

# The Covenant with Abraham

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Fear not, Abram. I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great. But Abram said, O Lord, 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 the heaven and number the stars if you are able to number them.

[ 1 : 13 ] Then he said to them, So shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord.

And he counted it to him as righteousness. And the Lord said to him, I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.

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

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

[ 2 : 29 ] 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 400 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.

Verse 17, 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 this land. From the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.

[ 3 : 42 ] The land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, Perizzites, the Rephrim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

May God bless the hearing and the preaching of his word. Recently I learned that children born around 1980 have been dubbed the Oregon Trail generation.

This micro generation who had a childhood before computers and a high school experience with AOL cut their computer teeth on the game Oregon Trail.

That was certainly me. In computer class, if we got done with our assignment, yes we had computer class and typing class, all those things, we were rewarded with a chance to play the heavily pixelated game Oregon Trail.

The goal of the game was to get your party all the way to Oregon, hence the name. But it wasn't easy. You know, when you're on this trail and you're traveling by wagon, when you ran low on food, you couldn't just go to Food City.

[ 4 : 54 ] Down the street you had to hunt for food with ammo that you had bought at a previous stop on the way. Hunt any number of wild game bison.

Got to watch those big boys go down with the ammo you purchased. Most importantly, at any moment, someone in your party could just fall out and die.

Of snake bite. One snake that you never even saw. Measles, dysentery, cholera, typhoid, or just plain old exhaustion.

Give it up. Though only a game, Oregon Trail was what they call edutainment. Introducing a micro-generation to the realities of hardship and loss of the many 19th century pioneers who made the 2,100-mile trek from Missouri to Oregon by wagon.

Well, since we last encountered Abraham last week in Genesis 12, Abraham has been blazing his own sort of trail. He traveled 600 miles to Haran, 400 miles to Shechem, after that 20 miles to Bethel, obviously before the locomotive and before the car.

[ 6 : 13 ] Then the famine came and he traveled 225 miles to Egypt. Some years later, he traveled 225 miles back from Egypt to the land of Canaan, 35 miles to Mamre, then another 160 miles to north of Damascus to rescue Lot, which we'll hear about in a moment.

The whole trek is captured in Genesis 12 through 14. In many ways, capturing that whole section focused on this land that he was promised and what in the world's going on with it.

But even though he's on the road, he hasn't found what he's looking for. It's been 15 years after the call of God, something like that. The land he was promised is still filled with Canaanites.

The great nation he has been promised has yet to materialize. He has yet to have even one son.

Genesis 15 presents the great patriarch of faith in a bit of a quandary of faith.

It presents him at a crossroads. When God called him in Genesis 12, he left everything, obeyed without a word. But when the Lord appears to him in Genesis 15, he has a few questions.

[ 7 : 27 ] He's asking, essentially, what happened to the promise? What happened to the land I was supposed to possess? What about the many children I was supposed to receive?

Abraham, in this little section, is facing the challenge of life in a fallen world, the challenge of living by faith.

Genesis 15 comes to us with two basic questions. Can you trust God? Can you trust God?

What is also being deliberated here? Will God deliver? Will he help? Will he watch? Will he keep?

Does he really know what he's doing? In so many ways, what it presents to us in this passage, faith is not a blind leap, but a personal trust in the God of the eternal covenant purchased with the blood of Christ.

I know that's a lot, but I tried. Faith is not a blind leap. It's a personal trust in the God of the eternal covenant purchased with the blood of Christ.

[ 9 : 00 ] Three points. First one, the test of faith delay. The test of faith is delay, and that's the first thing we see in this passage. The test, as you saw when we read, unpacks two encounters with the Lord, one at night and another at dusk.

Both begin with a word of the Lord. If you look back there in 15.1, after these things happen, the word of the Lord came to him and said, Fear not, Abraham. I am your shield.

Your reward shall be very great. But after these things alerts us that this statement, this statement of assurance from the Lord comes after what preceded it, which is kind of obvious, but it's tying it to it.

In the previous chapter, Abraham, as I said, traveled up to deliver his brother Lot, or his nephew Lot. If you remember, he took him out of Ur of the Chaldeans because his father died.

Abraham's brother died, so he took Lot. And we're going to learn a little bit more about Lot next week. But Adam rescued his brother Lot. Lot got caught up in a fight with a number of kings and was taken as spoiled back to some other land.

