulness to uphold his covenant promises and to do precisely what he has purposed to do in and through his people for the glory of his name from before the foundation of the world.

Just think about those I will statements for us in the gospel.

God says in the gospel, listen, I will bring you out from this burden.

What does Jesus invite us to in Matthew chapter 11?

to be yoked to him so we can experience that light yoke, that easy burden, and we can find rest for our souls.

God says, I will deliver you from slavery.

Did you know that God delivers us from slavery, from both the penalty and the power of sin?

That's what the gospel does to us.

God says, I will redeem you through mighty acts of power, not the least of which is the fact that he brought us from death to life in Jesus Christ.

Man, by the way, this is one of my pet peeves when it comes to our testimonies.

right?

Because here's what we tend to do in churches.

We tend to do this thing where, you know, we like celebrate and make an incredibly big deal about this guy who was like, you know, hey, did you see Joe, man?

He was addicted to drugs, and he was living on the streets, and he, you know, he did all this stuff, and he was robbing these places, and he did this stuff.

God saved him, and he just woke up from like a drug stupor over the weekend, and

Immediately there was light and he came running into the church.

God rescued him and he got baptized and his life's been radically transformed.

We will celebrate, as we should, we'll celebrate that kind of testimony.

But then, you know, little Susie over here grew up in the church, you know, and she doesn't even remember when she became a Christian because she's kind of always loved Jesus and it's beautiful and God's worked in her life in incredible ways.

We'll somehow celebrate this thing over here more than this thing over here.

And I'm here to tell you that the miracle involved in both scenarios is the exact same.

And it trumps all the circumstances involved.

The miracle is, is that two dead people were brought back to life.

That's the point.

He is doing mighty acts in bringing dead things back to life.

And I'll tell you, every day he's bringing dead parts of my heart back to life as he continues to pound away with his grace.

And it's beautiful.

God says, I'll take you to be my people, and I'll be your God.

That's the same.

The reason that Jesus lived and died and was raised again was so that we could be adopted into the family of God and be a people for his own possession and enjoy intimacy with our heavenly Father.

What about I'll bring you into the promised land?

I'll give you it as a possession.

Listen, y'all, if you're living as though you are home...

everything's going to start misfiring in your life.

You are not home.

God is bringing us right now through this wilderness of our sanctification, and he will bring us into the promised land.

I already told you that he's freed us from the penalty and the power of sin.

The good news of the gospel is that one day we'll be free from the presence of sin altogether.

Praise Jesus.

That's when we'll be home.

These I will statements are the same for us today in the gospel that they were for God's people as he was rescuing them from captivity in Egypt.

This is the work that God is doing based on his covenant faithfulness to us.

And he can be fully trusted to do his work.

You know, you've heard me talk about this before if you've been around Heartland for any length of time, but it bears repeating.

God never, ever, ever deals in plan B's.

There's no plan B's with God.

There's no backup plans with Him.

He's never surprised.

He's never confused or thrown for a loop.

There has never been anything in the history of anything where God hasn't seen something coming and hasn't already from eternity past made provision to use that thing for His glory and for our good.

Not one thing ever in the history of anything.

Everything that is unfolding...

both on the grand stage of redemption and individually in your life and mine is unfolding according to God's sovereign plan and his providential working.

Now, if you're willing to think critically about that, that might tick you off.

If you're so bold as to be honest with God, that might cause some frustration or anger in your heart because that means that God has purposed difficulty in your life.

And sometimes that makes us mad.

God, why are you doing this thing?

I mean, we talked about it in Exodus.

When Moses and Aaron came to the people and they said, hey, guess what?

God's going to deliver you.

He's heard your cries.

He's remembered his covenant.

He's going to deliver you from captivity in Egypt.

And the people believed and they worshiped.

Then they roll into Pharaoh, announce what's happening, and then things got infinitely worse.

There are those moments where we're like, I don't get it.

Why is this happening to me?

Why are you letting me go through this?

Why this pain?

Even sometimes when we walk out in obedience...

things get more difficult.

That's frustrating.

Here's what I want you to hear.

That difficulty in your life matters.

We've talked about, we've talked over the last couple of weeks about the fact that God is far more interested in your character than he is in your comfort.

You've got to get this.

If you don't have a theology for this, life ain't gonna make sense.

God is rad.

