

# A Gracious Covenant

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 07 May 2023

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, church. The scripture reading for today is taken from Genesis chapter 15, verses 1 through 21.

! After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. Fear not, Abram. I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great.

But Abram said, O Lord God, what will you give me? For I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, Look toward heaven and number the stars if you are able to number them.

Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.

[ 1 : 25 ] But he said, O Lord, how am I to know that I shall possess it? He said to him, Bring me a heifer, three years old, a female goat, three years old, a ram, three years old, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.

And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the bird in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the Lord said to Abram, Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace.

You shall be buried in a good old age, and they shall come back here in the fourth generation. For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

[ 2 : 42 ] When the sun had gone down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Canaanites, the Canaanites, the Karamites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Here ends the scripture reading. Thank you very much, Joan.

I have no doubt that most of us, if not all of us, who belong to Christ, know what it is to struggle to believe one or more promises that God has made to us.

And when I say made to us, not to us personally, in a vacuum, but in his word. Or maybe we struggle to believe some aspect about God's character.

Sometimes we find that God's word teaches, for example, that he is sovereign. And things happen in our lives, and we wonder, is he really sovereign?

[ 4 : 16 ] God's word teaches us that he is good, and that he works in all things for our good. And sometimes, we can find ourselves going through different situations, whether it's illness, whether it is marital breakdown, or job loss, or financial challenges, perhaps wayward children, and other kinds of challenges in life.

And we may struggle to believe in the goodness of God. Or perhaps we genuinely believe, we believe God's promises, but we sometimes want him to give us some additional assurance, some additional evidence that he is going to do what his word says he will do.

Perhaps some of us find ourselves in that place this morning. You are in your heart saying, Lord, I believe, but you deeply desire some additional assurance, some additional evidence about what God has promised that he will do.

As we come to this passage this morning, as we work our way through the book of Genesis, we come to this account where Abram finds himself in such a place.

As we heard last week, he believed God's promise to him, but he's asking God for additional assurance. He's asking God to assure him that he is going to do what he said he will do.

[ 6 : 11 ] And I believe that this account holds for us a whole lot that we can learn and we can apply to our lives. And so with the Spirit's help, let's consider this passage this morning.

But before we do that, let's take a moment to pray. Father, we bow this morning, asking that you, in this moment, would superintend the preaching of your word and speak to all of our hearts.

Lord, you know where each one of us is. Lord, you know those of us who in this moment are struggling to believe your promises.

You know those of us this morning who believe, but in our human weaknesses, we are asking that you would give us some sign, give us some indication, some assurance that you will do what you promised to do.

Lord, wherever we find ourselves this morning, would you meet us? Lord, meet us as you met Abram. You know our frames, Lord.

[ 7 : 32 ] You know our constitutions. And I pray that you would come to us, both collectively and individually, and speak to our hearts in ways that we need to hear from you.

And we ask that you would do this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, hopefully you recall, either from the series that we've been doing, or from your general Bible knowledge, that the Lord, back in Genesis 12, called Abram out of his native land, Ur of the Chaldeans, and promised to make him a great nation and to give him land.

And so it was a two-part promise, this promise of a large number of offspring and a great amount of land.

But there were two obvious problems. The first problem was that Abram and his wife Sarah were childless, and both of them were advanced in age.

And the second problem was that the land that God promised to give to Abram was occupied by at least ten different nations.

[ 8 : 47 ] And there were no pushover. And so in this passage that we have come to this morning, we find Abram questioning God. We saw last week about the offspring.

And now this promise about the land that he promised to give him. And this morning, I want to capture how God responds to Abram and these two questions that he raises under two headings. And the first is a gracious promise confirmed. You'll notice that Genesis 15, verse 1, opens with these words, after these things, as we heard last week.

And these things refer to Abram's defeat of the king, Kedorlaomer, and the kings who were with him, and how he rescued Lot and Lot's family, and how he brought back all the people of Sodom and all of their gifts, their goods that he recovered in the war.

After these things also refers to the proposal that the king of Sodom gave to Abram when he said to him, you take the goods and you give me the people.

[ 10 : 02 ] Abram rejected that. And so we have the Lord appearing to Abram after these things, and he says, Abram, I am your shield, I am your protection, and Abram, I am your great reward.

