

Genesis 15:1-21

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Date: 06 August 2023

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[0 : 00] Father, we thank you for your word, Lord. We continue to just bathe it in prayer, Lord. Always that picture of Elijah building the altar on Mount Carmel, just pouring water on it and again and again.

I see that as a picture, just bathing the word, bathing the sacrifice again and again, that place where we meet with you, Lord, to be a place of consecration and a prayer. And so Lord, we just ask you to meet with us.

We don't demand it. We recognize that we have nothing to offer. But Lord, we offer you all that we have. And we thank you that you're a God who loves us and hears us and draws near to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

So we're continuing to journey with our friend, Abraham. Or Father Abraham, if you want to call him. We've come to Genesis 15.

Abraham at this time, somewhere between the ages of 75 and 85. We don't have much to go on other than we know he left Haran when his father died at age 75.

[1 : 02] And we're going to find out chapter 16, verse 16, tells us he was 86 when he has Ishmael. And 16 is Ishmael. So he's somewhere between 75 and 85, right?

He's getting up there. He's not had kids. Him and Sarah have not been able to have children. So that gives us a, kind of helps get into his mind of where he's at as he approaches this stage of his life.

So Genesis chapter 15, the title, I guess, for today is A Little One-Sided. This chapter is a little one-sided. Because we're going to see here, this back and forth conversation, it's just a running conversation.

But God's going to make a covenant with Abraham, with Abram, which is all one-sided. But this conversation, this is back and forth. Verse 1, God comes to Abram. Verse 2 to 3, Abram responds. 4 to 5, God talks back. Verse 6, Abram responding in belief. Verse 7, the Lord talks. Verse 8, is Abram talking? Verse 9, God responds.

[2 : 05] Verse 10, Abram tries to act. And then God kind of steps in for the rest of the chapter and is like, enough, I got this now. But I thought this was a pretty good synopsis of a one-sided conversation.

Lucy says to Linus, I think it's time we had a serious conversation. And Linus says, you mean a little back and forth dialogue? And Lucy says, no, something a little more one-sided. All one-sided. That's where we find ourselves here with our friend Abram. So this is after the battle where he's just brought back Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah. Well, he's brought back all of Sodom and Gomorrah, all of the people from Chetleomor.

He defeated them. He brings back Lot and all the people and all the goods. And he meets Melchizedek. And Melchizedek comes out, blesses him with communion and with a blessing from the Lord, and then prepares him for the trial of the temptation to take something from the world, something from Sodom.

And he says, no, I'm not going to do that. So chapter 15, excuse me, picks up, after these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram. After what things?

[3 : 15] So after trial and testing and after victory and communion, the word of the Lord has come to Abram. This is not initiated by Abram. He's not expecting this, but the word of the Lord has come after Abram has just walked through this sequence of events.

And again, he's separated from Lot. Lot's gone back to Sodom. Without a thank you, without a hi or goodbye, he just heads back. And then Abram again comes back into the land of Canaan. And the Lord comes to him.

And he says, in a vision. I thought that was interesting, because this being pointed out to us now, that this is a vision that Abram's having here. I don't know if the whole chapter then is a vision he's having, because later it's going to say when the sun was going down.

So there's time that's happening throughout this day. Is it all a vision? Is he in and out of vision? I'm not sure. I don't think it necessarily matters. But it made me think of, you know, people who have visions and say, well, I've had a vision of the Lord.

And that seems to automatically add some substance, or they think it does, to what they're saying, some weight to it. You know, if it's like, well, I was reading my Bible, and I said to, you know, to love my neighbor as myself.

[4 : 22] Oh, that's good. I had a vision. And the Lord came and showed me this person. Really? He did? He showed you that person? And this is how you're to respond to them? Wow. But I don't think this is just, the Lord doesn't do the same thing, you know, and I think he doesn't do it twice.

But he's not going to be put in a pattern. So I don't think the focus is on the method. The focus is on the substance. And so when someone has a vision, if you have a vision, if I have a vision, I've never had visions.

That's not how the Lord has chosen to deal with me and my relationship. I love how everybody's different. And some people, the Lord is just like, that is how they relate with the Lord.

For me, it's through his word. But the message validates the method, not the other way around. So I think it's important as the Lord's come to Abram in a vision.

Abram's going to have this vision. He's going to pass it on to someone else and say, this is what happened. Well, how do you know that vision was any good, Abram? How do you know it wasn't you just too much heat? How do you know you weren't just kind of like emotional from that battle?