So we are born radically committed to our comfort.

If you don't believe me, look at any small child.

They just want what they want and they want to be comfortable all the time.

God is radically committed to your character.

Now understand how that plays out in our lives.

Because if God's more interested in my character than in my comfort, it means that he's going to sometimes walk me into and walk me through great hardship.

Same is true for you, but it's not without great purpose.

God has great purpose in the pain as he's working to deepen and develop your faith by causing you to run into his presence and depend more upon his working and leading.

Now, we're going to explore that more in depth next week when we talk about God's sovereignty.

But here's what I need us to understand in our time this morning.

The hard things that happen to us are not moving against God's covenant faithfulness.

They are an expression of God's covenant faithfulness.

I'm going to say that one more time to make sure you got that.

When difficulty and suffering, hardship comes into your life, it's not moving against God's covenant faithfulness towards you.

It's an expression of God's covenant faithfulness towards you.

What that means is that God has not forgotten you when things get hard.

It means he's remembering you, regarding you, loving you.

Very much how a parent is loving their child when they intentionally cause pain in their lives to teach their heart something.

It means that God's playing the long game with you and that he's radically committed to your spiritual growth over time.

Here's the thing, guys.

We are so conditioned to chase after our comfort and then to allow how we feel about our circumstances to shape what we believe about God's goodness and faithfulness.

That's how we're hardwired.

If I think things are going well and I feel good about them, I'm more apt to understand or think about the covenant faithfulness of God.

And if things are not going well for me and there's a hardship, I struggle to believe the covenant faithfulness of God.

I love the example of Paul's life in this regard.

If you're struggling to find joy in suffering, read Philippians.

That's the theme of the book.

Paul writes about how we can experience an abiding joy in the midst of deep suffering.

And I love what he writes in Philippians 1.

By the way, Paul gets, like, if you're going to listen to a guy about this, listen to Paul.

Because he's writing the letter to the church in Philippi while suffering mightily.

I say this all the time, like the joke is, if Paul's like writing this letter poolside at the Damascus Hilton with his feet up and an umbrella drink in his hand, you know, they're like, really?

Paul's in prison in Rome, house arrest, granted, but chained to a member of the Roman Praetorian Guard, probably can't go to the bathroom by himself.

And he's awaiting what would eventually be his execution.

He didn't know that at the time, but he's suffering mightily.

And he writes to, by the way, if you were to write a letter to the church and you were imprisoned and you were suffering, how would you write the letter?

Because I'll tell you how I'd write.

If I was on a mission trip, I got caught up in North Korea or something and I'm in prison and I somehow got to write a letter to Heartland, I'd be like, Heartland, prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective.

Y'all better be praying for me that God saves me from this.

Send money.

Send money.

kim jong-un's gonna take it anyway it doesn't matter i'm i'm praying for salvation from my circumstances look at how put this on the screen look at how paul prays he says i will rejoice for i know that through your prayers and the help of the spirit of jesus christ this will turn out for my deliverance that's different

He's not saying, pray that God will deliver me from this.

By the way, that word for deliverance is the same word for salvation.

He's saying, keep praying because God's using all this to save me.

Oh, that's different.

That's different.

That's not wanting to be released from hard circumstances.

That's wanting God to use circumstances, difficult circumstances to release you from yourself.

He says, it's my eager expectation and hope that I will be not at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

And then here's the one you all know, verse 21, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Paul is able to say that Christ is life because he's living inside of the covenant faithfulness of God.

Where he knows that God is working all things in such a way that glorifies his name and actually works for Paul's greatest good at all times and so it is with us.

So it is with us.

So let's look at this at one more place in scripture.

this covenant faithfulness of God.

As was the case with monotheism, there are a number of different passages that we could explore together, but here's what I want to do very briefly.

I want to go back and look at a passage in Genesis 15.

So if you're still in Exodus 6, make a left turn, Genesis 15, because there's this incredible interaction between

Where God came to Abraham in a time when Abraham was doubting the promises and the goodness of God.

Ever been there?

Come on.

Church, we can be honest.

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

We've been there.

We doubt his goodness at times.

We doubt his promises at times.

And that was Abraham.

Abraham.

Because what God said is he came and said, look, I'm going to give you a son.

I'm going to give you an heir.