[ 10 : 13 ] And Abraham comes and defeats these kings in battle. Afterwards, he's coming along back to the land of Canaan, and a priest named Melchizedek pronounces a blessing on Abraham.

So Abraham gives him a tenth, gives him a tithe. Gives him an offering to this priest. Now, there's a lot of questions there. Melchizedek wants to give Abraham some of the spoils.

Let me give you some of the spoils. You know, you win a big war, you get some of the spoils, cars, trucks, things like that. People, land, stuff like that. In the old days, Abraham refuses.

He said, I'm going to rely on the Lord alone. Then the Lord comes to him. After these things had happened, the Lord said, I'm your shield.

Your reward shall be very great. So the Lord's going to reward him. But Abraham is not so sure. I mean, that's what we capture.

[11:17] He's in this quandary. He's not so sure. Look in verse 2. But Abraham said, oh, Lord, what will you give me? I continue childless.

The heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. What will you give me? What kind of reward will you give? Now, perhaps he means, what will you give me that I do not already have?

You know, sometimes we tell our kids at Christmas, you don't need to give me anything. Just give me something that I don't need and I already have all that I need. You know, we can think maybe that's what Abraham means. But what he means comes clear.

What will you give me? I continue childless. What he is saying, he said, what will you give me? I obeyed when you said go. For all that you have promised, though, has yet to come to pass.

Even though I trekked all over this land, my circumstances in actuality have not changed. I am still childless. I have no son. I have no heir.

[12:22] Verse 3, he cuts right to the chase. Behold, you have given me no offspring. Notice, gives, repeated in his questions.

And it's, you have given me no offspring. And a member of my household will be my heir. What will you give me?

I have everything. Except one thing. What you promised. A child. A son. It looks like my heir will be someone in my household.

I'll have to appoint someone else because you won't give me anybody. So what's going on here?

With Abraham. With Abraham. The smart guys wrestle with this little section.

Is Abraham complaining in faith? Now I'm just going to use Abraham and Abram interchangeably.

They change his names later. So I'm not too worried about it. But is he complaining in faith or despairing in unbelief?

[13:27] Is this disappointment or despair? Struggling? Is he struggling or is he stuck? Seems to me that Abraham's complaining in faith.

He's already responded in faith to the promise of God. In Genesis 12. Leaving everything.

Essentially being converted to follow him. In addition. If you notice.

He says in verse 2. And in verse 8. He addresses the Lord as Lord God. Lord God. Now our translations are a little funky.

Some might have something different in there. ESV renders it Lord God. But really it's sovereign Lord. It's Lord, Lord. It's Lord like Master Lord.

And Lord like Yahweh. The personal name for God. Lord. So I think he's complaining in faith.

Because he's holding these two things together. You are my Lord. You are Yahweh. And yet you're my Lord.

[14:24] You're my Master. And so I'm speaking to you. I'm complaining. I'm declaring the difficulty that I'm facing. But I'm doing so in a degree of faith.

So Abraham's not despairing and unbelief. He's rather complaining about the difficulty of delay.

Now the hardest test of faith is delay.

Os Guinness says in his book. On doubt. He says. What would you say is the hardest test for faith? Crisis? Disappointment? Disaster? Or delay? Unquestionably it is delay.

Nothing is harder for faith than waiting. Now your first reaction might be. What? I mean. Can't any old sack of bones wait?

[15:31] But not when it comes to faith. You know the problem with waiting is not the time it takes. The problem with waiting is the toll it takes. Waiting does things to us.

Waiting makes us less alert. Less aware. Less eager. It makes us less careful. Less cautious. Less committed. Now you can see this. You go visit one of our local emergency rooms.

You can see it. When people arrive. They come in with whatever their wound is. And they're waiting. You know. They get there. They're sitting on the edge of their seat. Waiting with bated breath for the people to come out. It's going to be my name this time.

But you know. After it's been a few hours there waiting. They're slumped over. Half asleep. Grumpy. Annoyed. Complaining about the coffee.

Why? Because waiting. The only thing that's changed. Is delay. Waiting does things to us.

[16:27] Even worse. Waiting tells things to us. It says it's never going to happen. You're never going to get better. You're not going to get married.