[5 : 24] Because of the message that comes with it. And so if you've had a vision, fantastic. It's a lineup with the word. But anyway, so the Lord comes to him and he says in a vision, he says to Abram, fear not, Abram.

I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. Why would he say that to him? Well, he must have been afraid. The Lord's not going to come and say, fear not. If Abram's like, I'm not afraid.

What are you talking about? Obviously, he was in a place of fear. He says two things here. I'm your shield and your exceeding great reward. Those two things. Well, the word fear there, fear means the anticipation of coming trouble.

And also has within it a desire to act in a way that avoids that future trouble. So the difference between like fear and anxiety, anxiety is more just a state of a feeling of anxiousness, of being stirred up.

You can be anxious over something good or anxious over fear, over an event. But fear is the idea that there is trouble coming and I'm afraid of it. Something imminent coming.

[6 : 29] You know, a guy runs a red light and you see him coming towards you. There's that moment of fear because of what's coming further off fear. You know, I'm afraid of, I don't know, getting eaten by a bear someday and dying.

You know, maybe an irrational fear, but it's still a future fear. How do I avoid that? I never go somewhere where there's bears. But there's a desire to stave that off. So the Lord's recognizing Abram's in this state.

He's anticipating some trouble coming. And then God himself meets Abram's fear. How does he meet it? He meets it with himself, doesn't he? He says, Abram, I am your shield and your exceeding great reward.

He comes and he meets it with himself. The word exceeding there means muchness or abundance. I didn't make up that word. It's actually there, muchness. Muchness and abundance and overabundance.

To go beyond what Abram's capacity is to contain. And great to be numerous. To be many. To become great. To multiply. So what's on Abram's mind?

[7 : 31] You say, I've read some of the commentaries. They're like, well, he's afraid of retribution from these guys from Mesopotamia. That they're going to come back. The king. They're not going to come back. He whooped them. They're not going to come back after him.

What's he afraid of? Well, he says it, doesn't he? And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless? And the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus.

What's on his heart? He hasn't had a child yet. Which kind of fits. Not so much in our culture. But in that culture, when God comes and says, I'm your shield and exceeding great reward.

Well, that's kind of how children were looked at. Your offspring was your shield. But they would grow someday to be your protection. They would be the one to take care of you. You look at, well, we get to Jacob and his sons.

And they're like a 12-man wrecking machine. And they do a lot of wrecking. But they're the shield. And they're the reward. They're your ability to carry on. They're your ability to not just carry on your name, but to pass your substance on to and to be something, essentially, in that culture.

[8 : 40] And the Lord comes and he says, that's me, Abram. I'm that for you. This is the first use of the word Jehovah. Abram will use that now when he says, Lord God.

He's going to say, Adonai, Jehovah. Oh, it's the first use of that language. It's also the first time Abram talks to the Lord. You know that? All this time the Lord's been talking to Abram.

Abram's responding. This is the first time he talks. And isn't it interesting? It's a question. It seems like doubt. We have a chapter where Abram starts out almost like, God, what's going on? And then a couple of verses later, it says he believed and accounted for him as righteousness.

Well, Abram's apparent doubt was not from a denial of God's promise, but a desire for God's promise. Abram wanted to believe God and therefore correctly look to God for the solution.

He recognized what's going on. Did I mess up? Did I fail? I mean, God, you promised this and it hasn't happened. Maybe it's me. Or God, how are you going to bring this about?

[9 : 43] I honestly want to know. I believe you. I just don't get it. I'm not doubting God that I'm questioning you that I don't think you can do this. I don't think you will. But God, I want to see this happen.

I desire it. I long for it. But how? How is this going to happen? And so he says, this guy, Eleazar, the one born in my house, he's my steward and he's going to be my heir.

Is this what he wanted? It's funny. You know what Eleazar's name means? God is help. And so, you know, the Lord sticks this guy there and every time he says his name, Eleazar, God is help. You know, come here, come help me. God is help. And he says, who? The guy in my house, God is help is going to be my heir? Well, essentially, yes. The Lord essentially says, yes, that's me.

I'm your help and I will provide this. Don't fear, Abram. And he says, lo, one born in my house shall be mine heir or literally, literally shall take possession. There you can see where that fear is.

[10 : 47] Lord, who's going to take possession? This is what you promised. And then God's going to respond to him. And this is this interesting conversation. The best thing about this that I think that I find so encouraging, other than the one-sided covenant, which we'll get to and the implications of that.

