

Genesis 15

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[0 : 00] 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 Eleazar 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 of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess. But he said, O Lord God, 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 of these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other.

[1 : 03] But he did not cut the birds in half. And when the birds of prey came down on the carcass, 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 served. 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. 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 Abram, saying, To your offspring I give you this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Riphon, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

[2 : 23] Let's pray. Father, it is so good to come together and worship you and to hear your word.

And Lord, as on this holiday weekend so many of our church family are traveling, we pray for them. Lord, that you would protect them, that you would bring them back to us.

Lord, that they would find a great Christian fellowship this weekend. Lord, for our children who are behind us today.

Lord, give them a glimpse of your love for them. And Lord, we pray for us as well. Show us your heart in your word.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. If you don't have a Bible today, we'd very much love to give you one. They're in the back table there next to the offering box.

[3 : 24] They're already bookmarked to today's passage in Genesis 15. Let me give you kind of an overview of what the passage is kind of all about. It centers on two promises.

The first is a promise for a son and for offspring in verses 3 through 5. And the second, starting in verse 13, moving all the way to the end, is a promise of land to Abram.

And sandwiched in between those two promises, verse 6 is critically important. Not just to this passage, but to the entirety of the Bible.

Abram believed God and God credited to him as righteousness. And then the last thing we will look at today is verse 17 especially.

Where God makes a covenant with Abram. But before he makes those two promises, the first thing he says in verse 1 is, Fear not.

[4 : 27] That's kind of interesting. After these things, verse 1 says, The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. Fear not, Abram, for I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great.

Now why does he say that? What are these things that are there at the very beginning? Well in chapter 14, Abram's nephew was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Foreign kings were moving through the land of Canaan, and pillaging, and taking everything as they came. And among the spoils that they still were, Lot and his whole family.

And Abram had tracked down the foreign kings. He had launched a surprise attack. He had rescued his nephew, Lot. And he had returned. And that's why the Lord said, Fear not.

You see, his success had sort of made him a target, right? Many people have kind of felt that in their own lives. So those foreign kings probably didn't take too kindly to being made fools of.

[5 : 29] They didn't like his heroics, and so he was afraid of retribution. And Abram had probably kind of made a name for himself in the land of Canaan. Here's this stranger with a small force put to shame these foreign rulers.

And so anyone who wanted to prove that they were strong might want to attack Abram to show their own might. And so Abram had good reason to be afraid.

And in light of that, what does the Lord say? He says, Fear not, Abram. I am your shield. Your reward will be very great. And that reminds Abram of something that we have already seen.

Something that the Lord has already said to him. Namely, what the Lord said last week in chapter 12. Chapter 12, verses 2 and 3 say, I will make of you a great nation.

And I will bless you and make your name great. So that you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you, I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

[6 : 35] And it's at this moment where the Lord has now reminded him at the beginning of chapter 15. About a reward and a blessing that Abram perks up in verse 2 and says, Oh Lord, what will you give me?

For I continue childless. And the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And so what he's saying, essentially, is, Lord, you keep bringing up this whole promise thing.

This whole great nation thing. And it's been something like 20 years. Since you called me to leave my country and my home. To come to a place where I'm a foreigner. Where my family is getting kidnapped.

To wait for an heir through which I'm supposed to be the father of nations. And through whom the whole world is supposed to be blessed.

So, how about it? From here, the Lord confirms two aspects of his promise to Abram.

[7 : 37] And that's really what's going on in this whole passage. First, he confirms his promise to bless Abram with a son. And then he confirms his promise to give Abram's descendants the land of promise.

First, let's look at the promise of a son. Starting in verse 3. Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring. And a member of my household, that's Eliezer his servant, 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. Back in chapter 12, when the Lord first made this promise to Abram, Abram was 75 years old. He and his wife, Sarai, had already waited a lifetime for the blessing of children before any of this kicked off. Today's promise in chapter 15 comes years after that.

[8 : 46] And it still hasn't been fulfilled. And by the time God repeats this promise in chapter 17, Abram will be 100 years old. If you were Abram, what would you have settled for?

Most of us are just trying to get through the day, right? So our goals really aren't that lofty. Through you, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

That's not really on my radar screen most days. Abram probably would have been happy with a child. But what does God do? He explodes that.

Abram's desires for blessing are far too small. He brought him outside and said, Look to heaven. And number the stars if you're able to number them. So shall your offspring be.