And it's going to blow your mind, Abraham, because like your descendants are going to be more numerous than when you look up and see stars in the sky.

And then what happened is, is time went by.

Has God ever put something on your heart and then said, wait?

Y'all chuckling because you know.

He does that.

Why?

Because he wants to remind you that he's actually the treasure and the prize.

Right?

Because we're idolatrous.

We're practical polytheists.

God knows if I give you that thing too soon, you're going to immediately attach your heart to it and treat it like it's God and not me.

God's good in the waiting.

I love this example of Abraham because we love to put Abraham...

on a pedestal talking about his faith.

And to be sure, Scripture makes a big deal.

about the fact that it was faith that was credited to Abraham as righteousness.

And I love that because people are like, oh, New Testament, that's about faith in Jesus.

Old Testament, that's about doing a bunch of stuff for God.

No, the New Testament continually points back to the Old Testament and says it's always been about faith.

And oh, by the way, that's always been a gift of God.

And oh, by the way, that's the point here.

Because we see Abraham's unbelief, his doubt, his lack of faith here.

And we need to understand and be reminded, Abraham was not awesome because he mustered up faith.

It was given to him by God as a gift.

And so it is with us.

Listen, there is nothing faithful in us except what God puts there and cultivates over time.

I'm going to say that again.

Y'all better start amening some of this stuff or I'm going to just keep repeating it because I don't think you're hearing me.

There's nothing faithful in you and me.

Nothing except what God puts there and cultivates over time.

You know what that means?

God hardwired the whole thing so that none of us have any room whatsoever to boast in anything but Him.

We can't boast in ourselves because we're not mustering this up.

Abraham didn't muster up faith.

It was given to him by God.

In fact, Abraham often faltered, doubted, disbelieved.

Have you read the Bible?

Two times he tried to give his wife away as his sister because he was scared of people.

It's literally like me walking into a situation and be like, man, my wife's super attractive.

I think they're going to try to kill me.

She's my sister.

You can have her.

Two times.

Does that sound like faith?

Two times he did that.

He didn't even learn this the first time.

And God was always faithful to remind Abraham that he was the one doing all the work.

You want to understand the covenant faithfulness of God?

Here it is in a nutshell.

God's doing everything.

All of it.

You're like, but what?

Nope.

But how about?

Nope.

God's doing all of it.

You're like, but what about this piece?

No, he's doing that too.

Read it with me.

Genesis 15, starting in verse 7.

I'm just going to read through 18 and then I'm going to explain it.

God said to Abraham, he said, I'm the Lord.

There's that phrase again, by the way.

I'm the Lord.

I'm the Lord.

who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.

But Abraham said, O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?

He said to him, now, I mean, God could have, have you ever, any parents in the room, you ever been like, because I told you so?

Well, dad, how do I know?

Because I said so.

God could have just been like, because I literally just said it, and I prefaced it by reminding you that I'm the Lord.

But he's so good in meeting Abraham in his knuckle-headedness.

He said to him, bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, turtle dove.

Sounds like there should be a song about this, a young pigeon.

He brought all these and I'm going to explain this in a minute, so don't be freaked out by this.

He cut them in half and he laid each half over against the other, but he didn't cut the birds in half.

And when the birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram, remember God renamed him later Abraham, Abraham drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram and behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

And 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 400 years.

But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve.

That's what we're studying right now in Exodus.

If you're like, oh, yeah, see, it's all connected.

And afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

We'll be dealing with that soon.

As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace.

You shall be buried in a good old age.

And they shall come back here in the fourth generation for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

Now look at verse 17.

This is where it just gets, I told you, it's gospelicious.

It's so good.

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces of the animals.

On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying to your offspring, I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites and the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,

The Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Now, a lot of stuff there that we're not going to deal with.

A lot of history.

But here's what I want you to get.

That whole picture, by the way, seems somewhat gruesome and barbaric to us in modern culture.

Certainly not PETA friendly.

Don't get us started on that.

Like, oh my gosh.

But this was a part of the culture of the ancient Near East.

In this culture of the day.

Here's what would happen.

When kings, leaders, rulers would make a treaty with each other.

They would do this.

So they would take animals.

They would have those animals cut in half.

There was blood everywhere along this barrier.

And that's kind of the idea.

