

Covenantal Faith

Principles of Abraham's Faith, Pt. 4; (Gen 12:1 - 25:17)

February 4, 2018

Review:

- 1. Abraham leaves Babylon** (Gen 11:26-32).
- 2. Conversion, call and promise of God to Abraham** (Gen 12:1-5)
- 3. Abraham's first test of faith** (Gen 12:6-20).
Because of the famine, Abraham goes to Egypt & lies about Sarah.
- 4. The parting of Abraham and Lot** (Gen 13:1-18)
- 5. Abraham wins three victories in rescuing Lot** (Gen 14:1-16).
- 6. Abraham tithes of all he has** (Gen 14:17-24).

God cuts covenant with Abraham

Gen 15:1-21 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." 2 Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." 4 Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." 5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. 7 And He said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it." 8 He said, "O Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. 11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. 15 "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. 16 "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." 17 It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."

Abraham heard the Gospel preached

Gal 3:8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "all the nations will be blessed in you." (Gen 12:1-3)

The setting

Abraham had just defeated the kings (Gen 14) and overcome the temptation from the King of Sodom. Abraham did not need the protection of the King of Sodom or the treasures he offered. Now God steps in to encourage him.

The entreaty of Abraham (Gen 15:1-6)

Abraham did not want a reward; he wanted an heir. He was now 85 years old, and for 10 years he had been waiting for his promised son to be born. If he had no son, all his inheritance would fall to Eliezer, his steward.

Look - God answers Abraham's questions

Gen 15:5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Whether Abraham looked down at the dust (Gen 13:14-16) or up at the stars (Gen 15:5), he would remember God's promise and have confidence.

The sacrifice (Gen 15:9-17)

This was known in Abraham's day as "cutting a covenant."

This ritual involved the death of animals and the binding of people to a promise. The persons making the covenant would sacrifice several animals and divide the bodies, placing the halves opposite each other on the ground. Then the parties would walk between the pieces of the sacrifices, this sealed the agreement.

Gen 15:9 - The sacrifices speak of Jesus Christ and the cross. Salvation is based on sacrifice and covenant requires the shedding of blood (Heb 9:22).

Gen 15:11 - Abraham offers the sacrifices and labors to keep the birds away (Satan Mt 13:4, 19).

Gen 15:12 - Nothing happens until Abraham sleeps.

Like Adam, Abraham was in a deep sleep and could do nothing to help God (Gen 2:21).

When we are helpless - God is able and will do great things for us.

Gen 15:17-18 - Abraham never did walk between the pieces. It was God alone who went between the pieces; the covenant was all of grace and depended solely upon the Lord.

The assurance

Abraham wanted to know for sure what God would do, and God met his need.

Salvation is based on the sacrifice of Christ and the grace of God; assurance comes from the Word of God.

God tells Abraham what he and his family will experience; the sojourn of Israel in Egypt, their suffering in Egypt, their deliverance in the fourth generation (Ex 6:16-26), and their possession of the Promised Land.

God says, "I have given this land" (Gen 15:18), and not, "I will give" as (Gen 12:7).

Notes:

A. The first mention principle:

Gen 15 has eight words or phrases used for the first time in the Bible, they are:

1. The Word of the Lord

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision ...

This is the first time in the Bible you find the phrase "the word of the Lord came"; it is used more than 100 times in the Old Testament. The faith that conquers fear is faith in the Word, not faith in feelings.

2. Do not fear

Gen 15:1 ... saying, "Do not fear, Abram, ..."

God repeated this to Isaac (Gen 26:24); Jacob (46:3); and often to the people of Israel (Ex 14:13; 20:20; Num 14:9; Dt 1:21).

The "fear not" promises in Isaiah are good to read and ponder when you find yourself dealing with fear (Isa 41:10, 13-14; 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8).

God's remedy for Abraham's fear was God's presence – "I AM."

And God reminds Abraham who He is; "I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward".

Ps 84:11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly".

God's, I AM is perfectly adequate for man's "I am not".

3. Reward

Gen 15:1 ... I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."

4. Heir

Gen 15:2 Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (used 4 times in Gen 15:2-4)

The answer to Abraham's concern about his heir was God's promise—I WILL.

5. Possess

Gen 15:7 And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."

6. Believe (d)

Gen 15:6 Then he believed in the LORD; ...

Abraham's faith is a pattern for all believers (Rom 4; Gal 3:6-9; Heb 11:8-10, 17-19).

Abraham believed God, which is literally, "Abraham said, 'Amen, God!'" The Hebrew word translated "believed" means "to lean your whole weight upon." Abraham leaned wholly on the promise of God and the God of the promise.

The Bible does not say that Abram pleased God or appeased him, as most religions require, but simply that he believed in him.

7. Reckon (ed) or account (ed)

Gen 15:6 ... and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

"Impute" means "to put to one's account."

There are three main crediting in the Bible:

The sin of Adam upon all mankind (Rom 3:23; 5:12).

The sins of all upon Christ (Isa 53:5-6; 2Cor 5:14-21; Heb 2:9; 1Pt2:24).

The righteousness of God upon each believer (Rom 4:6-25; Phil 3:9; Jas 2:23).

8. Righteous (ness)

Gen 15:6 ... and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

The Bible teaches that we are all sinners before God (Gen 3:7-10; Heb 4:13; Rev 3:17).

Some realize this and try to make their own spiritual clothes, but God looks upon such clothes as "filthy rags" (Isa 64:6).

Abraham's greatest need was righteousness; This is also man's greatest need today.

Rom 3:23 all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Rom 3:10 There is none righteous, no, not one.

How did Abraham receive righteousness? He believed the Lord, and righteousness was imputed to him.

Whenever sinners realize their nakedness and turn to God, He clothes them in His own righteousness (Isa 61:10; Zec 3:4; Lk 15:22).

On the cross, our sins were put on Jesus' account (Isa 53:12); He suffered the punishment that belonged to us (53:6). When you trust Him, His righteousness is put on your account (2Cor 5:21), and you stand righteous and forgiven before God.

B. This chapter shows us that there can be:

no heirship without sonship (Rom 8:16–17)

no righteousness without faith (Rom 4:3ff)

no assurance without promises

no blessing without suffering

C. It had to become dark before Abraham could see the stars.

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth (13:16).

D. There are three kinds of covenants in the Bible

The covenant of blood (Gen 15)

The covenant of salt (Lev 2:11-16; 2Chr 13:5)

The covenant of a sandal (Ruth 4:7-8)

E. God gives Abraham seven prophecies; which were all fulfilled.

The reference following each prophecy shows its fulfillment:

1. Abraham's descendants would be strangers in a foreign land (Gen 15:13-14).

2. They would be servants in that land (Ex 1:7-14).

3. The servitude would last 430 years (Ex 12:40).

4. God would judge the nation that enslaved them (Ex 7-12).

5. Abraham himself would be spared all of this (Gen 15:7-8).

6. After four generations in Egypt, Israel would return to Canaan (Ex 6:16-20).
(Moses was the fourth generation)

7. Israel would come out of Egypt with great wealth (Ex 12:35-36; Ps 105:37).

References used:

Willmington's Bible handbook

Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament