

Genuine Faith Expressed by Abram (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] We're in Genesis chapter 15 this evening, looking again at the life of Abram, who the scripture declares as the father of many nations.

! A rescue lot from Sodom and from the kings that were engaged in war that had captured him and taken he and all of his goods and family and possessions to their own place.

Someone escapes from the battle, you remember, and fills Abram in on what's going on. And so Abram musters 300 and some odd of his men that were capable of using their weapons and went and rescued Lot from those kings.

Remember now, on the way back, he is met by Melchizedek, who is the priest of the Most High God, King of Salem.

All right? Now, again, we said that was the divine appointment from God, because here Abram learned more about who Jehovah is to him.

[1 : 27] He is the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth. Again, I just surmise what Abram must have felt when he came back, maybe even on the way back from rescuing Lot, thinking, how did we do that?

You know, what just happened here? How did we do that? And then Melchizedek comes to him and, in essence, wants him to recognize the fact that he was successful because of God, Jehovah, who is the Most High God, the highest or the strongest strong one, the highest of the high ones, someone has said.

Again, the picture there is that there's no army, there's no nation whose pagan God can withstand the power of the true God.

All right? And so that's where we left off last week. Now, chapter 15, in essence, picks up with that, but there's a change here. Here's another manifestation of God to Abram.

All right? But it's unlike any other. And we're going to take a look at that here in a minute because it becomes a turning point in Abram's life. Something begins to happen here.

[2 : 43] So, in verse 1 of chapter 15 of Genesis, the scripture says, After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.

Now, notice, the word of Jehovah came to him, came to Abram in a vision. Now, got to be careful with the word vision here.

All right? Is what this actually is. It's not a direct address here. God does not verbally speak to Abram per se. Nothing that appears evidently to the outward senses.

This is what some are calling an inward spiritual intuition. Sometimes they call these things in a state of ecstasy.

In other words, it's just something that God places upon the spiritual mindset of Abram here. It does not occur at night.

[3 : 47] Most visions we think of are at night. But this was in the daytime. All right? So, you kind of get the picture here. He's not daydreaming. He would be in what they would call a state of ecstasy.

During the daytime, where God speaks to his spiritual mind and heart through an intuitive means.

All right? So, when it says it's in a vision, recognize something.

If you look through this chapter, you don't find any place that gives us an indication where this particular vision stops. So, we have to categorize that vision as being the entire chapter.

Chapter 15 here. Everything that transpires in chapter 15 is a part of this vision that God deals with Abram through. And there's a little difference, though, when we get to verse number 12, I believe it is.

Because it becomes more of a prophetic outlook here that God impresses upon Abram's heart and mind. So, keep that in mind as we get there.

[4 : 51] Now, here's what he says. Here's what he places upon Abram's spiritual mindset. After everything that's transpired here in chapter 14, you can probably try to conceive in your mind what that battle was that they engaged in.

It doesn't tell us what kind of warfare it was, but it was a battle. And he comes out successful.

Comes out with a lot and all of his goods.

Some spoils from those they defeated. All of those things. All right. So, God says to him now, after he meets Melchizedek and moves on, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.

Let me ask you, what is a shield for? All right. It serves as a protecting agent. All right. To keep from the arrows, spears, and everything else becoming lodged in you.

All right. So, that's protection. That's what God is saying to Abram. Abram, fear not. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of what?

[6 : 05] Doesn't classify here. Got the idea. Don't be afraid of anything here. I am thy shield. All right. I'm your shield.

I'm your protector. Remember. Remember. The reason why Abram can really embrace this is because the reality of the promise that God made to him.

That he would bring about various things in the life of Abram. So, he said, don't fear, Abram. I am your shield. I am your protector and thy exceeding great reward.

All right. Reward simply means to reward. In the idea in the original, reward very much. I think some of your translations probably read it that way. I am your reward very much.

God is going to reward, through Abram's life, his obedience, his confidence, and his faithfulness, if you will, to what God tells him to do.

[7 : 13] Look over in Hebrews chapter 11, just a moment, because it reminds us of what God says here. That chapter on the faithful, if you will. So, in verse 5, I'm going to read it out of the Amplified here.

Because of faith, Enoch was caught up and transferred to heaven, so that he did not have a glimpse of death. And he was not found, because God had translated him.

For even before he was taken to heaven, he received testimony still on record, that he had pleased and been satisfactory to God. Now, to me, that's an amazing statement about a guy you hear nothing else of.

Don't read anything else in Scripture of who and what Enoch was or did. Just this testimony, and what a testimony it is. He walked with God.

All right. Literally, walked with God throughout life. So, God translated him so he wouldn't see death. But look at verse 6. But without faith, it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to him.

[8 : 23] That's to God. For whoever would come near to God must believe that God exists. Well, that's a given. And that he is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek him.

All right. The idea here is, we are to believe that he is one that will prove himself. And this is the case. He will prove himself to be faithful to those who diligently seek him.

All right. I like that. God has a longing. God has a desire to prove himself to be faithful. All right. And reward those.

That he is a rewarder of those that diligently, with all their heart, seek after him. Boy, that word diligently goes a long way.

All right. Not haphazardly. Not some of the time. But all of the time. With all of our heart.

[9 : 32] Then, we will be able to recognize and see, through the experience of what he does in our own lives, that he proves himself to be a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.

All right. Now, my question is this. If he proves himself to be a rewarder, what is the reward that we're going to see him provide and prove himself to give?

Go to Revelation 22. Verse number 12 is an interesting verse. And behold, I come quickly.

And my reward is with me. To give every man according as his work shall be.

Okay. Now, I've always been curious as to what that reward is. My reward is with me. How will he reward?

[10 : 49] And he says, it's my reward. So, when you see that as his reward that he brings with him to give to every man that satisfies the will of God.

What is that reward? Put it in the context of Hebrews 11. That context of Hebrews 11 started in verse 5.

Enid being translated because he walked with God. God did not allow him to see death because how close his walk with God was. Got to have the idea here in all of this, even in Revelation 22. The strength of that lies in the reward being a spiritual reward. Now, when you think about eternity, in our spending eternity with the God of creation, the God of heaven.

The only way we can be afforded that privilege is if we are in the spiritual glorified body.

[11:57] Glorified body that possesses the glory of God. All right? It's not yet manifest what we shall be, but we know that when we see him, we will be like him.

Because we'll see him as he is. All right? That means we'll have to be clothed in the glory of God. And I really believe the strength of all of that lies in that fact.

Oh, we think of rewards materially because we're material people. And spiritually, we do think, as of the redeemed, of being saved, being on our way to heaven.

That joy that lies in store for us. But I think more so is the reality of what we're going to be when we get there.

All right? And then what we're going to be will provide for us the privilege of what we're going to see. And what we're going to experience in the presence of the Father and in the presence of the Son.

[13:00] All right? So, I am your shield and your exceeding great reward.

Go back to Hebrews 11. Verse 8. By faith, Abram, when he was called to go out into a place which he should have to receive for an inheritance.

All right? Obeyed, and he went out not knowing whether he went. That's going into Canaan. By faith, he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

Verse 10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Through faith, Sarah also herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Therefore sprang there even of one and him as good as dead. So many as the stars of the sky in multitude and as the sands which is by the seashore innumerable.

[14:18] All right? Abram looked for a city. What city did he look for? Yeah, the new Jerusalem. Yeah. Yeah. What insight God has given to Abram.

Amen? That would create in him that desire to be faithful and true to the God that called him. Now, God rewards our faith and confidence and obedience as well as he did Abram.

Realize the protection that God gave to Abram and his wife while they were in Egypt and went through all that silliness in Egypt was a pledge of the reality that he would have a posterity.

That he would have an offspring that would be to the degree that God will promise that it will be. All right? Posterity being an offspring to the furthest degree.

To the furthest point. That's what the posterity is. All right? Now, when he separated from Lot, if God's protection of Abram was a pledge of his having a posterity in the future, what was the separation of Lot from Abram a pledge of?

[15:40] Remember what happens. Abram gave Lot the choice. Amen? You choose which direction you want to go in and I'll go the opposite.

Lot chose Sodom. The rich plains of Sodom. Abram stayed in Canaan. That land that was, remember, at some point, a land of famine.

That's why he went to Egypt. So now, that separation from Lot, in reality, is the pledge that God gives of one day possessing the land that God promised to him.

All right? Remember, he couldn't possess it right now because of the variety and number of people that were in that place and possessed it. All right?

So, that was the pledge. But notice something. There's something missing here for Abram. What would that be?

[16:53] Now, remember, there's a time span that goes along here. This isn't all bang, bang, bang, one day right after the other. There's a time span here. What is it that's missing for Abram?

His son. A son. If he's going to have a posterity, he's going to have to have a son. Sorry, daughters won't do. It's going to have to be a son.

All right? I love daughters. I have two of them by birth and the third one by marriage. But he has to have a son. At this point, there's no prospect of that happening.

All right? No prospect of all any of those promises about the posterity coming to pass. That was the promise of him becoming a great nation.

All the families of the earth being blessed in him. So, it creates an anxiety, no doubt, about the future in the mind of Abram.

[17 : 56] So, to meet all of this, the word of God comes.

Abram, fear not. I'm your shield, but I am your reward very much. All right?

I'm going to reward you very much. So, look at verse number two and three.

So, his thought, no doubt, could only come to the fact that he's childless. So, he asks in verse two and three, Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me?

Seen I go childless. And the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed.

[19 : 04] And lo, one born in my house is mine heir. All right? What are you going to give me? How is this going to come to pass? To see that I go childless.