Your child is never coming home. You're never going to have the wife you want. The job you want. The marriage you want. The town you want. Now listen.

The greatest temptation in waiting. Is to stop waiting. Now you've all met. You know. You can stop waiting when you give up.

You stop waiting when you give up. Now we've all met people like this. Who because of hopes deferred. Fails marriages. Prayers not answered. Job loss. Whatever. They just give up.

They give over to despair. I've met scores of them in this county. Nothing happened. Except delay. That's why they don't go to church.

[ 17 : 28 ] That's why they don't have a relationship with Christ. There's another danger. Another way we stop waiting. You also stop waiting when you take matters into your own hands.

Martin Luther once said. The sin underneath all our sins. Is to trust the lie of the serpent. Okay. What is that lie? That we cannot trust.

The love and grace of Christ. And must take matters into our own hands. What does that mean? To take matters into our own hands.

It means to rush providence. It means to not wait on the Lord to answer. It's the woman who marries the bachelor just because he's eligible.

It's the fed up husband who chases his own happiness in the woods or on the boat because the home is not where he wants to be. It's the older couple who tries to fill the hole of regret with things that are fading.

[ 18 : 31 ] It's the young girl who longs to be loved and gives away quickly what she never wanted. Taking matters into our own hands. The greatest test.

I'm telling you as your pastor, the greatest test to faith is delay. But the encounter is not over. Look at this. The Lord wonderfully condescends.

He comes down to Abram. He says, behold, the word of the Lord came again. This man shall not be your heir.

Your very own son shall be heir. He's calling him back to the promise. Your son is going to be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, look toward the heaven.

Number the stars if you're able to count them. The Lord knows the host as Isaiah 40 tells us. But not Abram. Abram. He says, so when you're having trouble waiting, he's calling you back to the promise.

[ 19 : 37 ] To return to what God has clearly promised. I'll never leave. I'll never forsake. I'll supply every need of yours. No good thing will I withhold. All things work together for good. He's calling you back to the promise.

You know, one of the hard things with waiting is when we return back to the promise, we might realize that the thing we're waiting for is not what was promised. We got to do a little change up. What we've been waiting on. You know, he has promised you abundant life. But not necessarily wealth. He has promised you eternal life.

Not necessarily long life. He has promised you meaningful work. But not in the place or the position that you might imagine.

So, we return to the promise. When we're caught in the test of faith.

[ 20 : 43 ] Two, the essence of faith. The essence of faith. Trust. That's what zeroes in on Genesis 15, 6. This verse comes in between the two encounters with the Lord.

A stunning description of Abraham's faith. It is one of the most important verses in the Bible. And that's the third week I've said something like that. So, sorry.

But they just keep coming. Verse 6. And he believed the Lord. And it was counted to him.

As righteousness. It's not a part of verses 1 through 5. You know, that's kind of an encapsulated scene.

And then verses 7 through 21 is another encapsulated scene. So, it's right there in the middle. It's not describing the first time that Abraham believed. We already said. When the Lord called him, he left everything.

[ 21 : 42 ] And followed the Lord out of the Ur of the Chaldees. So, it's describing though. What he is describing is the essence of Abraham's faith. Abraham believed God.

Now, it's one thing to believe in God. It's another thing to believe God. The demons believe in God. But only the child of God believes God. What's the difference? Well, the old guys have said for years and years that true saving faith includes knowledge, assent, and trust.

The difference between these two aspects of faith is what is being identified. Here, it's one thing to say Christ is a Savior. That's just knowledge. Anyone can say Christ is a Savior. It's another thing. It's an improvement. Christ is a great Savior. That includes some assent, some recognition, some agreement.

[ 22 : 43 ] But it is still another thing to say Christ is my great Savior. That includes the most important element of faith, which is trust.

And the difference between mere knowledge and trust cannot be exaggerated. It's a difference between saying planes can fly and sitting down in a seat.

And Abraham believed God. It's uncovering the essence of faith. He believed. He trusted God. The verse continues.

And the Lord counted it to him. Counted what? Counted his faith to him as righteousness.

Now, in this verse, there's three words that have not been seen in all of Genesis yet. Believe, counted, and righteousness.

[ 23 : 55 ] We just talked about believe. Counted. What? Counted. What does that mean? Counted. Not one, two, three, four. No, it's something different. It's a way of saying reckoned, regarded, considered.

