

## BUILDING YOUR FAITH: EXPLORING SCRIPTURE WITH THE PASTORS

### *The Gospel in Abraham's Story: Walking by Faith*

#### Genesis 15.1-21 - "Abram Trusts God"

October 2, 2022 - Clay Brown, MDPC Adult Discipleship Pastor

#### I. The questioning of the covenant in Genesis 15.1-4

- A. Unclear how much time has passed since the events in Genesis 14, but evidently significant
- B. God communicates with Abram in a vision, but Abram responds: "O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth" (15.2 NLT).
- C. Why Eliezer? Possible way forward: Abram to adopt Eliezer and leave everything to him (foreshadows other ideas to arise later in Genesis about finding an heir)
- D. God's reply: not anger, but accommodation to Abram's weakness, with a reminder (v. 4)
  - *What do we do when our lives do not unfold as we want, and we face obstacles, challenges, or suffering? What are faith-honoring ways to respond?*

#### II. The response in faith in Genesis 15.5-7

- A. Must be careful not to hear Abram as knowing and saying more than he actually knows and says: he trusts that God will be true to His promise from Genesis 12
- B. In v. 5, God chooses a vivid way to emphasize the scope of His covenant promise; Abram responds in v. 6
- C. Abram not simply assenting to a series of facts and propositions about God, although such information has its place; response is deeper, affirming God's character and trustworthiness, without knowing the details on how God will express His faithfulness through the centuries
- D. Often expressed in English as the distinction between "belief" and "faith," as described by John Walton: "This is what impressed God about Abraham. He did not simply believe. In taking God at His word, he embraced faith. That is not to say he adopted a faith system—he simply had faith in God" (*Genesis: NIV Application Commentary*, Zondervan, p. 441).
- E. In return, God pronounces or "counts" (ESV, NLT) Abram as "righteous" (i.e., in a right relationship with Him) through this faith (v. 6) and then reaffirms the basic relationship (v. 7);
- F. Not because Abram deserved it (will explore next meeting how Romans 4.1-16 portrays this)
  - *How would you describe the distinction sometimes drawn between "belief" (defined as assent to facts and propositions) and "faith" (defined as trust in God's character)? How does this distinction help us as we go step-by-step in our walk with God?*

#### IV. The ritual of reassurance in Genesis 15.8-21

- A. Abram asking for a sign, a representation of God's commitment
- B. God responds again not with anger, but accommodation, with covenant ceremony common to ancient Middle East: two parties walk between prepared animal halves with understanding that if one of the parties betrays agreement, then your fate will be like the slaughtered animals
- C. Important to note only God walks through the ceremony, pledging His fidelity; Abram asleep
- D. Smoking firepot and flaming torch both use fire as a sign of God's presence; common in Old Testament (burning bush, fire and smoke from Mt. Sinai, pillars of smoke and fire in wilderness)
- E. Timing not immediate, but long term, including slavery in and exodus from Egypt, and eventual judgment upon pagan peoples in the territory (but not now—Abram will not see it)
  - *What does this passage say about God's patience with Abram? With us?*

Sunday Morning Schedule for *The Gospel in Abraham's Story: Walking by Faith*

1. 8/21/22 - **Introduction**
2. 8/28/22 - **Genesis 11:27–12:9** - “Abram’s Call”  
 \*\*\*\*\* (9/4/22 - Labor Day - No Classes)
3. 9/11/22 - **Genesis 12.10-20** - “Abram and Sarai in Egypt”
4. 9/18/22 - **Genesis 13.1-18** - “Abram and Lot Separate”
5. 9/25/22 - **Genesis 14.1-24** - “Abram Rescues Lot and Encounters Melchizedek”
6. 10/2/22 - **Genesis 15.1-21** - “Abram Trusts God”
7. 10/9/22 - **Romans 4.1-16** - “Justified by Faith”
8. 10/16/22 - **Genesis 16.1-16** - “Sarai and Hagar”
9. 10/23/22 - **Galatians 4.21–5.1** - “Allegory on Sarah and Hagar”
10. 10/30/22 - **Genesis 17.1-27** - “Circumcisions and Name Changes”
11. 11/6/22 - **Galatians 3:1-25** - “Faith and Law”
12. 11/13/22 - **Genesis 18.1-15** - “Abraham, Sarah, and Unexpected Company”
13. 11/20/22 - **Genesis 18.16-33** - “Abraham Intercedes for Sodom”
14. 11/27/22 - **Genesis 19.1-38** - “Sodom and Lot”
15. 12/4/22 - **Genesis 20.1-18** - “Abraham and Abimelech—Part 1”
16. 12/11/22 - **Genesis 21.1-19** - “Isaac and Ishmael”
17. 12/18/22 - **John 8.31-59** - “Jesus and Jewish Leaders Debate”  
 \*\*\*\*\* (12/25/22 and 1/1/23 - Christmas Day and New Year’s Day - No Classes)
18. 1/8/23 - **Genesis 21.20-34** - “Abraham and Abimelech—Part 2”
19. 1/15/23 - **Genesis 22.1-18** - “Sacrifice of Isaac”
20. 1/22/23 - **Hebrews 11.17-19; Romans 4:17-25** - “The God Who Raises the Dead”
21. 1/29/23 - **Genesis 22.19–23.20** - “Sarah’s Death”
22. 2/5/23 - **Genesis 24.1-67** - “Isaac and Rebekah”
23. 2/12/23 - **Genesis 25.1-18** - “Abraham’s Death”
24. 2/19/23 - **Hebrews 11.8-16** - “Exemplars of Faith”