Look at Abraham's comfortability with the Lord. He's just talking to him. The Lord answers back. And he talks back to him. We prayed about something. Oh, Natalie was locked out of her computer last night.

Man, you get locked out of an Apple product. Good luck getting in another way. Couldn't remember a password. She tried and it didn't work. And so Sue's like, Lord, just help us, help her remember this password. Tries it again.

Like works that. Whoa. It's like, wow. The Lord answered my prayer. Talking to my mom last night. She was telling me about something that we prayed and the Lord answered the prayer. It's like, I wonder why are we so surprised when he does that?

I think the Lord likes that. I think that's a blessing to him that we get so excited. Like he answered a prayer because it is something unexpected and out of the ordinary. We know he can and we know he answers prayer.

[11 : 52] But I think he's very pleased when we interact with him in a way where we're like, wow, that's amazing, Lord. You know, our kids do that, right? You do that everyday routine that they can't do on their own.

You reach something on the top shelf and they're like, wow, amazing. And that's how we are with the Lord. That's how Abram is. We can learn a couple things before we go on here with Abram. And how do we question God?

Abram has questions for God. And as we go through the chapter, he's going to continue to question. But yet God's going to say, hey, he believed me. And I count that for righteousness. So that means there's a way to question God, even have some doubts, but still have faith.

So Abram, in questioning God, what was he? Well, he was honest, first off. You know, the Lord comes and says, I'm your shield and exceeding great reward. And Abram didn't say, yes, Lord, you are. Thank you, Lord.

That was within it. He knows that. But he's real enough. He's honest. He says, Lord, you're right. I'm afraid. I'm afraid because I just can't figure this out. He's respectful.

[12:54] He says, oh, Lord, God, Adonai, Jehovah, Lord, Master, you are the Lord, not me. He recognized who God was by calling him that. He understood God's role in his life.

He expected this of the Lord. He's saying, Lord, what's the answer and what's the solution? It's got to come from you. And I recognize that. I want to know how, but I know it has to come from you. He knew the answer came from God.

And so where it looks on the surface, almost like Abraham's losing his faith or doubting. God, what are you doing? I don't think that's the heart at all. I think it's one of desperation, but he's going to the right source.

And I think the Lord does that to us. He makes a promise. He brings us to the place of desperation where we say, okay, Lord, I'm not going to try anymore.

The sad thing is right into chapter 16, we're going to see where Abraham's going to kind of step outside that promise and go, well, I'm going to try now. I'm going to try to figure this out. But at this point, he's asking these questions and the Lord's responding.

[13:56] And so Abraham's questions and doubts, how does God meet them? Verse four, with his word. And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him saying, this shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

So God's promise was completely outside Abraham's ability to accomplish in the circumstances he was in. We're going to see him attempt to accomplish it with Hagar.

But the circumstances God was going to use to accomplish the problem or accomplish, I mean, his promise was Abram's marriage with Sarai. He said, I'm going to give you an heir.

I'm going to give you a seed. But this is completely outside Abram's ability to accomplish this. And so God steps in and says, you will have a son. You will have a seed. And then he does this remarkable thing.

And I don't know if this is still a vision or not. And he brought him forth abroad. And he said, look now toward heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to number them.

[14:59] And he said unto him, so shall thy seed be. There's a couple of words there. And he brought him forth. Brought and forth are the same word. They mean to come out from.

And so him in the middle, it's emphasizing that he's taking Abram out from someplace to another place. He's taking him abroad or without. So he's taking him without.

And he said, look toward heaven and tell the stars. So he brings him out alone. He brings him out to look at this alone. This was for Abram alone. No one could go with him. Abram was taken by God on the outside to look up.

He says, I'm taking you out, Abram, to look up. Abraham's life seems to be a series of outs. Come out from your father's home. Come out from Ur of the Chaldees. He goes into Egypt.

Get out of Egypt. Separate out from Lot. Come out. But you see what God is leading it toward or driving towards. Is to come out of all those things to come into God.

[15:59] So he says, look up, Abram. Tell the stars if thou be able to number them. He said unto him, so shall thy seed be. So God's promise is when there's no actual evidence of that promise.

He mentions a single seed. Socialized seed be. This is a done deal, Abram. Abram's looking at the stars going, one, two, three, four, five. Maybe if I count groups of ten.

Ten. How many kids am I going to have? He's probably looking up going, Lord, I just want one. And you're promising me all this? And he believed in the Lord.