A man may be completely without money, but if a rich man comes in the restaurant and said, I'll pay for everything he wants, the rich man's money is counted for him.

You understand? Reckoned to him. It is as if that money is in that poor man's wallet. So it's a way of saying it's reckoned to him, regarded to him, considered to be his.

Well, righteousness, we know. Righteousness refers to, you know, we think of righteousness in kind of unhelpful ways, like self-righteousness and things like that. Well, righteousness, actually a good word is not a dirty word.

You know, righteousness is all that aligns with what is good and right, all that is true and lovely and wonderful. You should want to be righteous in all your ways.

[ 25 : 02 ] A righteous person is one who walks with God and is welcome in his presence. Now, we know from Scripture that no one is righteous.

No, not one. Romans 3. Not even Abraham. We saw last week he was called out as an idol worshiper, but even after that he continues to sin.

He tells his wife to lie for him in Genesis 12. I don't want to lie for myself. You lie for me. He has a baby with his wife's servant in chapter 16.

He tells his wife to lie for him again in chapter 20. What's all this mean then? What does this mean? Okay, he's blown it.

Like, what does this first, what does this mean? What does this first mean? That he had faith and it was counted to him. Remember, it was regarded to him in such a way as if it was his, that he was righteous.

[ 26 : 02 ] Well, because of his trust in God, God counts Abraham as if he has something that he does not have. Because of his trust in God, God credits Abraham with something that he does not have in and of himself and that something is righteousness.

So, Abraham trusts God and God gives to him all the blessings and privileges of righteousness, though he is still unrighteous.

This verse is what it's telling us, it's telling us, it's teaching us the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

In perhaps the most important verses in all of Scripture, talking about justification by faith alone, the Apostle Paul quotes this very verse, and that's here.

Romans 4 says, What does it say? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

[ 27 : 10 ] Now, to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift, but as his due. And to the one who does not work, but believes in him, who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Now, you see the emphasis upon the word counted that runs through those verses. It was counted to him as righteousness. It was not counted.

Counted to him again in verse 4. So, what it's helping us to see this justification by faith alone, that it's a right relationship with God, it's not based on our works, it's not based on the one who works, but not based on anything you do.

If a right relationship with God is based on anything you do, you're just getting paid. Like, you're just getting what you do. It's just a wage.

It's not a gift. But that's the way we think. But who is the one who has a right relationship with God? Well, the one who has a right relationship with God is the one who does not work.

[ 28 : 23 ] A right relationship with God is found by not working, but by faith. A right relationship with God is found not by getting a wage for something you did, but by the gift of righteousness that you could never achieve on your own.

This means by faith in Christ, you receive a righteousness that is as if you have never sinned. It means by faith that you receive a righteousness that is as if you have always obeyed. It means that by faith you receive the same legal standing before God as his son, Jesus Christ, perfectly righteous from now to eternity with no possibility of corruption or change, no chance of rejection or loss.

Now, getting this right is so important. Every other religion in the world says something like, you gotta work hard, you gotta climb up.

I mean, it's Hinduism, I mean, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, you gotta work hard, you gotta clean yourself out, you gotta attain nirvana, this state.

[ 29 : 42 ] All of them are saying, you gotta do these things. If you do the work, you'll get the reward. Well, the gospel flips it on its head. You can't do enough work to get the reward, so God gives you the reward before the work.

He gives you the verdict before the performance, the wage before you clock in.

You got to hear me, but this is the stuff that makes men run through walls. I mean, this is what makes them sing at the top of the door. I'll never forget, I know you've heard me, so you just nod along like you haven't, but I'll never forget in January 2002 when I heard a message and I heard this phrase in the message, justification by faith alone, and I called my old man like a young man does, and I said, Dad, have you heard these words?

Do you know what this means? He said, yes, son, I know it, and we just wept and rejoiced. We're justified, not by anything we've done, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

And standing on the authority of the gospel and authority of God's word, I invite you to stand in that truth.

[ 31 : 01 ] God welcomes you, accepts you, and is completely satisfied with you if you've rested by faith in Christ alone. Point three, the assurance of faith covenant.

The assurance of faith, the second encounter, so this text includes two encounters. The second encounter begins in verse seven. The bit of a doozy.