If you do a search for light pollution map, you'll find that southeastern Connecticut isn't really the best place to look at the stars. I blame the Navy base mostly.

[9 : 53] But all the artificial lights kind of muddy up the sky and refract off of anything that's in the air. And it reduces the numbers of stars that you can see to really just the bright ones.

My third class summer at the academy, I was assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter Rush. And that summer we sailed from Hawaii to the Gulf of Alaska. If you look at a map, you realize that about midway between Hawaii and Alaska is one of the very furthest places you can be from land on the planet Earth.

There is zero light pollution. And as I stood lookout at midnight, well, let me tell you friends, the sky is alive.

You look at one bright star and realize it's surrounded by a hundred smaller lights. And Abram, living long before the advent of electric lights, that's the kind of sky that he would have been looking at.

Stars upon stars, utterly innumerable. And God said, count them if you can. that's how I will bless you. I bet all the days of his life, Abram never looked at the night sky the same way again.

[11 : 19] He looked up every night and saw promise, hope, joy, so many blessings. Now, if you were here last week, you might recall the Apostle Paul's words about Abram and our relationship to him.

In Galatians chapter 3, saying, know then that it is those of faith, those of faith who are the sons of Abram. Friends, if by faith you are joined to Christ in his death and resurrection, you are one of those stars that Abraham couldn't count.

Your life in Christ is a testimony to God's faithfulness because you are part of the fulfillment of his promise. you are written here in the pages of Scripture.

Right here, this chapter. And Paul goes on to say, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. And that means, what?

That means that this promise of blessing without measure belongs to you too. you have a night sky full of innumerable blessings from the Lord.

[12 : 34] Think with me. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Your night sky just got really full. even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

What a blessing that we should be holy and blameless before him.

Another blessing and love. He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ.

What a blessing. According to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

In him, we have redemption through his blood. What a blessing. The forgiveness of our trespasses.

What a grace. According to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will.

What blessing. According to his purpose which he set forth in Christ, in him, we have obtained an inheritance. What a blessing. In him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

[13 : 52] What a blessing. Who is the guarantee which is another blessing of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory. Friends, your night sky is full of stars.

Are you looking? We haven't even begun to talk about the blessings of the church or the blessings that scripture is or the individual blessings of the life circumstances that you walk through.

But sometimes it's hard to see the stars. Sometimes it's because you're not looking at the sky and you're just looking at the ground. How easy is it to look away from the best things when other things, even good things, fight for our attention?

Right? And sometimes we don't see the stars because the clouds are out. Troubles and sickness and sadness and worry blot out those stars with thick clouds.

And that's the struggle that many of the psalmists face. Right? How many of the psalms are filled with the Lord's people tearing their eyes away from lesser things to set them on the Lord?

[15 : 16] How many of the psalms record their valiant attempts to live by faith? That means to live knowing that the stars are there even if the clouds obscure them.

On both accounts, missing the stars by looking at the ground or being blocked by storm clouds, the answer is actually the same.

Look at stars. Look at all of those stars. When we're looking at the ground, when entertainment or busyness or sin distract us from full Christian joy, look at the stars.

turn your eyes upon Jesus, the song says. Look full on his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

And when suffering and sorrows come your way and thick clouds choke out the stars so that you can't even see a glimmer of the night sky, all the blessings that the Lord has cast there, now is the time to walk by faith, remembering that those stars are there.

[16:36] So, prepare yourself for distraction. Prepare yourself for trouble. Soak in the stars today. You've been blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

Pardon for sin, hope for a future, adoption as sons, a family in Christ's body. We are heirs of the world. And that's just the beginning. What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2. And I just read from you a section from Ephesians chapter 1. If you need help looking at the night sky, I'd encourage you on your own to go there. Underline and think on all the stars in the sky that are set there. I'll let the night sky beam down on you. If you need help, I have this little book here.

I've got three copies of this to give away today. It's called 50 Reasons Jesus Came to Die. There are innumerable stars in the sky. Here are 50 of them and short reflections on them, a page, page and a half of each.

[17:47] If this would be an encouragement to you, come talk to me. You know what's crazy? Looking to the night sky is only the first of two promises that this passage has.

The first one is about Abram's descendant and the second one, the second thing the Lord confirms, is the land of promise. Starting in verse 12, we read, The sun was going down and a deep sleep fell on Abram and behold, dreadful, and a great, a dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

And 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 400 years but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions.