And he counted it to him for righteousness. You see, God's promise is limitless because God is limitless. Whenever God makes a promise, it is based upon himself and upon his character.

So that means it's limitless. It can't fail because he can't fail. It's eternal because he's eternal. God is love. It's a promise full of love. That's how we can trust when we're told that despise not the chastening of the Lord.

[17:01] Well, wait. God is love. So anything that comes from him is love. That means even what I would look at as like painful situation or chastening, that's the Lord in his love. And so here, Abraham believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Very key verse for Abram's life and a very key verse for how God relates to man in his relationship and covenant with them. Paul's going to expound on this a whole lot more.

We'll look at a little of that. But the word believed right there to get an idea of a couple of these words means firm, unshaken, trustworthy, lean upon.

That's my favorite. Lean upon. The word says, and he leaned upon the Lord. He said, all right, Lord, I'll lean upon that. I'll trust that.

Yes. He said it. I'm good with that. And counted where it says, and God counted it to him for righteousness. righteousness is impute, what we would see in like the New Testament to be imputed.

[18:00] It means a sign of value to infer, to stick to, as in disdain. So it's something that is imputed to someone. It almost becomes affixed to their character and their person.

They're always known as that. Sometimes you can think of like a nickname. That's something that sticks to them. That's a characteristic that is imputed to them. But I like that idea of like a stain that once it kind of gets, gets on that shirt and you can't get it out.

Well, it's been imputed to it. It's, it's been assigned that value of that stain. And, and that's kind of part of the characteristic of it now. And so God is assigning this.

He's saying that Abram, this is part of that characteristic of you. I see as righteous. The word righteousness, the state act or condition of rightness. Oh, that was profound. Being devoid of all that is not right.

I think we think of righteousness a lot of times in our Christianese as that word righteous. And we assign it with the Lord. The Lord is righteous. Therefore, we are righteous. But it's just being devoid of all that's not right.

[19:01] And so if God is all that is right and everything apart from him is not right, then God is saying to Abraham, that you leaning upon me, trusting me and my righteousness, I can, I can account you now as, as righteous as well.

You turn briefly to Romans chapter four. I'm going to be in Romans four a little bit, Romans eight. I think it's good to see this. This is where Paul will pick up on this line.

Remember Genesis is the start of everything, but the finish of nothing. It's the foundation of so much of our faith and so many truths in the scripture. And then on the other side of the cross in Christ, we have the fulfillment of all things.

And so Paul, the New Testament is able by the Holy Spirit to kind of flesh that out for us. So, hey, this is what that fulfillment looks like. So Romans four, starting in verse eight, pick up in verse eight. It says, blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute. There's that word, will not assign sin, will not stick sin to them. Comes this blessing or this blessedness then upon the circumcision only or upon the uncircumcision also.

[20:14] In other words, those under the law, those outside the law. For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. Then jump down to verse 20. How so?

So he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. So that's it. Now you can see kind of the mindset of Abraham in this moment where it seems like doubt.

But when God comes with this promise, this reiteration of his promise, he doesn't stagger in unbelief at the promise. But what does he do? He recognizes that it is the Lord. He gives glory to God. He leans on him and being fully persuaded that what he, God, had promised, he, God, was also able to perform.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. It was counted unto him as that, the act of being in a state of rightness. Devoid of all that is not right.

When we put our faith in God, that our faith is devoid of all that is not right. Do you realize that? So my faith is frail and weak. It doesn't matter. That small mustard seed faith is righteous because it's in a righteous God.

[21:22] And therefore it's imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed.

If we believe on him, the raised of Jesus, our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. Will you lean on that?

If so, God says, I see that as righteous. That is an act of putting your trust in that which is completely right and just. Me to perform that, the Lord says.

And therefore we enter into that state of rightness by our faith, not by our works. You can turn back over to Genesis. And so there's that where Paul will pick up on that.

And there's a whole lot more to that we're not going to go into now. But he believed God and God assigned it to him as righteous. And he, the Lord, said unto Abram, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit.

[22 : 24] Then Abram's going to respond. Interesting. Genesis 12, verse 1 says, And the Lord had said to Abram, get thee out of thy country from thy kindred and from thy father's house into a land that I will show thee.

He says, get out. Go. Abram, you need to act. And now he's saying, I am the Lord that brought thee. It was me, Abram. I brought thee out.

And that's where our quote comes in, our Narnia quote from the silver chair. It's where two of the protagonists, they end up from our world into Narnia.