Your reward will be exceedingly great. And Abram's response in verse 2 is very interesting. You may have experienced this before, where you're talking to someone about a particular thing, and their mind goes on to something that isn't really connected to what you're talking about.

But Abram's response in verse 2 reflects what was pressing on his heart. He says, O Lord God, what will you give me? Because I continue to be childless.

I don't even have an heir, someone to inherit my possessions. The heir of my house is this foreigner, Eliezer of Damascus. You've given me no offspring, and Eliezer will be my heir.

And so the Lord says to him, Eliezer will not be your heir. Your heir will be your very own son. And the Lord takes Abram outside, and he tells him, look toward the sky, and number the stars if you can.

[ 11 : 32 ] And he told Abram, he said, in the same way that you cannot number the stars, you cannot define the specific number of the stars because they're too great, he says, your offspring will

be not similar in number, but similar in the sense that you will not be able to count them.

There will be so many that you just can't count them. Not in the billions like stars, but there will be so many of them, you will not be able to count them.

And as we heard last week, Abram believed God, and God counted it to him as righteousness. And what God was doing in this particular instance, on this occasion, is he was graciously confirming the promise that he had given to Abram way back in chapter 12, when he called him out of Ur of the Chaldeans.

And God confirmed the promise in such a graphic way, in such a memorable way, in a way that it would have been hard for Abram to shake. He could have simply uttered the words to Abram, Abram, trust me, I'm going to do this for you, but no, he graphically takes him outside, he says, look in the heavens and count the stars if you can count them.

And with that encounter that Abram had with God, he believed God. He believed what God said to him, despite the fact that he and his wife, to that point, did not even have a single child.

[13:08] He believed what the Lord said. But God's promise to Abram was two parts. It was a two-part promise. It was a connected promise.

He also promised him that he was going to give his offspring land. God had called him out of the place that he called home, where he had land, where he had possessions.

And God says, you go to a place I'm going to show you. So he had no land. And God says, I'm going to give you and your offspring land. Now notice that Abram was the one who raised the issue of offspring, but God was the one who raised the issue of land.

And look at that again in verse 7. And he said to him, I am the Lord. This is God speaking to Abram. I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.

Now, initially I talked about God calling Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans. But that's not what God did.

[14:25] Look at verse 7 again. He brought him out. There's a big difference. There's a big difference between calling someone out and bringing someone out. God brought him out.

And God brought him out to give him the land that he was in to possess it. This was God's doing. God brought him out.

And God would give him this land that he was going to possess. This is the God of heaven and earth. This is the creator who has done this.

And so here the Lord is confirming to Abram, Abram, this gracious promise that he had given to him. That he was going to give him this land.

And the reason I believe that we need to see that these are gracious promises is that Abram did nothing to deserve them. Couldn't earn them. He didn't earn them.

[15:28] He was in Ur of the Chaldeans minding his business. And God goes to him and brings him out and says, I'm going to take you to a better place. And I'm going to give you this desire that you and your wife have to have offspring.

These were pure gifts from the hand of God. These were by sheer grace and mercy. Abram didn't earn them.

Abram didn't deserve them. Abram didn't deserve them. Abram didn't deserve them. For decades, he and his wife wanted children. They clearly could not have children. And God would have to intervene to give them children.

Abram knew this. Abram certainly knew he could not dispossess the people in the land where he was living. Only God could do that.

And God chose to do that by his free choice and by his undeserved grace.

[16:28] And so both the promise of offspring and the promise of land were gracious promises to Abram. From an amazingly gracious God.

God freely chose to give them to him. And notice in verse 8 that Abram questions the Lord about the land in a similar way that he questioned him about the offspring.

He asked the Lord, how am I to know that I shall possess it? When Abram questioned the Lord about offspring, the Lord confirmed it by taking him outside and getting him to look up to the heavens.

And say, count stars. If you can count them. But your offspring will be like that. You can't count the stars. You will not be able to count your offspring.

But when he questions him about the land, God does something very different. God, instead of just doing something like some memorable event for him to look at, God makes a covenant, a gracious covenant.

[ 17 : 52 ] God makes a covenant with Abram. And this brings me to my second and final point where we'll spend most of our time this morning.

A gracious covenant made. In verse 9, the Lord tells Abram to bring three animals to him. He tells him to bring a heifer, a female goat, and a ram, all three years old.