As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You will be buried at a good old age. They shall come back here in the fourth generation for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

Moving on to verse 18, 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 river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

[19:16] Thank you, Katrina. You did a tremendous job with all those names earlier. Now, this second promise is actually, when we think about it, a subset of the first.

The Lord promised Abram innumerable descendants and they needed somewhere to live. And so he reiterated to Abram that the land of promise would belong to the people that he promised.

And what we know, we already talked about this a little last week, these two promises, they point beyond themselves to something else. When Abram looked at Isaac, the promised son, who we'll see in two weeks' time, what did he see when he looked at his son?

He remembered what we saw last week in Genesis 12. Not only would Abram have many descendants through Isaac, but in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

This wasn't just about having a lot of kids. It was about being a blessing to the entire world. That's the promise God made in the garden.

[20:28] That one of Eve's descendants would crush the enemy. It's a promise of a savior. Likewise, when Abram looked at the promised land, what did he see?

The Hebrew word here used for land in all of these Abrahamic passages can indeed point to a particular land. But there's a bit of word play going on.

It's also sometimes used more broadly to refer to the entire earth. And that's exactly how Abram understood this promise. We know that for a number of reasons. In Romans chapter 4 verse 13, we read that the promise to Abraham and to his offspring would be that he would be the heir of, not just the promised land, but he would be the heir of the world.

You see, Abram knew that the boundaries of his promised land here were simply the capital of his inheritance. In the Lord, he was an heir of everything.

And Abram knew that even that pointed to something greater. Last week, we read from Hebrews chapter 11, By faith, Abram obeyed when he was called to go out.

[21 : 40] By faith, he went to live in the land of promise. As in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

You see, Abram knew that the promised land was a down payment on heaven. So when Abram heard these two promises, he saw what they pointed to. A son who pointed to a savior and a land that pointed to heaven itself.

What connects these two promises? Sandwiched in between them is one of the most important verses in all the Bible. Verse 6.

He believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness. I cannot overstate the importance of this verse. If we're to use our night sky analogy a little further, in the New Testament there are two constellations of truth that are bigger and brighter than any of the others.

they most fully express the truths of the Christian faith. The book of Hebrews and the book of Romans. They systematically outline the biggest truths and how the whole plan of redemption, God's purpose for the world fit together.

[23 : 10] And the book of Romans is actually built entirely around this verse. The first three chapters of Romans, Paul shows how the entire world, those who are Jews, those who are not, have utterly failed.

How we are sinful before the Lord and we have earned for ourselves death and judgment. Then in chapter 4, he builds Romans chapter 4 around this verse that God graciously credited righteousness to Abram through his faith.

the same can be true of us. That's the whole point. And now the rest of the book of Romans, the whole rest of the book of Romans is unpacking what that means for us. And so this one verse is the very heart of that whole book that explains the gospel.

It's central to Romans, it's central to the gospel, so let us look at it very closely today. First, he believed the Lord. See, it's really easy to believe in God, I think.

Lots of people believe there's some supernatural power out there. It's probably a good force, right? It might even be a personal force instead of just some cosmic influence, but that's not what we see here, is it?

[24 : 29] Abram believed the Lord. First, your Bible probably has Lord in all caps there. And that means that the personal name of God, Yahweh, is being used here.

Abram didn't believe in just any conception of God. He believed in the God of the Bible as he had revealed himself, the self-existent one, the good creator, the one who made humanity in his own image for fellowship, the righteous judge in Eden, the merciful judge in Eden, the one who promised a savior in Eden.

God was the God of Abram's own imagining. Abram believed the Lord of life, who had clearly shown himself.

God said, God created man in his own image, and since then, man's been trying to do the reverse. We construct a false picture of God that suits us, that is convenient to us, that makes us feel good. How do you know if you're worshiping the true and living God? Well, here are three questions you could ask yourself, where do my ideas about God come from?

[25 : 54] If you find yourself saying things like, I think of God like, dot dot dot, and you don't, the next steps aren't things from scripture, it's probably a bad sign.

How much of your understanding about God comes from Facebook posts, from other people? Or are you seeking him out in his word?

That might be the first way you ask yourself. Or, ask yourself, do you ever find yourself saying, I couldn't believe in a God who has unchanging moral standards, or would send anyone to hell, or would make a claim on my life, my time, my money, my behavior?

See, if you find yourself denying the Bible, you're not worshiping the God of the Bible. Or, you could ask yourself, does your God challenge you?

