

## Read Genesis 15:1-6

- Remember God's promises to Abram back in Genesis 12:1-3:

*The LORD said to Abram:*

*Go out from your land,  
your relatives,  
and your father's house  
to the land that I will show you.  
<sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation,  
I will bless you,  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,  
I will curse those who treat you with contempt,  
and all the peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.*

- As you look at the promises printed above, what part of those promises has been emphasized in chapters 12-14?
- Note how the phrase "after these events" serves as a divider. The focus has been on God's promise of the land. Now begins a focus on the promise of the descendants.
- Often times in the Bible we hear about God coming to people in dreams and visions. Here God appears to Abram in a vision. How would you respond to someone today who expects to receive a vision or dream from God?
  - Hebrews 1:1-2 – *Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. <sup>2</sup> In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son. God has appointed Him heir of all things and made the universe through Him.*

- The first thing God says to Abram in this vision is “Do not be afraid, Abram.” What things might here cause Abram to be afraid?
  
- After reminding Abram to not be afraid. Note what God says next. How are these words a fitting encouragement for Abram?
  - HCSB – “I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.”
  
  - NIV<sub>84</sub> – “I am your shield, your very great reward.”  
(Footnote: Or *your reward will be very great*)
  
  - KJV – “I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.”
  
  - Pastor’s Literal Translation – “I a shield to you, your reward to be great very.”

אֲנִכִּי מִיָּגֶן לְךָ שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד

- What is Abram’s complaint against God in verses 2-3?
  
- Why is this so devastating to Abram?
  
- What is God’s answer?
  
- (verse 6) “Abram believed the LORD.” In the Hebrew language the word translated as “believe” is the same word from which we get the English word “Amen.” Therefore, you could say that what Abram was doing here was the same thing we do at the end of our prayers. Explain.

- Note how verse 6 is quoted by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. How do those passages below help us understand what this verse is saying?
  - Romans 4:1-5 – What then can we say that Abraham, our physical ancestor, has found? <sup>2</sup> If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to brag about—but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? **Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.** <sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, pay is not considered as a gift, but as something owed. <sup>5</sup> But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who declares the ungodly to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness.
  
  - Romans 4:19-25 – <sup>19</sup> He considered his own body to be already dead (since he was about 100 years old) and also considered the deadness of Sarah’s womb, without weakening in the faith. <sup>20</sup> He did not waver in unbelief at God’s promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup> because he was fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. <sup>22</sup> Therefore, **it was credited to him for righteousness.** <sup>23</sup> Now **it was credited to him** was not written for Abraham alone, <sup>24</sup> but also for us. It will be credited to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. <sup>25</sup> He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.
  
  - Galatians 3:1-9 – You foolish Galatians! Who has hypnotized you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified? <sup>2</sup> I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Did you suffer so much for nothing—if in fact it was for nothing? <sup>5</sup> So then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?
 

<sup>6</sup> Just as Abraham **believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness,** <sup>7</sup> then understand that those who have faith are Abraham’s sons. <sup>8</sup> Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and told the good news ahead of time to Abraham, saying, **All the nations will be blessed through you.** <sup>9</sup> So those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.

### Read Genesis 15:7-10

- Is this still a part of the vision which God gave to Abram or is this literally taking place?
  
- What is going on here in these verses?
  - “If we are to understand the unusual transaction here involving three animals and two birds, we’ll need to remember that Abram spent the first 75 years of his life in a Babylonian culture. In that society, when two people wanted to guarantee an important agreement, they did more than affix their signatures to a document; they enacted a blood covenant. One or more sacrificial animals were killed, and the half carcasses were laid on the ground facing each other, forming a sort of corridor. To seal the contract, the two parties would solemnly walk together between the two slain animals. The symbolism is clear. First, the two participants approached the covenant ceremony as equals. Each had to contribute something to put the covenant into effect. And second, if either person violated the terms of the contract, the gory remains of the animal victims were a silent reminder that the person who violated the contract would forfeit his life.” (People’s Bible: Genesis, p.141)

### Read Genesis 15:11-16

- What is the point of the birds of prey?
  
- How were the words of verse 14 fulfilled?
  
- What extra promise is Abram given in verse 15?

Read Genesis 15:17-21

- What is different about this covenant described in verses 17-21 and ordinary covenants between two people?
- “Abram had asked God for a sign, and God gave him a spectacular sign that clarified his plan of salvation. The flaming torch, symbolizing the very presence of God, appeared all alone as it moved between the pieces of the sacrifice. God’s covenant was indeed an agreement between two parties, but the two were by no means equal partners. One party assumed all the obligations, and the other party received all the benefits. Abram promised nothing, did nothing, said nothing. He merely observed what the Lord was doing, heard what the Lord was saying, and believed. Saint Paul later put into words what God was teaching Abram here: *‘It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast’* (Ephesians 2:8-9).”  
(People’s Bible: Genesis, p.143)