And then he tells him to bring two birds, a pigeon, and a turtle dove. Now there's no record that God told Abram what to do.

We see in verse 10, Abram brings the animals as the Lord commanded. But we don't see that he was told to do what he proceeds to do.

He cuts them in half. He cuts the three, the bigger animals in half. He doesn't cut the two birds because evidently they're too small to cut.

[ 18 : 56 ] But they obviously were dead. He killed them. And he cuts the animals in half and he lays them side by side. Now somehow, Abram understood what to do with those animals.

And the reason he understood what to do with those animals was that he understood that he was going to, that God was going to enter into a covenant with him that was consistent with covenants that were made at that time in his culture, where they would have a superior king to make typically a land covenant with an inferior king and set the terms of it and he would dictate it and they would make an agreement, the terms of that land covenant.

And if the agreement is broken, well then you actually would lose your life. And the way they would do it is they would, it's a pretty elaborate ceremony.

They would cut the two, the animals in two and lay them side by side, making like an alleyway in between them. And the parties to the covenant would walk between the animals that have been slain.

And essentially what they were saying as they walked through was, if I don't keep my terms of this covenant, then let my fate be what the fate of these animals is.

[ 20 : 30 ] It was a very solemn and sober thing that people entered into. And so they didn't enter into it very flippantly. So this superior king says to you, I'll give you this land, but you have to give me tribute.

You have to do all these other things. Well, you better make sure you could do that because if you can't keep the terms, you'll be like those animals. And so Abram somehow knew that this is what God was going to do with him.

And so he sets up the arrangement for this covenant. And notice Abram did not ask God to make a covenant with him.

God told Abram, you go get these animals. God took the initiative to make this covenant with Abram. Now, I think Abram had every expectation, even though he may not have understood exactly how, to be involved in this covenant with him.

In the same way that the ordinary covenants of his day were entered into. And you could imagine what that scene must have looked like.

[ 21 : 40 ] If you take just one animal and slaughter it, the amount of blood that will be there, and the smell of flesh. But you have three large animals, and there was blood everywhere.

No doubt there was blood on Abram as well. We're told in verse 11 that birds of prey were attracted to the scene, and they would try to come and eat the animals that Abram had laid out.

And Abram fights them off. He fends and keeps the animals from being eaten by these birds of prey.

And then notice that something very surprising happens. In verse 12, at the time when the covenant is to be made, a deep sleep falls on Abram.

Now, I think we could conclude this much from the passage, that after Abram would have fought those birds off, and you could see his determination to make sure that they did not get the prey, Abram would have done every single thing to be up to make that covenant with God, because God was going to make a covenant with him to give him the assurance that he was going to fulfill this promise.

[ 23 : 10 ] But this deep sleep and a dreadful darkness falls over Abram. And commentators say that this very same word for sleep, what happened to Abram is the same thing that happened to

Adam when the Lord took a rib out of his side and formed Eve.

And so this sleep that came over Abram was not him getting tired and dozing off. This was a God-ordained sleep. God put him to sleep to do his work in the same way he put Adam to sleep to do his work.

And what we see is that God does this very intentionally because the covenant that he is going to make with Abram, he is going to make it alone.

It's a very unusual covenant because the covenants would have two parties to it. But in this particular covenant, what we see God doing is he makes the covenant alone.

He puts Abram to sleep and he makes this covenant alone. And the first thing God proceeds to do in verses 12 to 16 is he proceeds to tell Abram about the timing of the fulfillment of this promise concerning the land that he was going to get.

[ 24 : 41 ] It was not going to be immediate. Before it's fulfilled, God tells him that there's going to be an extended period of hardship for his offspring.

And that's the environment of the deep darkness that falls upon him. It's the foreboding of what awaits his people in the days ahead.

God tells him that his offspring would indeed inherit the land, but they were first going to be sojourners in another land that is not their home, and they will be slaves, and they will be mistreated for 400 years.

And God promises that he is going to judge the nation that treats them in that way after the 400 years, and he is going to send them out with great possessions. In verse 15, he promises Abram that he is going to live a long life, telling him that he will go to his fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.

And in verse 16, he explains why it's going to take 400 years for them to inherit the land. The reason is that although God promised the land to Abram and his offspring, the people occupying the land had not yet come to be ripe for judgment.