So many people serve a God that looks a lot like themselves, who has the same priorities and preferences. This is probably you, if you have said, I like to think of God like, and then said something that you would say.

[27 : 18] If God isn't challenging you, there are only two possibilities. Either you're ignoring God, or you're worshipping a giant version of yourself.

So that's Abram believed the Lord. Let's also see here, Abram believed the Lord. I guess we'll play putting the emphasis on the different syllables here.

Abram believed the Lord. That means more than he believes that the Lord exists, right? It's easy to think of faith as, I believe there is a God.

But what's this passage about? It's about two giant impossible promises. Belief, as the Bible understand it, isn't just holding right facts about God.

It's holding onto God. The words believe and faith mean believing God that he will come through on his promises. It's trust, and it has two big impacts on us.

[28 : 26] Trust, first, is personal. It's not abstract. You have to trust a person. You can have a lot of doctrine and have no faith. you can know a lot about a lot of truths without knowing that the truth is a person.

I am the way, the truth, and the life, Jesus says. And, believing that God is there, even the Christian God, isn't the kind of faith that the Bible talks about.

James is very clear about that. James chapter two, you believe that God is one. you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder. See, faith is trusting yourself to God and trusting yourself, your life, your walk, your preferences, your future, your very soul, into his loving hands.

Until you've trusted his promises and entrusted yourself to him, you haven't believed the Lord like Abram did. That's exactly what Paul points out as he looks to this verse in Romans chapter four.

Abram didn't just believe that God existed. He believed God would do exactly as he promised.

Romans 4.19 and following says, he did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old.

[29 : 56] Or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb, no unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God. But he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

That's faith. And here's the big one, where it connects to us today. That is why, Paul says, his faith was counted to him as righteousness.

righteousness. That's a picture of biblical faith, friends. Trusting God at his word. Now, how does that relate to you and me?

The most crucial aspect of God's promises to us are found in the second half of verse 6. Abram believed the Lord, this is what we've already looked at, and he counted it to him as righteousness. Now, at first, that seems really out of place, doesn't it? This passage isn't about righteousness, is it? It's about promises, promises of a son, promises of a land, and what those things point to.

[31 : 11] But, but, the fact that God is talking to an unrighteous man like Abram at all, and talking to him not about judging him, but about blessing him.

That should grab our attention. That means that the Lord is intending to do something about Abram's sin. We also say, but, when we think that the promised land, wait a minute, it points to heaven, where no unholy thing will enter.

And the promised son points to a savior who will destroy the works of the evil one, and bring about a righteousness. See, remember, Abram was an idolater before the Lord called him.

He worshipped other gods. He had his back to God and was running away. He was God's enemy, worthy of judgment and condemnation. And that is our plight before we come to Christ, before God counts righteousness to us.

And here we see that righteousness comes to Abraham, and to us, through faith, but not because of faith. Confusing?

[32 : 33] The Lord, in his great grace, decides, I'm going to impute righteousness unto everyone who comes to me in faith. So, a righteousness from God comes through faith, but that doesn't mean that faith somehow earns us righteousness.

We need to keep those separate. Faith didn't make Abram righteous. God just chose to bless him. Crying out for help doesn't make you strong, does it?

But it gets you help. And that's what we see here. God doesn't, believing God doesn't in itself make you righteous. But the Lord decides to help you.

God doesn't come from Abram himself, if faith didn't make him righteous, where did the righteousness actually come from?

Did God manufacture it out of thin air? Was it just a title, a label, that had no real substance of its own?

[33 : 39] Was it a false sort of righteousness? Well, that would be a lie. And the Lord is a God of justice, not lies. No, it's a real righteousness that came from somewhere.

Where? Where is righteousness found? Where does it come from? What is its source? Who alone is righteous? The Lord.

You can actually see that throughout the whole Bible. Jeremiah 33, the Lord is our righteousness. So, the righteousness that's credited to Abraham, that's credited to you and me if we are in Christ, the righteousness that can be credited to you today if you don't belong to Christ, that righteousness comes from God.

Because righteousness is found in Him. And listen to this, this is so important. Because righteousness is found in God, and because God gives righteousness to those who come to Him in faith, that means that God gave something of Himself to Abraham when He counted righteousness to him.

He gave something of Himself to Abraham. And He gives something of Himself to us. Now, I can't overstate the importance of that idea as we look to the last part of the passage today.

