

**1** After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:

*"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."*

**2** But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" **3** And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

Abram had defeated some kings and probably feared a counter-attack. So while he appreciated the promise from God, Abram wanted more.

It was as if Abram said, "What good is it that You are my shield and reward? The only thing I've ever wanted with any passion in my life is a son! Where are the descendants You promised me?"

Abram's bold honesty before the LORD is notable. Instead of bottling up his feelings, he lays them out before the LORD.

Did Abram's question mean he doubted God? Yes. But there is a difference between a doubt that *denies* God's promise and a doubt that *desires* God's promise. Abram *wants* to believe and is looking to God to strengthen his faith.

**4** Then the word of the Lord came to him: *"This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."* **5** He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." **6** Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

God had already promised Abram an heir in Genesis 12:2 and 13:15-16. God does this because He knows how much we *need* to be reminded.

God makes it clear the heir will be Abram's own flesh and blood. God does this so Abram won't misunderstand the promise. God often states a promise with such certainty, we believe it will be fulfilled right away, but the fulfillment of *this* promise was still 15 years away.

God not only *tells* Abram the promise again, but He *confirms* it with an illustration: the stars in the sky show how vast the number of Abram's descendants would be. How difficult it must have been for Abram to believe his descendants would be so numerous when he did not even have a son at all. And yet his descendants would be too numerous to count and through him would come Messiah. One of those descendants would be the *Bright and Morning Star*.

**6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.**

When Abram put his trust in God, specifically in God's promise to him (descendants who would also produce the Messiah), God credited this belief to Abram's account as righteousness.

Since none of us can be good enough to accomplish perfect righteousness, we must have God's righteousness accounted to us by doing just what Abram did: he believed in the LORD.

God's accounting is not pretending. God does not account to us a pretended righteousness, but a real one in Jesus Christ.

This is one of the clearest expressions in the Bible of the truth of salvation by grace, through faith. This is the first time *believe* is used in the Bible; this is the first time *righteousness* is used in the Bible. It is the gospel in the Old Testament, quoted four times in the New Testament. (Let's look at two).

Romans 4:2-5 *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,*

Romans 4:9-10 *Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness." 10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;*

Romans 4:10 makes much of the fact this righteousness was accounted to Abram before he was circumcised (Genesis 17). No one could say Abram was made righteous because of his obedience or fulfillment of religious law or ritual. It was faith and faith alone (not works) that caused God to account Abram as righteous.

Abram believed. Abram is saved by faith. Abram believed there would be an heir and that **the** heir would come through Him.

Abram is credited righteousness. How? Jesus paid our debt on the cross. Jesus took our sin and we are credited with His righteousness.

Genesis 15:7-11 *He also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." 8 But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"*

Abram is bold to ask for a sign. He has faith, but he still has questions. Can you relate? Abram believes God, but he still wants to know about the details. Can you relate?

*9 So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." 10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. 11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.*

God does something extraordinary. God lays out instructions for sacrifice, but it was more than sacrifice. Abram knew that God was preparing to make a covenant.

When we make a formal agreement, it is done with legal documents. In Abram's day a covenant was made – forms were not signed, but the covenant was acted out in a solemn ceremony.

The animals were cut in half, and the covenant makers walked between the animals to say, "May this be done to me if I do not fulfill my part of the covenant." The literal translation is not to make a covenant, but to cut a covenant.

Abram prepared the animals, but God did not come right away, but Abram was waiting on the Lord. Abram could have walked through the animals, but he was waiting on God. Birds of prey came down and Abram drove them away.

Genesis 15:17-18 *When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—*

God represents Himself by two emblems: a smoking firepot and a blazing torch.

The smoking firepot reminds us of the **pillar of cloud** representing the presence of God (Exodus 13), the smoke on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19), and the cloud of God's Shekinah glory (I Kings 8).

The blazing torch reminds us of the **pillar of fire** representing the presence of God (Ex. 13), of the burning bush (Ex. 3), and of the fire from heaven which consumed sacrifices God was well pleased with (1 Kings 18, 1 Chron. 21, 2 Chron. 7).

God passed through the animal parts by Himself; as Abram watched, God showed this was a *unilateral* covenant. This means the certainty of the covenant is based on God's character and faithfulness – not Abram's, not ours.

Abram does not pass through the pieces. The vassal usually walked through the pieces – usually alone – while the king watched. It was implied that the king was saying, "If you don't fulfill the covenant, I will kill you." Abram does not pass between the pieces.

This may be the only time only the King walks through the animals. God is saying, "You can trust Me because this is not your promise to Me, this is My promise to you."

**If we are going to be saved, God is going to have to do something for us. We are not capable of saving ourselves. We can't be trusted with the responsibility to save ourselves.**

Fifteen chapters into the Bible man had clearly demonstrated his inability to obey God and keep a promise. God could not leave our salvation up to us. God makes a solemn promise to us. I will provide a way for you to be saved. I give you My word. If I don't keep My word, let me be cut asunder. The promise is not clearly stated in Genesis 15, but God promises Abraham in other places that through his offspring the world would be blessed. Messiah comes from the line of Abraham.

Jesus died on the cross. We did not die on the cross. Jesus died in our place. Jesus went to the cross by His choice.

John 10:14-18 *I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 **No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.***

We don't go to God on our terms and make demands. We come to God on His terms. We merely enter into the covenant by faith; we don't *make* the covenant with God.

"A Divine covenant is not a mutual agreement on equal terms between two parties, but a Divine promise assured." (Maclaren)

We are saved by faith in Jesus' work on the cross – not by our efforts. We boast in God and not in ourselves.

*Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Do you see how the Bible is one story? We see grace in the earliest pages of the Bible. The OT is consistently pointing to the cross. Jesus gave Himself for you. What are you giving back to Him?

*Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

Are you living out the plan God has for your life? God has invested a lot in you. How are you responding to Him? Don't miss what God has for you!

God is enough. Whatever you need, God is enough. Whatever your circumstances, God is enough. God loves you enough to create you and plan to die for you. God loves you so much that He has a plan laid out for your life. If you seek God with all your heart, you will find Him and in finding Him you will find His plan, and you will find that He is enough ... always enough.