



## An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham

1. We're into our 5<sup>th</sup> week of our study on: **An Adventure of Faith: Walking with Abraham**

- remember, this study isn't really so much about Abraham as it is the GOD of Abraham
- we're going to learn a lot from Abraham's life, but we want to focus on the hand of God at work through the life of Abraham
- Next week we'll study *Genesis 16: "God Has a Plan" - The High price of impatience (Abram and Hagar...birth of Ishmael)*

2. For a bit of a review – let's consider the following question:

**Input: What lessons have you learned so far from the life of Abraham?** [You can divide your answer up into 2 categories:

#1: What you've learned about God AND #2: What you've learned about man & our faith

Lessons a/b God	Lessons a/b man & faith
✓ Faithfulness	✓ Inconsistent – up & down, back/forth
✓ Patient	✓ Impulsive – want it NOW
✓ Control/Sovereignty	✓ Wants control – lacks submission
✓ Gracious	✓ Sometimes demanding
✓ Dependable	✓ Unpredictable

3. A Key Verse that we've been focusing on is:

❖ **Romans 15:4** **For whatever was written in earlier times** [reference to the OT] **was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

4. Last week we studied Gen. 14: God Stretches Our Faith . . .

> in times of *conflict*, for *personal involvement*, during times of *blessing* and *important decisions!*

5. Our focus today in **Genesis 15 – How Big Is Your God?**

> while we going to be seeing how Abraham would answer that question, I want YOU to be asking the same question in YOUR heart!

6. Read the following quote:

***"This chapter is pivotal for the Abraham tradition. Theologically, it is probably the most important chapter of this entire collection... It has been utilized by Paul in a distinctive way***

**for his great teaching on justification by faith. There is no doubt that this chapter offers crucial resources for the themes of faith and covenant. Abraham and Sarah were called out of their barrenness (11:30) by God’s powerful word (12:1). Their pilgrimage of hope had begun on no other basis than the promise of Yahweh (12:1-4a). The promise of Yahweh stood over against the barrenness. But when we arrive at chapter 15, the barrenness persists. That barrenness (which the promise has not overcome) poses the issue for this chapter. The large question is that the promise does delay, even to the point of doubt. It is part of the destiny of our common faith that those who believe the promise and hope against barrenness nevertheless must live with the barrenness. Why and how does one continue to trust solely in the promise when the evidence against the promise is all around? It is this scandal that is faced here. It is Abraham’s embrace of this scandal that makes him the father of faith.” —Walter Brueggeman, Commentary**

[READ Gen. 15:1-18]

## **I. God Is Big Enough to Overcome Your Fears – 15:1**

**1. After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying. . .** (Later in Gen 20:7 God calls Abraham a “*prophet*”. Notice these “*words of Yahweh*” are coming to him in visions. So in the prophetic sense, it would not be unusual to have glimpses of the future as shown in vv. 13-16)

- God is bigger than our fears . . . .

### **A. Because of what He says**

- His word is His authority & it communicates what He wants us to *KNOW* and DO

**1. . . . “Do not fear, Abram . . . ,**

- remember Gen. 3 – *fear* (wrong kind of fear) is a result of the curse – Adam offered the excuse of “I was *afraid*” (the concept of fear is mentioned over 700 times in the Bible)

Q: *What would Abram have to fear at this point in his life?*

> don’t forget chp. 14 and the 4 kings invading the land & taking Lot

> look at the next few verses – the barrenness issue continues

- So, it’s understandable to see how Abraham would most likely grow anxious and fearful of the future in regard to God’s promises,

> But Yahweh (the LORD) reassures Abraham in the face of the apparent threats to the promises He made to Abram

- This isn’t the only time where God tells us (or someone) to not fear – or to “fear not”

- ❖ **Matthew 10:28 “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**
- ❖ **Genesis 26:24 The LORD appeared to him [Isaac – Abraham’s son] the same night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, for the sake of My servant Abraham.”**
- ❖ **Isaiah 41:10 ‘Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’**

### **B. Because of Who He is: God is a Shield**

. . . **I am a shield to you** (Yes, Yahweh helped Abraham in chp. 14 but how long will the protection in the land last? Yahweh reaffirms His protection of Abraham);

Q: *In what ways has God already demonstrated that He is a Shield?*

- Pharaoh could have killed in chp. 12
- 4 invading kings could have killed him in chp. 14

Point: God is always trying to help us – He is a *Shield* to His people:

- ❖ **Deuteronomy 33:29** "Blessed are you, O Israel; who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, Who is the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread upon their high places."
- ❖ **Psalm 18:30** As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.
- ❖ **Psalm 84:11** For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

### C. Because of what He will do: *'Your reward shall be very great'*

. . . **Your reward shall be very great.**" (Notice that Abraham rejected the reward from the King of Sodom (14:21-14) but God comes immediately after the events of chp. 14 and assures him of reward.) Read the quote:

***"The gift of God is given especially to those who trust and who will risk according to what is promised. The same difficult affirmation is made in the Beatitudes of Jesus. They conclude in Matt 5:12 with a promise of "reward in heaven." ...It is hazardous to speak of rewards as these texts do, for they may be heard as bargains or bribes. And yet it is attested that faithful trust makes a difference and that God does respond in generosity to those who trust. It will not do either to be silent on the question or to leave the subject to religious hucksters who promise all kinds of benefits in their religious retailing. Rather, the rewards must be articulated as the generous response of God to those who heed His call and share His life. That is what is offered Abraham in the face of barrenness."*** – Walter Brueggeman

- God is bigger than your fear . . .

### D. Because of what He has done – 15:2-7

**Q: What has God has done for us that Abram didn't have at this time in his life?**

[OT history, NT history, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the founding of NT local church, completed Scriptures, etc.!]

**Q: What impact should that have on our faith & confidence in God?**

[we ought to be more confident in God than Abram was – yet remember Heb. 11 – they are/can be an example to us about walking by faith and not by sight!]

- but you have to deal first with the effects of the curse of sin . . .

#### 1. Man's reasoning – sight-oriented – 15:2-3

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?" (An ancient practice was making a slave the ADOPTED HEIR when the father was childless. Abraham still doesn't understand precisely how *Yahweh* will give him an heir. He is not even contemplating that an heir would come from his own body or Sarah's own body.) 3. And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."

- Be careful when man starts telling God how things are going to be or ought to be!
  - > Remember, 'Man at his best, is at best a man' (. . . and cursed by sin!)
- Abraham thinks he knows what's possible & finds God's promises w/o persuasive power.

- But Abraham hasn't quite grasped the fact that *Yahweh* is the God who can do what is IMPOSSIBLE for man.

Q: *What would you say/do at this point if you were God?* [. . . but God is gracious to Abram]

## 2. God's response – 'look to the heavens and count the stars'

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." (This is the first time God directly and specifically says that the *seed* would come through Abraham's body—not Lot, not a family slave). 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."

- I think this is a great example of God meeting a person where they are and leading them to where they need to be – Abram was 'walking by sight sometimes' so God said, OK, look up to the heavens and "count the stars, if you are able . . . "
- > 'if you are able' is God's way of pointing out His power and Abram's weaknesses – Abram couldn't count the stars because he couldn't even SEE all of them!!

Q: *Why the reference to the heavens/stars?*

- ❖ Gen. 14:22 – Abraham recognized the LORD God Most High as the possessor of heaven and earth
- God is not only able to count them (Abram isn't), He even knows them by name:
  - ❖ **Isaiah 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of *His* power, not one of them is missing.**

Cf. Psalm 8 [READ – powerful reference to the nature and ]

## II. God Is Big Enough to Change Your Life:

- this is one of the most significant passages in the Bible . . .

6. Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. – Abram's faith excels!

### Input: What made the difference in Abram's life (v. 6)?

A: v. 1 – The word of God – what God said (command, and Who He is), along with the reality of the heavens and what He has done (as Creator and 'possessor of heaven and earth')

Point: If God can do that, He can create life out of barrenness – He did it once already!

- God's work in creation designates Him as the only power who can change the established order and can create *ex nihilo* (out of nothing!).
- Constantly when Scriptures present individuals struggling to believe, God confronts them with the work of His hands in creation—

Example: Remember our study of *Questions God Asks That Deserve an Answer*.

- ❖ **Job 38:4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding,**

[cf. if time – refer to Isaiah 40:12-31, Matt 6:25-35]

\* **God has given two revelations (1) His Word and (2) His Work.**

- His WORK is a sign that His WORD can/will be carried out. Abraham recognizes Yahweh as the Creator God and thus believes that Yahweh can create life out of His barren situation.

- Today, evolutionary philosophies undermine the sign (God's WORK in creation) and therefore cast doubt on God's WORD.

\* **A key to a changed life: Our response to God's Word/Work – 'then he believed in the Lord'**

- this is the passage Paul refers to in a rather lengthy statement regarding justification by faith

Cf. Romans 4 – explain justification by FAITH, not by works!

### III. God Is Big Enough to Keep His Promises – 15:7-21

- God makes a reminder statement to Abram:

**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."**

- don't forget chp. 14 – giving him victory over the 4 invading kings and regaining Lot

**8. He (Abram) said, "O Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it?"**

- \* **This is most likely a desire for a sign of *confirmation*, not an *expression of doubt* – remember, 'he believed' after he heard God's Word and saw the heavens/stars!**

- These signs remind man of God's presence and God-given obligations.

- To refuse a proffered sign can indeed demonstrate lack of faith [Isa 7:10–14].

- Abraham has a prophetic vision and he sees the future and the promises of God actually delayed, but yet it still assures him of 3 things:

1) The promise will be kept.

2) The promise will be delayed for the historical reasons given, and

3) Abraham to whom the promise is first given need not be anxious over the delay. It is enough for him to be assured that it endures to the next generation. He may confidently embrace his old age and his death. Again an extended comment by

\***Once again, we see the importance and/or connection of FAITH and PATIENCE**

❖ **Isaiah 40:31 Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up *with wings like eagles*, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.**

[Explain: the sacrifice was cut in ½ & placed on 2 altars & the one making the 'covenant' (v. 18 '...the Lord made [cut] a covenant...') walks between the 2 pieces, thus sealing the covenant]

[READ 14:17-18]

**Point: God entered into a contract with Abraham in which Yahweh obligates Himself to bring about His promise!**

- This forms the basis for the entire rest of the Scripture.

> Mosaic Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant is building upon the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant is building upon all of them in Christ.

> When God acts in regard to His people's dilemmas in the future it will be because of this covenant [Ex 2:24, 6:8, 32:13, 33:1, Lev 26:42, 2 Kings 13:23, Ps 105:9]

### Conclusion:

**Lesson: The fact that the Creator God, Yahweh, would enter into a contract binding Himself to sinful human beings shows His Amazing Grace!**

***Q: How Big Is Your God?***

**Study Notes**  
**An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham**  
**#5 How Big Is Your God? – Genesis 15**

**Introduction:**

**Input:** What lessons have you learned so far from the life of Abraham?

Lessons a/b God	Lessons a/b man & faith

- ❖ **Romans 15:4** For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

*“This chapter is pivotal for the Abraham tradition. Theologically, it is probably the most important chapter of this entire collection... It has been utilized by Paul in a distinctive way for his great teaching on justification by faith. There is no doubt that this chapter offers crucial resources for the themes of faith and covenant. Abraham and Sarah were called out of their barrenness (11:30) by God’s powerful word (12:1). Their pilgrimage of hope had begun on no other basis than the promise of Yahweh (12:1-4a). The promise of Yahweh stood over against the barrenness. But when we arrive at chapter 15, the barrenness persists. That barrenness (which the promise has not overcome) poses the issue for this chapter. The large question is that the promise does delay, even to the point of doubt. It is part of the destiny of our common faith that those who believe the promise and hope against barrenness nevertheless must live with the barrenness. Why and how does one continue to trust solely in the promise when the evidence against the promise is all around? It is this scandal that is faced here. It is Abraham’s embrace of this scandal that makes him the father of faith.” —Walter Brueggeman, Commentary*

**I. God Is Big Enough to Overcome Your \_\_\_\_\_ – 15:1**

**A. Because of what \_\_\_\_\_**

**B. Because of Who He is: God is a \_\_\_\_\_**

**C. Because of what He \_\_\_\_\_: ‘Your reward shall be very great’**

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## **II. God Is Big Enough to Change Your Life:**

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\* God has given two revelations (1) His \_\_\_\_\_ and (2) His \_\_\_\_\_.

\* A key to a changed life: Our \_\_\_\_\_ to God's Word/Work – 'then he believed in the Lord'

## **III. God Is Big Enough to \_\_\_\_\_ His \_\_\_\_\_ – 15:7-21**

\* This is most likely a desire for a sign of *confirmation*, not an *expression of doubt!*

\*Once again, we see the importance and/or connection of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Point: God entered into a contract with Abraham in which Yahweh obligates Himself to bring about His promise!

## **Conclusion:**

**Lesson:** The fact that the Creator God, *Yahweh*, would enter into a contract binding Himself to sinful human beings shows His \_\_\_\_\_ !

Q: *How Big Is Your God?*