Begins also like the first encounter with the word from the Lord. I am the Lord who brought you out of, out from Ur, the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess. Now, those words should remind you of something.

It sounds very much like Exodus 20. I am the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. The Lord is not merely making another promise here.

The Lord is alerting Abraham that something else is going on here. The Lord, this is like a historical introduction to a covenant.

[ 32 : 08 ] That is what's going on here. The Lord is reminding Abraham that he is called from Ur, called from Ur, the Chaldeans, to give him land to possess. But Abraham again asks a question.

Channels his inner three-year-old. Oh, Lord God, how am I to know that I'll possess it?

And the Lord comes down again, makes a covenant, and conducts a strange ritual.

Look at verse 9. He says, Bring me a heifer, three days old, and a female goat, three years old, ram, three years old, turtle dove, and a young pigeon.

Brought him all these, cut them in half, and each half was laid out against the other, did not cut the birds. Birds of prey came down on the carcasses. Abraham drove them away.

[ 33 : 16 ] Abraham knows immediately what to do. The Lord says to go grab those things, and Abraham knows what to do. He gets some animals for sacrifice. He takes them. He cuts them in half, arranges them side by side, like one on top of the other.

What is he doing? He's forming an alleyway, a little bit of an alleyway, in between these sacrifices. Then a deep sleep falls upon Abraham. Now good things happen in Genesis when you sleep, but this gets a little scary. Sun was going down, deep sleep fell on Abraham.

Verse 12, and behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him as well. What's the meaning of this great darkness?

What's the meaning of this great darkness? The birds of prey coming down on the sacrifice. Well, the Lord speaks and makes it clear. He tells them, know for certain, he's using the same word Abraham used, know for certain that you're going to go, your people is going to go to Egypt, going to live there for 400 years.

[ 34 : 27 ] You're going to sojourn there, you're going to be in slavery, but by judgment of God, I'm going to bring you out. So what's the darkness pointing to? What's the birds of prey pointing to? It's pointing to all the darkness that they're about to face.

Now, just an aside, the plan of God is not going off the rails when bad things happen. He's the God who works everything according to the counsel of his will.

The Lord said, look at verse 16. He said, they shall come back here in the fourth generation for the iniquity of the Amorites. That's one of the peoples in Canaan is not yet complete.

What does that mean? Not yet complete. The Amorites there is just referencing, he's just using one name to represent all the clans that were in the Canaanite land.

Saying it's not yet complete because it's not yet spread throughout that land and I'll bring judgment on everyone in that land. Then look in verse 17. When the sun had gone down, it was dark.

[ 35 : 37 ] Behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces, these pieces. So you see, that's where you know it was an alleyway.

It passed between these pieces. So, the smoking pot and the torch represent the presence of God. Just like the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day. Then God passed between the pieces. Now what does all this mean? R.C. Sproul, ever the, the late R.C. Sproul, ever the live wit, once said, this was his life first.

Genesis 15, 17. Hang that over the vanity. Looks just like every other story, every other sacrifice in the Bible.

I want to explain it a little bit more. So it's a covenant, I said that, but when people and nations make covenant with one another, it would begin with an agreement just like a business deal would begin now, you know.

[ 36 : 53 ] It would begin with an agreement. But how would, how would they know? Like if you're making an agreement, a handshake, how would you know if the person's going to follow through? Like how do you know this is going to work out? Well, after they would make an agreement, they would, they would sacrifice together.

So first the oath and then the ritual. First the declaration, then the demonstration, just like us. First the word, then the sacrifice, the sacrament.

So too, we do the same thing with the marriage vow. I mean, you have a marriage ceremony, you stand up there, you go through these vows. But how are you going to be held accountable?

Well, afterwards you go, you do the ritual. You sign a license that's mailed into the state of Tennessee. Why?

To hold you accountable. So first this oath and then the ritual. And so this ritual, God is enacting a ritual that was common in that day when two men or people in a nation or whatever, a king and his servant, when they would make sacrifices together, they would walk between the pieces together.

[ 37 : 58 ] What they're saying demonstratively with their feet is that let it happen to me like these animals cut in half if I fail to upkeep my side of this bargain.

So that was their guarantee. So if you, somebody just, you know, shook your hand, you know, I mean, people's words are not as valuable as it is to maybe you, but it's not always as valuable.

But this is the guarantee. The ritual is the guarantee. It's the anchor. It's the assurance. So in Genesis 15, 17, when the smoking fire pot and flaming torch passed through the sacrifice, God is saying, let me be cut off if I am not faithful.

What is he saying? Why is this R.C. Sproul's favorite verse? Well, that's our guarantee. He's saying, whatever happens, I will be faithful or else you can just cut me off.

But did you notice that only God passed through the pieces? Abraham was very clearly asleep.

[ 39 : 19 ] Why did God pass through the sacrifice, pass through the pieces, this ritual?

Why did God do this ritual alone? Now, in the history of covenants, when a king would make a covenant with a servant, which is what's going on here, either both the king and the servant would pass through the pieces or only the servant would pass through the pieces because he's the

servant after all, but never the king alone.

So, the king would never pass through alone. The king and his servant or just the servant, but never the king alone. So, what is the Lord saying when he passes through these pieces alone and Abraham is asleep?

He's saying, Abraham, if I don't keep the covenant, I will be cut off. But he is also saying, Abraham, if you don't keep the covenant, I will be cut off.

What we have, right here, Genesis 17, is the mystery of the gospel. The Lord is saying, rather than cursing and condemning my people for their sins, I will bear the curse.

[ 40 : 36 ] I will be the one cut off for the ways they fail in upkeeping this covenant. Whatever punishment is due for their sins, I will take it upon myself. And we know this from the word of the Lord.

There was another dreadful and great darkness that fell upon the land on Good Friday for three hours from high noon to three in the afternoon.

Why? Because, Galatians 3.13 says, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

Fear not, Abraham. I'm your shield. What's the meaning though of this ritual? It's a guarantee. It's an anchor. Remember, what did Abraham want? He wanted assurance. He wanted assurance. That's all we want. That's what we want more than anything else.

[ 41 : 54 ] I don't know if you remember the movie Saving Private Ryan. The story of a man who lost his four brothers in World War II. The president sent a platoon of men to find him.

They searched all over France. they found their man. They lost several men along the way but they finally found Private Ryan.

They told him as he was they told him he was going home. The last son his mother had. It's inspired by a true story by the way but it's not completely true.

As one of the officers was dying he looked Private Ryan the commanding officer was dying he looked Private Ryan in the eye and said earn this. Earn this.

Earn all the lives that were cost and coming to rescue you. Earn it. The movie concludes with Private Ryan as an old man in Arlington Cemetery.

[ 43 : 02 ] If you know Arlington Cemetery that's where most of our our fallen are buried. Private Ryan is an old man kneeling before the grave of his commanding officer.

He said every day I think about what you said to me that day on the bridge. I've tried to live my life as best I could. I hope that was enough.

I hope I've earned what all of you have done for me. and his wife walks over and he says tell me I've lived a good life.

Tell me I'm a good man. What is he after? What does he want? He wants assurance. Tell me that I've done it. Tell me that I'm a good man.

Well listen in the words of one pastor this passage is giving you the assurance that you need more than anything else. How do you spell assurance according to this passage? C-O-V-E-N-A-N-T That's what he's saying.

[ 44 : 09 ] How can you know for sure? How can you know for sure that God loves you? How can you know for sure that God will keep his promise? How can you know for sure that God will never withhold what is ultimately good for you?

How can you know that someday he will not get tired of you? How can you know it cannot be your track record? It cannot be your church attendance. It cannot be your prayer life or your Bible reading or your memory verses.

It cannot be your affections. If your affections are like mine they rise high in the clouds and they go all the way down to the bottom of the pond. It cannot be the fruit. How can you know for sure?

How can you know for sure that God can be trusted? Covenant. Covenant.

Several more chapters the Lord gives Abraham the sign of the covenant calls him to cut a covenant so to speak with the sign of circumcision.

[ 45 : 17 ] the Lord gives us a sign to in baptism and the Lord suffer to strengthen our faith all the more.

Can God be trusted? Will you trust him? faith is not a blind leap it's a personal trust in the God of the eternal covenant purchased with the blood of Christ.

May God help us. Let's pray. Father in heaven we hide ourselves in these unshakable truths. pray that you'd help us. Give us grace. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace please visit us who knew who knew who knew who knew!

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