And one of them has not yet met Aslan. But they were calling to him before that because the other one had been to Narnia. Like, let's see if we can get back by calling to Aslan. The other one says, who's Aslan?

Let's just call to him. Maybe he'll let us in. And they get interrupted. But anyway, they get there and the one meets Aslan and he says, you know, I'm the one you were looking for.

[23 : 22] She says, no, no, no, you made a mistake. You weren't calling to us. We were calling to you. That's where he says, you would not have called to me unless I've been calling to you. My favorite lines. One of 12 favorite lines probably from the book.

That we see that Lewis took that from the scripture. First John 4, 19 says what? We love him. Because he first loved us.

John 10, 27. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. Responding, responding, responding. What we may look at as initiating an action, God looks at as a response. Why? Because the life of faith is a life based upon response. Constantly responding to the word of God. Constantly responding to the Holy Spirit calling us and drawing us.

And so even where it looked like to Abram, like, I got to get up and go. The Lord's saying, I brought you out. It was me. You walked it out. You lived out the actions.

[24 : 20] But man, Abram, I brought you out step by step. I've brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land to inherit. We'll see at the end of the chapter what that land is specifically.

And then here we get our buddy Abram. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit? I like this. He's going to question him too when God comes down to smoke Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abram's relationship with God is based on questioning. A lot of questions. I think the Lord likes that and appreciates that. Again, not in unbelief, but in like, God, how are you going to do this? What are you doing, Lord? And we base that on the fact that God responds to our response to him, that life of faith.

And so he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit? Abraham's question was one of desire and not denial. Denial. And he said unto him, the Lord said unto him, take an heifer of three years old and a she-goat of three years old and a ram of three years old and a turtle dove and a young pigeon.

[25 : 31] He took unto him all these and he divided them in the midst, cut them in half, and laid each piece one against another and made a pathway through them. But the birds, he didn't divide. He didn't cut them. He just kind of separated them.

What is he doing? Well, thankfully, we don't have to do this when we go and sign a mortgage. But this is the way they would cut a covenant or make a deal. And the idea was, if it was usually between two people, you'd cut the animals in half.

You and the other would walk down between them. That's why we do marriage ceremonies the way we do. Or well, traditionally. So I have a bride's side and a groom's side. The covenant is being cut, going between the two sides.

And the two are witness to that covenant. To hold those two accountable to that. So the idea, though, is as you and I walk through these bloody animals, is if you break your covenant, I'm going to do that to you.

You know, you're going to get slaughtered. So Abram knew what to do. When God says, hey, take all these animals, Abram's like, oh, I know what to do. Chop, chop, chop, chop, chop. Let's go. And then verse 11, and this is why I think he's not so much in the vision anymore.

[26 : 31] And when the fowls came down upon the carcass, Abram drove them away. And so here still, the Lord's making Abram wait. Abram's patient. But he's thinking, I got to do my part.

Get out of here, birds. God and I are going to cut a covenant. And then when the sun was going down, a deep sleep. That's the same word that's used in Genesis chapter 2, verse 21, where Adam was given, put into a deep sleep.

A deep sleep fell upon Abram. And lo, and horror of darkness, great darkness fell upon him. What is that? Well, it means exactly what it says.

A terror or a fear came upon him. You know, Psalm 72, verse 2 is an interesting verse. It says, speaking of the Lord, David writes, clouds and darkness are round about him.

Righteousness and judgment at the habitation of his throne. There's another verse in the Psalms that says that the pestilence goes, and the whirlwind is driven before him. What does that mean?

[27 : 34] Well, God is light, and in him dwells no darkness at all. But this is the round about him.

And in my mind, I picture it that, you know, think of like a forest fire. As you approach the forest fire, what approaches you?

Everything is running from the forest fire. All the little animals and everything. And then as you get closer, it's, it's, there's smoke and it's, it's burning. And then you get in there and there's just what? The fire. And I think of that like the Lord, that as the Lord approaches or we approach the Lord, all that is not of him is just driven before him.

And there's that moment when you approach the Lord, you've hit that wall almost that would cause you to turn back. That fear of like, oh, like when the light shines on you and you see your sin and you see your darkness.

And the temptation is like almost to pull away, but if we stick it out, then we get through that and there's the Lord. And so this idea of the clouds and darkness. And so is this great, this horror of darkness falls upon Abram.