And then each of the kings, okay, the two kings who were making the covenant, they would walk through these animal pieces and they would recite.

the terms of the agreement, the covenant.

And the whole point of this was to display in front of all the people, everyone watching and to each other saying, if I don't uphold my end, if I'm not faithful to these promises I'm making in this covenant, what's happened to these animals will happen to me.

So think about Abram, Abraham, who knows this culture.

It would make sense to him when God's like, bro, I'm going to remind you of my covenant right now.

Go get these animals.

And Abram will be like, yeah, that's what you do.

And they're cut in half and they're laid in two rows.

That's what you do.

And then Abram undoubtedly would have assumed that he and God were going to somehow pass through these pieces together and recite the

covenant and what they would do but that's not what happens what does God do for starters he moves Abram to a place of rest he causes him to fall into a sleep and then God himself passes through the pieces as he announces his covenant promises to Abraham

Don't miss this because, again, we tend to somehow misinterpret how all this began as though it's not gospel.

It's fully gospel.

It's been the gospel.

It's been faith.

It's been God's covenant faithfulness.

It's been grace.

It's been mercy.

It's been chesed, steadfast, covenantal love of God from the very beginning.

This is the entire point of the message, and it sits at the very heart of the gospel.

God takes upon himself the entirety of responsibility for fulfilling both sides of the covenant.

Why?

Because he knows that he's the only one who is faithful.

He knows Abraham won't be faithful.

He knows Israel repeatedly won't be faithful.

He knows that you and I aren't faithful, but he knows that he's always faithful.

My friends, God's promises have never failed and his covenant is always sure.

This is not about you and I mustering up faith to place in God.

It's actually about us coming to an end of ourselves into a place of resting in the fact that God fulfills both sides of the covenant for us.

You might say, Jeff, I get how God's faithful and fulfills his side of the covenant, but how does he fulfill our side of the covenant?

Oh, let me tell you about the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ for us.

That's the entire point of the incarnation.

Jesus stepping out of heaven, taking on the form of his own creation and living out his righteous, his rightness, perfection in perfect obedience to his father.

Living a life that you and I didn't and couldn't live.

That's why he came.

That's why he died.

It was so that he could die in our place, taking our sin, our guilt, our shame, all the uncleanness upon himself so that he brought that into the grave with him, fully paid for, and then put death to death as he raised victorious over sin and death because death had absolutely no claim on his righteous perfection.

All of that is so that his righteousness can now cover us

He's fulfilled it for us.

He's done it for us.

Both sides of this new covenant of grace are completely fulfilled in God himself.

I ask you, listen, every man-made religious system from the history, the entire history of the world says that you need to do things to measure up to a standard so that God accepts you and loves you and is pleased with you.

You better get busy doing stuff upholding your end of the bargain.

It's the gospel that says that where God says, no, no, you can't do any of that.

I've done it all for you.

I want you to come and be with me and enjoy me and delight in me and experience my love and grace and mercy showered upon you.

And I just want you to rest.

Do you know that's why the gospel is called good news, the evangelion?

Because it doesn't get any better than that news.

And it's the only way to be saved.

Never by trying to fulfill your end of the bargain, you can't.

How on earth could you and I improve upon the perfect finished work of Jesus?

Crazy.

It's crazy to think that.

It's about you coming to an end of yourself, running straight into his arms, and basking in his love for you.

And enjoying his righteousness as he covers you with it, smothers you with it.

That's imputation.

It's covering you now.

And that happens as it has always been, even with Abraham.

That happens only by faith, which is given to us as a gift of God.

That's the truth of the gospel.

And that's where we experience the covenant faithfulness of God.

Let's pray together.

Oh God, we need you in every way.

We need you to show us what is true of yourself.

We need for you to awaken.

Dead hearts and bring us to life god.

We need you to shine your light on those Places in our heart where we don't get it.

There's unbelief.

There's doubt.

There's idolatry god.

We lack faith We're just asking that you would shower us with grace in this moment to show us what is true Of who you are and what you've done And who we are in jesus christ and I pray god that you would flood our hearts this morning

with fresh understandings of your mercy and your love.

Do that work, God, for your glory as Jesus Christ is lifted high in this place.

I pray, God, that you would meet us in our unbelief.

Meet us in those dark places and draw us into your marvelous light for your glory.

We pray in Christ's name.

Amen.