

Homework for Discussion September 26 and 27:

1. Read Genesis 15-16.

Re-read our definition for Grace:

Grace can be seen as God's movement towards the sinner-saint; action that manifests as unmerited kindness towards the sinner-saint.

(*Remember* Kindness plays out more specifically than favor; kindness is specific blessings pertaining to the individual and the specific season they're in.)

Keeping this definition in mind, are you seeing any instances of Grace that you hadn't seen before?

2. Write Genesis 12.1-3 here:

Genesis 12.1-3 lists the promises that God is making to Abram. Use the table below to identify which promises are more immediate and which promises are more future oriented.

Immediate	Future

Read Romans 8.28, 2 Corinthians 1.3-4, Philippians 1.6, and Philippians 4.6-7. What are some things you and I, the Church-age Saints, are promised?

Do you find it easier to trust God with the future promises (like Philippians 1.6: the good work started in us will be brought to completion) or the immediate promises (like Romans 8.28: God can bring good out of anything, 2 Corinthians 1.3-4: We'll receive comfort, and Philippians 4.6-7: Prayer brings peace).

Why do you think it's easier to trust God with the future promises?

3. Read Genesis 14.

What does God tell Abram in Genesis 15.1? After reading Genesis 14, what do you think Abram fears?

Do you have any fears? Revisit some of the promises listed above (Romans 8.28, 2 Corinthians 1.3-4, Philippians 1.6, Philippians 4.6-7); do any of these promises ease your fears?

If you struggle with fear, consider incorporating Psalm 31.7 into your prayer time:

I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul.

4. According to Genesis 15.2-3, what is Abram's repeated complaint?

Write Psalm 142.2 here:

Why should we take our complaints to God?

How does the Lord respond to Abram's complaint in Genesis 15.4? How does this impact your view of God?

Where do you take your complaints?

5. Write Genesis 16.1 here:

Who was Hagar?

Write Genesis 12.16 here:

6. What does Sarai suggest to Abram in Genesis 16.2? What is Abram's response in Genesis 16.4?

Abram and Sarai want an heir and take matters into their own hands rather than wait on the Lord. Are there times you take matters into your own hands rather than waiting on the Lord? How does it work out for you?

7. What does the angel of the Lord call Hagar in Genesis 16.8?

What does he ask her in the same verse?

What is the point of conversations and asking questions (recall the Lord having a conversation with Adam and Eve and with Cain)?

8. Incorporate Psalm 119.132 into your prayer time this week:

Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name.

September 26 and 27, 2023: God's Grace to Abram and Hagar, 15-16

I. Events that have Impacted Abram:

A. The five kings of the Dead Sea region rebel against the four kings of Mesopotamia.

The battle culminates in a decisive victory for the four kings of Mesopotamia at the Vale of Siddim, such that they are able to loot the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Genesis 14.11:

So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way.

B. Lot is captured by the four kings of Mesopotamia:

Genesis 14.12:

They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

C. Abram rescues Lot:

Genesis 14.14-16:

***14** When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. **15** And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. **16** Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.*

D. Abram refuses plunder:

Genesis 14.22-23:

***22** But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"*

Whatever blessing or reward he received, Abram wanted the credit to go to God not man.

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.”

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?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.”

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.” 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.”

And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

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.”

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

15.1 *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.”*

i. After fearing retaliation and loneliness and refusing plunder on behalf of the Lord.

He is very likely considering the possibility that he will be killed in retaliation before the promised offspring is conceived.

We are told to ‘*fear not*’ countless times in the Bible, but the Lord is actually quite Gracious when it comes to our fears.

Mark 4.35-41:

35 *On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.”* **36** *And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.* **37** *And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.* **38** *But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”* **39** *And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.* **40** *He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you*

still no faith?” 41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

He first removed the source of their fear. That is Gracious. That is Jesus moving towards the sinner-saint and showing unmerited kindness to accomplish His will or His pleasure in their life.

Grace-Grace can be seen as God’s movement towards the sinner-saint; action that manifests as unmerited kindness* towards the sinner-saint (*kindness is specific to the individual and the specific season they’re in). Grace is also demonstrated when God moves towards the sinner-saint to accomplish His will or His pleasure in their life.

Psalm 119.132:

Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name.

ii. The Lord moves towards Abram to remind him of their covenant relationship and to remind Abram that it is His faithfulness that protects Abram and that His faithfulness would supply Abram’s very great reward.

God is our very great reward throughout Eternity.

Philippians 3.7-14:

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Jonathan Edwards Thoughts on Romans 2.10:

Heaven is where the tears from earthly sorrows and afflictions will be wiped away.

The mercy and grace of God appears differently now; it doesn't convict now, rather it leads the saints to contemplate His wonderful mercies and Grace. How He wrought everything together for good will be sweet meditations and subjects of praise with other saints.

The blessed sentence will be inexpressible grace and love causing raptures of joy.