[35 : 11] That God gave something of Himself. We're going to see how that comes to a beautiful climax in the covenant ceremony that we're about to see.

The covenant is set up in verses 8-11 and then God actually makes the covenant in verse 11.

Verse 8 says, He said, O Lord God, 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. He brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other, but he did not cut the birds in half.

Then in verse 17, when the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces. Now, that made perfect sense to you, right?

See, there wasn't a notary public in the ancient world. Instead of signing a contract in front of a witness, covenants between leaders were marked with ceremonies like this.

[36 : 14] Animals were cut in half and the parties walked through the pieces, as if to say, what happened to these animals happened to me if I don't fulfill my word that I'm making today.

One writer explained it like this, what you're seeing here is that they were richly identifying with the pieces, and you were actually acting out the consequences, the penalty of breaking the contract, the covenant.

What you were saying is, if I do not do all the words I am saying today, may I be cut off, may I be cut up, may my flesh be strewn out in the desert to be food of birds and beasts of the wild.

What's so interesting here is who passes through the pieces. If two kings were making a covenant, usually only the lesser king, the vassal king or the conquered king, would pass through the animals. The king in the possession of power had no reason to make an oath that could come back to hurt him. Right? He had no reason to do that. No one can compound him to do it, he has all the power.

[37 : 24] So, one would expect Abram, who is infinitely less glorious than God, to be the one who is taking on a potentially lethal oath.

But, in verse 17, who walks through the animals? Behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

Now, that might seem weird to you and me, but the ancient Hebrews would have understood who that was in an instant. When the Lord led them out of Egypt, when he led them to the promised land that was promised to Abram here in this passage, he led them with smoke and fire.

Exodus chapter 13 says, And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might travel day by day, excuse me, that they may travel by day and by night.

The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

Abram's been laid out on the ground since verse 12.

[38 : 37] He can't walk to the pieces, but smoke and fire, the very presence of the Lord is there. The Lord and the Lord alone walks through the pieces.

What does that mean? It means the Lord is saying the promises, these promises for a son pointing to a savior, and a promised land pointing to heaven, those promises are on my shoulders alone.

Whatever the cost, be it death itself, that's on my shoulders. And of course, that's exactly what it did cost God, to keep those promises.

God visited his people again, this time not in the form of smoke and fire, but in the form of a man, Jesus, the Christ. And the cost for fulfilling these promises was indeed his death.

He took your sin and mine, the sins of everyone who would ever repent and believe, bore them on his own shoulders, nailed them to his cross, and buried them in the grave.

[39 : 51] But he didn't only make an end of sin, so that we would be at square one with God.

This passage is about righteousness. When we're united to Christ through faith, he takes our sin to the cross, and we receive his righteousness, his actual righteousness that makes us acceptable before the Father, that radically changes our hearts, the new birth.

That's why I said it's so important for us to remember that God gave something of himself. God gave himself literally at the cross, and literally in our own hearts, he has given us new life.

That's why in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says, for our sake, he, that is the Father, made him who knew no sin, that's the Son, to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God. And that's how we come to possess a righteousness by faith. Jesus, the Son, promised here, the promised blessing, died for our unrighteousness.

[41 : 04] And when we grab hold of him in faith, he gives something of himself, his righteousness, so that we might dwell with him in the promised land forever.

forever. That is the very heart of Christianity. So friends, let's remember, biblical faith is trusting God, that he is who he says he is, and that he will do what he has promised.

The Lord imputed the son's righteousness to Abram, because Abram was banking on God. And that is the story of every Christian. Christian. So, today, if you do not know Christ, I invite you to trust him and his promises.

Not just to agree with certain doctrines, that we must do that to have a right understanding of the God we trust. But it is more than just agreeing with facts.

And don't rely on ritual either. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, church attendance, these are testimonies to God's grace, celebrations of God's grace, responses to God's grace.

[42 : 16] But don't think that simply by participating in the signs that you have the reality. You have Christ if you've placed your hope and trust in him.

So, trust Jesus that he is God the Son, who he said he is. That he took your sins to his cross. That he offered you forgiveness through his righteousness and offers you new life in him.

trust him. God promises to give you something of himself. He wants to make you a new creation and place his righteousness on your shoulders, even as he places your sin on Christ's shoulders.

For those of us here today who are in Christ, first, let's not come across as superior to other people. The text doesn't say Abram believed God and earned righteousness.