So, you know, he's got a lot of goods and stuff maidservants, menservants, he's got wealth, he's got power, but he has no child.

Only his servant Eliezer in his house. Now, verses four and five. Behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, This shall not be thine heir.

No, Eliezer won't be the one. But he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad and said, Look now toward heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to number them.

And he said, So shall thy seed be. What a response to Abram's question. He simply confirms the promise here that he made to him earlier concerning his seed.

[20 : 12] Now, he commanded to view the stars just the way he commanded him to view the sand of the sea.

All right? Just as he'd done that, that's what the promise would be concerning the offspring that would come from him.

If you, by chance, can number that. So he challenges him. Go out, number the stars, see what you find. Here's what you ought to do.

Anybody that lives somewhere where it's good and dark, can't do it very well when you've got streetlights, but out where it's, go someplace where it's good and dark and just, just wait until it gets warmer and just look at the heavens and start counting.

Now, don't go out there like some would go, analytical people would go, is that a star or is that a planet? Which is it? Count what you see and see how far you get before you get tired of counting and recognize you've only just begun.

[21 : 30] Amen? Yeah. Yeah. That's how the seed of Abraham shall be. The one that made all of that out of nothing by the word of his power has the same ability to make that happen for Abram.

To make his seed number as the stars of the heaven. And he, that's Abram, he believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness.

One of the most important theological doctrines come out of this particular portion of the scripture. One of the most important passages of the Old Testament.

All right? And that is the doctrine of justification by faith. Okay? That's what lies at the foundation of the atonement of the Lord Jesus by the Lord Jesus and that which the Apostle Paul writes of so often.

Justification by faith not by works. And he, that's Abram, believed. He put his faith in Jehovah.

[22 : 44] Again, remember working definition of faith positive response to anything God has said or shown or done whatever.

All right? It's a response of obedience, a positive response as far as belief is concerned. All right? So he put faith in Jehovah and Jehovah regarded it, regarded his faith for righteousness.

Now, notice something here. I looked up that Hebrew term righteousness in this verse and here's what I found. It said, righteousness here as a human characteristic is correspondence to the will of God both in character and conduct or a state answering to the divine purpose of man's being.

Okay? Again, it's the idea of a life that is totally in touch with and in obedience to whatever the will of God is, not only in conduct but in character as well.

All right? This was the state in which man was first created. Of course, we know that sin changed that. Okay? Sin changed that so that put man in opposition to the will of God.

[24 : 11] Wow! What a clear picture he gives to us of that back in the Garden of Eden. All right? Adam and Eve clothed in the glory of God were having good fellowship with God until Satan got involved tempting them to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

All right? When they ate of that, all right, everything changed. Everything. All right?

So now, man was in opposition to the will of God. It was not the will of God for them to eat of that tree. It was his will for them to leave it alone.

But now, they ate it, they're in opposition to the will of God. And it's only by his power and desire that man can be restored to that state of righteousness.

All right? So, that righteousness was acquired by Abram through his faith and trust unconditionally in the Lord.

[25 : 24] All right? Faith in the promises of God and his obedience to what God had said he is to do. So, God then treated him as a righteous man and formed such a relationship with him.

Now, here's the good picture here. Not just did he call him righteous. You think of Enoch in this, too.

Not just did he determine that he was righteous, but brought him into a relationship with himself.

All right? That not only in the relationship, but in that relationship, a fellowship with the holy, righteous God.

All right? Yeah. That's what righteousness is in this case. He accounted it to him for righteousness.

No outward act is declared here in that case, except that of the mind and heart believing.

there's no work of any kind done by Abraham. There couldn't be. There was no work he could do that would provide salvation for all of lost humanity.

[26 : 38] There's just nothing. So, it's justification, it's righteousness, if you will, that comes by simple faith. All right?

Yes, it's true. in Abraham, all families of the earth will be blessed. They'll have opportunity of redemption. But that's not by the work of Abraham.

That's by the work of God in the life of Abraham. All right? And Abraham believing in God in all of that, thus God deeming him righteous.

All right? Now, here's a good question for you. In what way did Abraham make known his faith in Jehovah?

And in what way did Jehovah count him righteous? What happened to cause all that to be? So, we'll pick up there next week.

[27 : 42] Let's pray. Father, again, thank you for your loving kindness and your goodness today.

And again, for the privilege of bringing us together again this evening to look into your word and let you speak to our hearts about that.

Father, thank you that the more we look into your word, the deeper we see your faithfulness. Not because of us, but because of who you are.

Faithful, true to everything you've said and everything you've promised. And that you've revealed that to us through your Son and are continuing to prove that you are a rewarder of those that diligently seek you.

So, Father, thank you for that reality. Now, thank you again for those that are here. Thank you for their love for you and for your word and ask your blessings upon them as we leave this place and continue to consider the things that you've shown us today.

Thank you and praise you for what you do. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

[28 : 55]