[ 26 : 12 ] They were going there, but they were not ripe for judgment yet. And he says that the time of the Amorites is not yet complete. In other words, their time for judgment, to be expelled from the land, has not yet come.

And therefore, Abram's offspring would have to wait until that time came. So God makes the promise, but it's not yet to be fulfilled.

But not only did God put Abram to sleep to give him this prophecy, God put him to sleep to do this most unusual thing, make this covenant with Abram.

But what he does is he places all the burden of fulfilling the covenant upon himself. None of the burden of fulfilling this covenant was upon Abram.

All of it was a part of what God would do. And it is a very important point to see in this passage. Again, covenants made by two parties.

[ 27 : 23 ] Both parties would walk through the pieces of animals as an expression of their commitment to keep their word and their acknowledgement that should they break it, the fate of the animals will be their fate.

Look again at verse 17. I want to read to 21. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed through these pieces.

On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying to your offspring, I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the land of the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

And see, brothers and sisters, this is why the covenant is a gracious covenant. This is not a covenant where something is brought by both parties to the covenant, some commitment being made by both parties of the covenant.

No. In this particular covenant, both Abram and God should have walked through the carcasses. But in verse 17, we see that only God walks through the carcasses represented by the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch.

[ 28 : 58 ] This is what theologians call a theophany. This is an appearance of God, an indication of the presence of God that came and walked through the carcasses.

And so what God did was he made a unilateral covenant with Abram. Not a bilateral one, but a unilateral covenant with Abram.

The burden to fulfill the promise to give Abram's offspring the land rested solely on God. It rested solely on the God who cannot lie and who condescended to Abram and said to him, my fate will be the fate of these animals if I do not keep my promise to you.

The God who cannot lie, the God who cannot die, accommodated Abram in his doubt and in his weakness in this particular way. And what did Abram contribute?

All Abram contributed to the covenant was the animals that God was the creator of. The animals that God gave him to bring he contributed nothing to the covenant.

[ 30 : 15 ] He certainly made no commitment to do anything. He was fast asleep and God made the covenant all by himself. The God who cannot lie obligated himself to keep this covenant.

But this promise that was given to Abram and his descendants was secured by a covenant that God made by himself was eventually lost.

They didn't hold on to this promise. And indeed we could see that it's not surprising. I think after 400 years of slavery in another land, it's very easy to think, well, maybe something wasn't too right about that promise that we're going to get land.

400 years of slavery is a long time to be enslaved. And so, what we see happening here in Genesis and also in Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy, these are books that Moses wrote and he wrote them as the children of Israel were coming out of Egypt to make a case for them to say, all that is happening is what God determined to do.

You're coming out of Egypt and you're going into this promised land, this land that you're going into. God promised some 400 years ago that this would be your land.

[ 31 : 52 ] And it was to give them faith to embrace all that God was actually doing. As I thought about this, the certainty of this promise, the kindness of the Lord to help Abram to see that though there would be this delay and there would be hardship and oppression, that this promise was going to come to pass.

And sometimes that's what we experience. We experience this gap between God's promise given and God's promise manifested. But when I considered this passage, I couldn't help but think about our salvation.

I couldn't help but think about the fact that in the same way that God unilaterally covenanted himself to Abram to fulfill this promise to give land to his offspring, that God unilaterally covenanted to bring salvation to us unilaterally and to bring us home to the place that he is preparing for us because this world is not our home.

We are sojourners here. God's ultimate promise to us, brothers and sisters, is to give us a Savior and to give us a place that is truly home because this world is not our home.

And the same way that Abram contributed nothing to that covenant that God made, we contribute nothing to our salvation. Our salvation is of God from start to finish.

[ 33 : 49 ] Every single aspect of it, is of God from start to finish. And Scripture is filled with just wonderful reminders of this and we so easily forget it because so often we are thinking that we are bringing something.

We're thinking that we are adding something to our salvation. We have some vital role to play in our salvation, but that's not the witness of Scripture.

The witness of Scripture is salvation is all of grace. If salvation is an ounce of effort or an ounce of merit that any of us brings to it, then it's not all of grace.

And however small we bring to that, we could boast in that, that I brought that. But imagine Abram bragging to the Lord or bragging to his friends, well, I brought the animals.