Christians aren't somehow superior because of our faith. Our faith is built on the fact that we are utterly unable to stand before the Lord on our own. That we are absolutely unable to produce acceptable righteousness on our own and therefore we desperately lay hold of God and his promises.

[43 : 36] also for those of us who are of faith today, if your life has lost some of its spiritual vitality, if you're struggling to walk by faith, if the joy of your salvation has dimmed, it might be because you're distracted from the two big things in this text.

There's a difference between knowing about God and knowing God. A lot of that has to do with where your eyes are. Right?

Are you looking at that night sky? Or are you looking somewhere else? So, look at the night sky. You will see your Lord there.

And last, will you point someone else to that sky? Okay. I've been working on something to help people start spiritual conversations.

I think sometimes we're really good at knowing the gospel and wanting to share it, but sometimes having that thing that moves us into a spiritual conversation where we can talk to somebody about really important things.

[44 : 59] The matters of faith, the matters of the heart. That's really hard. Almost done with that. It'll be coming soon. But one of the questions I think is so appropriate today in the light of this text is simply saying, what's the best thing someone's ever done for you?

When the question comes back to you, because most people say, oh, here's the best thing that's happened to me, and then, well, how about you? They'll turn the question around in you. You can say, well, someone died for me.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, it is so great to be your people, to have a God who died for us, so that we might have blessings, so that we might have a night sky full of testimonies to your goodness and your grace.

And Lord, that we can look to the promised land that was given to Abram and his descendants that points to the heavenly city, where we will dwell with you forever. Thank you, Lord, that you placed our sin on Christ's shoulders, so that you could place his righteousness on ours.

And Lord, thank you that knowing that we were completely unable to earn any of this standing before you on our own, Father, that you give it to us by faith.

[46 : 43] Lord, build our faith, confirm our faith, help us to walk each day in light of the night sky, full of stars, full of hope, full of promise, full of blessing.

May we always walk towards you. We pray that in the matchless name of Jesus Christ, our King and our Redeemer. Amen. Okay.

The covenant, oh, there it is, gotcha. All right. Covenant made in Genesis 15, right, was God's solemn oath that he would fulfill his promises. The promised son through whom he would bless the entire world.

The promised land, a place for the people of God to dwell that foreshadowed the final city of God. And he pledged those to Abram and all his posterity, an oath of blood, for the curse of death be upon God if he didn't deliver.

That was the whole idea. And of course, what we now know on this side of the cross is that blood and death are just what it cost God to fulfill those promises.

[47 : 59] The righteousness of God that comes through faith, the only righteousness that allows us access to God, a home forever, as many blessings as the night sky has stars. That righteousness was paid for on the cross.

And just as this passage had a bloody sacrifice that instituted a covenant, so too did the cross. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, said Jesus.

Each covenant has a tangible symbol of remembrance. For Abraham, it was actually this sacrifice that we saw here in chapter 15.

Charles Spurgeon said that Abraham's hands were stained with blood. He handles the butcher's knife. He divines the beasts. He kills the birds. There is a tangible aspect to the covenant that was made with Abraham.

And for us, our tangible remembrance is the bread and the cup. Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you.

[49 : 10] Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, he also took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

Friends, if you have repented and believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, the righteousness credited to Abraham, Jesus' own righteousness, has been credited to you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He has given you new birth. this table is for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord. If today you are here and you don't know Christ and this is not a description of you, we ask that you don't receive the elements, but rather that you would receive Christ to whom they point.

So in a moment, we are going to stand. We are going to take the elements, return to our seats, where we will eat as a family together. Let me pray. Father, you are so good to have extended and fulfilled the promise to Abraham to us.

So Lord, as we remember, as we celebrate what you have done for us, the true cost of fulfilling these promises was the cost of the life of your son.

[50 : 38] Lord, may we be overjoyed at this, the brightest star in the night sky, the blessing that earns for us every other blessing.

Lord, may we be filled with joy today as we remember, as we celebrate, and as we do it together. We pray that in Christ's name.

Amen. The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Let's eat together. God. In the same way, he also took the cup after supper, saying, this is the covenant, the cup of the covenant in my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. Let's train together. Amen. Amen. Father, fill our hearts with joy and praise as we gaze on that brightest star, the blessing of Christ for us, where you gave something of yourself to us and took the worst from us.

[52 : 14] Made an end of it on your cross and gave us new life. Father, fill us with joy, the joy of our salvation.

Amen.