I don't think it's because the Lord's approaching in a scary, dark way. I think just as the Lord approaches, those things that are not of him are driven before him and away from him.

[28 : 37] But anyway, Abram here, he's asleep. That means he's not going to be doing too much in this covenant here. And the Lord then speaks to Abram and he's almost like question time's over, son.

It's time to listen. There's another Narnia quote, I wasn't planning on using this, where one of the characters is giving the king advice and he doesn't agree with him. But then afterwards he says, okay, you know, I'll go and do that.

And the king says, well, wait, you didn't agree with me. You don't believe in this. He says, no more I do. He goes, but I know the difference between giving orders and taking orders. He goes, I said, you know, I said what I thought.

And now it's time for taking orders. And you see that here with Abram where the Lord's like, it was a good conversation, Abram. And now I brought you to this point where you can accept what I have to say to you. And he said unto Abram, know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs.

They shall serve them. They shall afflict them 400 years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge. And afterwards they shall come out with great substance. And I, and thou, thou shall go to thy fathers in peace.

[29 : 40] And thou shall be buried in a good old age. Strange promise to give him in the midst of all of this. Hey, by the way, they're going to go down into Egypt. They're going to be, you know, afflicted, but I'm going to bring them out.

Why does he tell them that? Well, I think it's, if you, if you're Israel, if you're the sons of Jacob and you're in Egypt and you read that, man, you're going to be encouraged.

Hey, we've been, we've been in Israel 395 years. We've been, I mean, in Egypt, we've been in Egypt 399 years. God's going to deliver us.

Wonder how, wonder there must've been people at that time looking for deliverance. And we know Romans 15, four tells, Paul says that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.

That we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. And so I think God gave this promise. It's never just for one person. But also we see a principle here that present revelation is future promise.

[30 : 42] Whatever present revelation God is giving you in your life is contained within a future promise of what God will do. Because God is never limited to the moment, never limited to now.

He has something much greater in store. So where we see God's promise, we see its effect now.

We're like, yes, he's looking down the road and he's going, oh, just wait, just wait.

That this revelation I'm giving you in the moment, there's a future promise involved here. And he says, you shall go to your fathers in peace. And thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

Back in verse 12, where it said the sun was going down, the wording here, thou shalt go to thy fathers is the same thing. You shall sunset, Abram. You'll have a sunset and it'll be in peace. But in the fourth generation, they shall come hither again.

Four generations from now, they will come. You know what that means? It means there has to be a first generation, doesn't there? If God promises a fourth generation, gotta be a first. We talk about that all the time, right?

[31 : 44] If you see the Christmas decorations getting out, coming out, you know, Thanksgiving is coming, right? Jesus said, when you begin to see these things, well, actually not anymore. Now, if you see the Christmas decorations, you know, the end of summer is here.

They're pushing them up. But Jesus said, when you begin to see these things come to pass, look up. My redemption is drawing nigh. So as we see the world preparing to rebel against God at full steam, 100% with the Antichrist, well, it means the rapture is around the corner, doesn't it?

It's the same thing here. If there's a fourth generation, it's gotta be a first. But he says, hey, that fourth generation, they're gonna come here, but the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

The word full there, you know, means complete, of course, but it also means sound and safe.

There's an idea of safeness within it, that it is completely self-contained at that point.

Funny, isn't it? Because at this time, he has a covenant, not covenant, he has an alliance with some of the Amorites, some of them, and to be told that, hey, you know, their iniquity is not yet full. That's where their end will be.

[32 : 50] Verse 17, What is that?

So there's these two pieces that are cut in half, it's dark, and all of a sudden, you know, Abram's in this deep sleep, but he's either awake for this or is part of this vision, and between these two halves of animals comes this smoking, what's the word, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, or a lamp of fire.

Well, how does God relate in the Old Testament a lot of times to his people? A pillar of cloud by day, pillar of fire by night. In the mountain, with Elijah the fire from heaven, when Moses is on the mountain, surrounded with smoke and darkness.

But I think there's also here a picture of the Trinity, isn't there? The Father is represented by the smoking furnace, the Spirit by the burning lamp, and then the Son is the divided pieces.

In a sense, the Father walked through the broken and bloody body of Jesus, established his covenant with us, and God signed it for both of us. We participate in the covenant by faith in God, but he will keep his covenant.

[34 : 11] But we don't make the covenant with God. In the same way, Abram here, he's not making this covenant, but God's saying, I want you to participate in this covenant. And here we have the Father, the Son, and the Spirit there making a covenant with Abram.