*The chief bliss of heaven: Seeing God [Beatific Vision]--**Beholding God** with an intellectual view...**not with eyes of the body but with eyes of the soul.***

Psalm 17.15:

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

Revelation 22.3-4:

***3** No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. **4** They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.*

Who will you see?

1 Corinthians 13.12:

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

John 6.45-46:

***45** It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— **46** not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.*

Jesus is the image of the invisible God and reveals to us how God thinks and feels, so if we're to impact our relationship with God for all of Eternity, we should cultivate a relationship with Jesus Christ here and now.

15.2 *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.*

Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?...Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.”

i. If a promise is delayed, we think it must be denied.

Romans 8.28:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

The fulfillment of Abram’s promise for a son wouldn’t be for another 15 years but his laser focus on that sole provision very likely meant that he neglected the comfort of all the other provisions the Lord had Graciously blessed him with.

ii. The Lord reassures Abram that his steward, Eliezer, will not be his heir but his heir will be from his own loins. To underscore this reassurance the Lord directs Abram outside to look at the night sky and tells him: *“Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them...So shall your offspring be.”*

That is exceedingly kind of the Lord to move towards Abram in the midst of his fear to reassure him of His will for Abram’s life.

Romans 9.4:

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

Revelation 22.16:

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.

iii. Abram has trusted much of God's far-off promises to this point but here we're seeing Abram trusting that the Messiah would come from his lineage. Salvation is found in no other name under heaven; here we're seeing Abram look forward to Christ and trust on Christ's atoning work that **would** come.

15.7 *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.*

i. The Lord ratifies His covenant with Abram by reminding him that He showed Abram unmerited favor by bringing him out of a land and then showed him even more unmerited favor to give him the boundaries of another land.

ii. The Lord replies to Abram with the command to bring animals; the two are going to "sign a contract."

Genesis 15.18: "...made a covenant..."

Made: Hebrew, *karath*—cut a covenant

Jeremiah 34.18-20:

18 *And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts— 19 the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. 20 And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.*

15.12 *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.*”

The Lord’s delays are Gracious. Because as we wait on Him and His sovereign timing, we continually return to Him. And with each return we develop our relationship with Him, which we already learned impacts the relationship that we’ll have with Him throughout all of Eternity.

15.17 *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.”*

i. “...a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.”

Smoking fire pot, similar to pillar of cloud (Exodus 13.21-22); flaming torch similar to burning bush (Exodus 3.4).

It’s wholly about God and His faithfulness, and what He would do and what He would accomplish, so God alone signs that contract by passing through the animals.

16.1 *Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife.*

Sarai had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

i. Abram is frustrated with God's timing, so he decides to help God out with the plan to bring forth a son, and he acts in the flesh. And the worst part—he leads Sarai in doing all of this too by not drawing her eyes up towards their faithful God.

16.4 *And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. 5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" 6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.*

All of this would have been avoided if Abram would have returned to the Lord when his faith was failing. The Lord would have been Gracious to Abram and reminded him of His faithfulness and covenant promises.

16.7 *The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her."*

i. A Christophany, which is an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. Again, this exceeds Grace...this goes beyond God moving towards us; here He outright appears to Hagar.

ii. Anytime we see the Lord engage in conversations, the questions are designed so that the answers will reveal sin for what it is and the hold it has over a person's life. The Lord moves towards people throughout Genesis through conversation so that they will understand their need to turn to a Gracious God who favors them.

The conversation with Hagar is no different; to be stopped in the midst of sin is exceedingly Gracious.

Remember what we've learned about sin from Genesis thus far—where there is sin, there is death and the preincarnate Christ just appeared to Hagar to loosen that hold on her life.

16.10 *The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." 11 And the angel of the Lord said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son.*

You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction.

12 *He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."*

13 *So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.*

Here the preincarnate Christ moves towards Hagar to accomplish His will and His pleasure for her life; He promises her that her offspring will be innumerable, although it will start with a *"wild donkey of a man."* And while Salvation by Grace alone is off the table, we can see that God's common Graces extend to even the most unlikely candidates.

16.15 *And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.*

It appears that Hagar had a change of heart and obeyed the instructions given to her.

The War of Nine Kings

The War of Nine Kings (mentioned in Genesis 14.3, 14.8, and 14.10) was a battle waged by Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, who allied with three other kings (Genesis 14.1: Amraphel of Shinar, Arioch of Ellasar, and Tidal of Goiim) to subdue the five kings of the Dead Sea region (Genesis 14.2: Bera of Sodom, Birsha of Gomorrah, Shinab of Admah, Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela/Zoar).

The five kings of the Dead Sea region had submitted to Chedorlaomer's rule for 12 years, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against his rule, causing Chedorlaomer to ally with the three kings, who were most likely rivals of the five kings of the Dead Sea region.

Chedorlaomer and his allies had several victories, and at the Valley of Siddim had such a decisive victory he and his allies were able to loot the cities of Sodom and Gommorah and take captives from those cities.