God created the animals. They're gifts from his hand. He enabled you to bring them. I want to read two passages of Scripture, the familiar passages, but I want to read them in your hearing and I pray that hearing them in this context, they will land on your soul in a different way.

[ 35 : 11 ] This is what Paul writes to the Philippians and indeed to us as well. In Philippians 1, verse 7, he writes, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion to the day of Jesus Christ.

He who began it is he who will complete it. He doesn't say he who began a good work in you will complete it with you.

No, he will complete it all by himself. He will bring it to completion in the same gracious way that he started it. The second is Jude, verses 24 and 25.

Now to him who was able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever.

Amen. And I can go on with other references to remind us of the certainty that we have that we will finish the race, that we will forever be with the Lord and it is because God has placed on himself the responsibility of saving us from start to finish.

[ 36 : 51 ] He will save all of his elect people without exception and not one of them is able to stand and say they brought anything to it. We sing the song nothing in my hands I bring.

Nothing we bring, friends. And theologians said the only thing we bring is the sin that God so freely forgives. And this is what this unilateral covenant that God makes with Abram, putting him to sleep, should remind us of that God has done this on behalf of his elect people.

Like Abram, we brought nothing to it. Like Abram and the covenant God made with him. This covenant of our salvation, this covenant of redemption, nothing is dependent upon us.

Now, no doubt, some of you are probably thinking, but we must persevere. We mustn't turn back because if we turn back then we won't be saved.

And that is true. We must persevere. But why do we persevere? And how do we persevere? And the answer in both cases is God.

[ 38 : 15 ] We persevere because of God and we, God is the way that we actually persevere. persevere. We persevere because God preserves us.

That's what he says in Jude. He says, now to him who is able to keep you, able to keep you from stumbling and able to present you blameless.

Think about that, brothers and sisters. The only way we can be presented blameless before the Lord, and I think we all know ourselves well enough. If we had to present ourselves blameless before the Lord, in all honesty, we all know we wouldn't even try.

Because we will be going before the God whose eyes are like fire, who knows all and sees all. And we wouldn't try that. But he presents us blameless before the presence of the Father because it's his doing, it's his work.

Scripture is filled with warnings, calling us to persevere, warning us not to fall away.

[ 39 : 34 ] But even those passages that warn us, those passages that warn us against falling away, even those passages are the means by which God uses to cause us to take sin seriously and to press on and to persevere.

And so even in that, God is at work causing us to finish the journey. And we have nothing to boast about in that.

Salvation is of the Lord from start to finish. It's a unilateral covenant. The God who cannot lie has made that promise that what he starts, he will complete.

The covenant that God made with Abram was made by the blood of animals.

The covenant that God has made to secure our salvation is the blood of his son. And the writer to the Hebrews tells us it's a better covenant.

[ 40 : 59 ] He says, Jesus, in Hebrews 7.22, he says that Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant. You know, if you go to the bank and the bank isn't so sure about your ability to repay a loan, they'll say to you, I need you to get someone to guarantee it.

And normally, it's going to be someone who they really believe is able to make good if you fall short, if you aren't able to keep your obligations. Jesus Christ is the guarantor of our salvation.

Amen? Not Moses. Not Abraham. The Lord Jesus Christ. He is the guarantor of the better covenant that we have that is secured by his own blood.

Brothers and sisters, it's quite interesting how Scripture is written. I would have liked to see a report about when Abram got up.

I mean, the place is smoky, these animals are burnt. Don't you think for a second that when he woke up, things looked the way they were when he went to sleep? Now, that flaming torch that came through there, that fiery sight that came through there, I think it torched everything, burned it all up.

[ 42 : 45 ] And when Abram got up, he realized something happened in this place. And I believe he had the sense in the presence to know that a covenant had been made and he wasn't a part of it.

Brothers and sisters, ours is better than that. If that is startling, if that is attention-grabbing, the writer to the Hebrews says that our covenant is a better covenant because it has the Lord Jesus

Christ himself who guarantees it.

Our salvation, brothers and sisters, is guaranteed. And if we belong to Christ, we will always belong to Christ. Christ. And that's good news.

That is good news. The God who cannot lie promises to give salvation to all who repent and believe the gospel.

And it is secured by better blood. It is secured by a better covenant.

[ 44 : 07 ] And if you're here this morning and you've not yet trusted in Jesus as your Lord and your personal Savior, I plead with you this morning. Turn from your sin and turn to Jesus.