And in the same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed, here we have again, have I given this land, the river of Egypt, under the great river, the river Euphrates, the Kenanites, and the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaeums.

The Rephaeums are a name for a race of giants. Well, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Gergesites, and Jebusites. That's a lot of land when you think about it.

So why does he lift all those nations? Some of those are ones we've just saw Chetalei-Omur come through and wipe out. But he's kind of pinpointing, Abram, you know where all these nations are?

That's going to be yours. Over there by the Kenizzites? Those are yours. The Rephaeums? That's yours. That's what it would look like. From the Nile to the Euphrates, and some of the nations like the Kenizzites, the Rephaeums, and the Gergesites, you'll be sure where those are.

[35 : 24] What that looks like in modern day? It would be that. That is the promised area of land given to Israel. And what do they occupy? Any fraction of that.

All the way over to Iraq, Jordan, Syria, to Egypt. God said, this is yours. I give this to you. You know what? You can't give something to someone that you don't have, can you?

Who does this land belong to? It belongs to the Lord. He says, I give it to you. It doesn't matter who's there. It's still theirs. So if you go to Jordan, that's Israel's.

The Lord gave it to them. And that's one of the reasons he's going to come back at the end of those seven years to set up that kingdom. And that will all be Israel's. In the middle of that, there's going to be a new Jerusalem.

We're going to be there. But this is what he's giving to them, to him. But it says he made a covenant the same day that this is what he's going to give to Israel.

[36 : 24] So this covenant, what is this covenant? It's one-sided, isn't it? Like, how much participation did Abram have? Well, he's just there. And God's saying, this is what I'm going to do.

Well, there's some things we can look at about a one-sided covenant, can't we? A one-sided covenant implies one-sided responsibility. Who's responsible to keep the covenant?

Abram, you better be a good boy. You better keep that covenant. Nope. It's all in the Lord. Abram's sound asleep. I don't know. Abram could have slept through this. And maybe after the fact, the Lord kind of told him, hey, this is what I did.

He's like, what? A one-sided covenant means I can never break or annul that covenant, can I? If there's a one-sided covenant, well, that means the other side, no matter what they do, they can't do anything to affect that one side.

That means in our one-sided covenant, that Jesus on his own went to the cross alone, went down into death alone, rose alone, and ascended alone, and sits at the right hand of God alone.

[37 : 28] That means that same covenant that he enacted on our behalf, one-sided, you can't break it. He said, hey, enter into it. But you can't fail that covenant. A one-sided covenant also implies privilege, obligation, and participation.

What does that mean? Well, it's not your responsibility to keep it. But a one-sided covenant, there's a lot of privilege that goes along with that. For someone to make a one-sided covenant, to take it all upon themselves, and then offer you essentially the benefit of it, that's a huge privilege.

There's an obligation there. There's an obligation then to live up to being worthy under that covenant. And there's participation. Participation. You didn't make it, but you're being asked to participate in it.

What does that participation then look like? And this is what God is doing for Abram. This is how he's approaching him. Abram had all these questions, you know, all these fears.

He's like, God, how are you going to bring about this promise? And the Lord essentially said, let me show you. Now, at the time when Jesus showed up to walk the earth for 30 years, Israel was like, how is God going to keep his promise?

[38 : 38] It didn't look like what they expected. That covenant did it. I don't think Abram in any way expected this. He's like, ah, I know. I got this. We're going to make a covenant. We're going to walk between it. I'm going to do my part.

And like when Jesus came, Israel thought, we know what we need to do. God's going to come. He's going to wipe out our enemies. We did wipe out their enemies, didn't he? But not the enemy they had expected him to wipe out. Not Rome, but something greater than Rome.

Sin and death. So we also have the privilege and obligation to participate in the new covenant. For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves is the gift of God.

Not of works, lest any man should boast. We hear people say, well, grace is free, but faith is works. So that's why we, you know, we had no part in our salvation, whatever.

We had no part in enacting the covenant. But God, where does God put faith? For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

[39 : 35] Not of works. Faith isn't a work any more than grace is a work. It's the gift of God. But faith is our part in this covenant to respond. It's our privilege to respond.

If you turn quickly, we'll end in Romans chapter 8. I didn't want to focus on the enacting of the new covenant.

I think we all know that. So Jesus, like I said, he alone went to death, alone on the cross, alone rose again. He enacted that covenant. It's all on him.