Trust in Jesus. As we sang this morning, it is only in dying that we live. You will begin to realize that true living doesn't begin until we find our place at the foot of the cross and we die to self and we begin to live for Christ.

And it will be a joy then to live the rest of your days for the one who died for you. But for the rest of us this morning who have put our trust in Jesus Christ and for some of you who may have questions about all kinds of things that may be going on in your life, maybe even questioning your very salvation, the God who cannot lie has secured your salvation on this better covenant based on the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I pray that that brings comfort to your soul. I pray that that brings assurance to your soul. I pray that that's enough. I pray that that's enough.

I pray that that will cause the questions to go down in volume in your heart. Because God has done this big thing. How would he not do these lesser things?

[ 45 : 43 ] That's the argument that the Apostle Paul makes in Romans chapter 8. He says, if God did not spare his only son, how much more will he not freely give us all these other things?

You know, but as glorious as this covenant is that God made with Abraham, this unilateral covenant where he says, I'm going to perform this all by myself.

And as wonderful as it was evidently for Abraham to get up and see that God had done that, in the very next chapter that we're going to look at, we see that Abraham wavers in his faith.

He wavers in his faith and he sets out to try to help God to fulfill the promise that God says he was going to bring about. In the process, he creates a lot of problems.

But you know what? God remains faithful to Abraham. Because he can't deny himself.

[ 46 : 56 ] And because he promised that he himself will bring the covenant to fulfillment. And I pray that we are encouraged that even when we fail or we falter on our journey of faith, the God who made the covenant by the blood of his Son, who promised that he will present us faultless before his presence on that great day, he will remain faithful and he will bring it to pass.

grace. And on that day, we will know with even greater certainty that we know now that it's all of grace. That it's all by grace.

And that our hands are truly empty other than full of the sin that we bring to our salvation. And so next week is Mother's Day.

The Lord willing, we'll pick up in chapter 16 the following week. Let's pray together. Father, we are so grateful for the mercy and the grace that you show to the undeserving.

Lord, thank you for securing the covenant of our salvation in the blood of your Son. Thank you for your repeated assurances that from start to finish, salvation is of the Lord.

[ 48 : 30 ] And Father, I pray that our assurance in that truth will grow. Even where there may be questions about things that are happening in our lives, Lord, I pray this morning that you would cause us to accept the blood covenant that Jesus Christ secured by his death to be enough.

Lord, would you speak to hearts in ways that you know that we need to hear from you this morning. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's thank our closing song. your grace that leads this inner home from dive to land forever and sings a song of righteousness by blood and not by merit.

your grace that reaches far and wide to every tribe and nation has called my heart to enter in the joy of your salvation.

salvation. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am restored. And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

[ 50 : 48 ] your grace that I cannot explain not by my earthly wisdom the prince of life without a stain was traded for this sinner thy grace.

By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am restored. And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

will rise up and overflow my song resound forever for grace will see me welcome home to walk beside my Savior By grace I am redeemed By grace I am restored And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord By grace I am redeemed By grace I am restored And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord

Lord, thank you for your grace By which we are redeemed And your grace by which we are restored when we fail And Lord, thank you that because of your grace That is based on the gracious covenant That you have made By the blood of Jesus Christ A covenant which he himself guarantees That the recipients of it will receive all of its benefits Lord, may that grace ring in our hearts May that grace give us the assurance That we will make it finally home

Lord, I pray That you'd help us To truly lay a hold of your promises In Jesus Christ Because all of them in him are yes and amen He secures them all for us He secured them In his blood and on the cross And Lord, I pray that we would look to that place We would look to what he has done Rather than looking around us in some subjective way For some sign or some assurance May we look to the fulfillment Of our salvation In the Lord Jesus Christ And now as we leave this morning Let us hear fresh these words from

[ 54 : 45 ] Jude 24 and 25 Now to him who was able To keep you from stumbling And to present you blameless For the presence of his glory With great joy To the only God our Savior Through Jesus Christ our Lord Be glory Majesty Dominion And authority Before all time And now And forever Amen Amen God bless you Please If you are able to Join us For our time of fellowship After this But if you are here And you need prayer Please feel free to come at this time It would be a joy to pray with you Amen Amen Amen