He says, if any man would believe in me, he has eternal life. It's that simple. Lean on me. So what's our participation then in that?

Well, I'm not responsible to keep it. But what's our privilege, our obligation to participate in the new covenant? Romans chapter 8, let's start in verse 4. Paul says that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

[40 : 44] Participation. For they that are after the flesh, those who participate in the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh. But they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh, they cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. If so be that the spirit of God dwells in you.

Privilege. What is he saying? Then you have the privilege of having the Holy Spirit through the new covenant, through the one-sided covenant that Jesus enacted on your behalf. When you enter into that covenant, you now have the life of the spirit.

It is your privilege to walk in that. You have the choice if you're going to participate in the spirit or participate in the flesh. One will lead to life. Will lead to a greater understanding and participation in the covenant of life.

[41 : 46] One, as Abraham is going to show us in chapter 16, of the flesh will lead to death, walking outside of that. Now, did the covenant fail? Not a chance. No way. But you and I, God gives us that crazy privilege of choosing participation in the covenant.

By grace are we saved? Yes. But are we going to walk in faith? Jump down to chapter, I'm sorry, verse 12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors.

This is our obligation. Not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die. But if you, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.

Your choice of participation. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. There's a couple of verses that just really stood out to me.

I know the picture there. That's the difference between the flesh and the spirit. It's not a competition. There's no competition. It's not a tug of war back and forth.

[42 : 51] It's just, which side are you going to choose to participate in? Man, if you choose to participate in the side of the spirit under the new covenant, the Lord is like, got this, and the flesh is done for.

We think of it like as a two-sided kind of thing. It's not. It's not. There's no contest. But Paul says, the scripture tells us, that God has made a one-sided covenant with us, and then he's given us this great privilege of participation.

He's not going to force us and make us live in the spirit. He says, this is your privilege. And so with Abram, who has just woken up to this amazing covenant, that's all on God to keep.

It's his responsibility completely. Abram does have a part. Abram does have a part. And so do we. So as we pray and as we close, just make that choice.

That's where Paul says, he says, don't live after the flesh. Live after the spirit. Mortify the deeds of the body and live through the spirit. That's God's responsibility.

[43 : 58] He says, hey, you just choose me and I'll do the rest. Kind of like that tug of war. We say, Lord, the flesh is so strong. It's pulling. It's like, well, you just lean on me. Just put your trust in me.

Walk in the spirit. I got it. And whenever we take that step towards the life of the spirit, boom, he just tugs and the flesh kind of just falls flat on its face. Father, we thank you for this one-sided covenant, this picture you've given us in the life of Abram.

Lord, he had his doubts and he had his fears. Lord, you had an answer for everyone. And Lord, help us not to, in false pride or false humility, self-righteousness, not run to you with our questions, thinking like, well, I'm not supposed to doubt.

Lord, you're big enough. You're big enough. In fact, I think it's one of the highest measures of faith that we would come to you with our questions and say, God, I trust you. I trust you to answer this question that to me seems like it's going to totally undermine my faith and totally undercut your promise.

It seems like it's falling apart, but I trust you, God. You have a plan. So I'm going to come to you and I'm going to ask you, help, Lord. I have doubts. How does this work out? And the amazing thing is, Lord, how do you answer?

[45 : 12] Do you give us more to do? No. Do you answer with yourself? You said to Abram, I am your shield and your exceeding great reward. I, the Lord. And you put him in a sleep. He said, Abram, I got this.

I'm going to make this covenant. And then what a privilege he had to wake up to participation. Lord, I pray that you'd wake us up today to participation in that new covenant. That we would not just go about our days thinking, well, that's all on God.

He took care of all that at the cross. Thank you, Jesus. I'm going to heaven. But realize the privilege and the obligation of walking in the spirit. Being free. To not have to try and keep this on our own. But, boy, it is an obligation. Not an obligation like I have to, but I get to. But, Lord, we can't break this. I can fall down over and over and over. And the covenant is still there.

Grace is still there. The Lord is still there. His love is still there. And the Holy Spirit still says, come, let's try walking again. Lord, that is a covenant that we are truly privileged to be part of.

[46 : 16] Fill us now with your spirit as we close, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen. Two thoughts. Don't forget God's always calling. Even when we think like we're the one acting or initiating, we're responding.

And since it's all on him, don't be afraid to step in faith. Because you can't fail. You're responding to him. Or sometimes we get afraid, I think, to take a step.

Because we think, well, it's all on me. It's not. It's all on him. It's all on him.