



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

Faith and Righteousness!

Genesis 15:1-21

Message #16 of 50 – S913

Sermon given on September 20, 2020

@ Hawk Ranch, Murrieta, CA



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Faith and Righteousness!

Genesis 15:1-21

Opening Comments

- Good morning – turn to **Genesis 15**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- How big is God? Might sound like a funny question
- But it is vitally important that we have the answer if we want to live a life that is worthwhile
- The problem with some people's faith is that their God is too small
- A small God cannot help us with the big things in life
- We need a God who is bigger than the biggest thing this world can throw at us
- Abram has an encounter with a big God, and it transforms his life and gives us an example of true faith
- Abram's encounter with God teaches us how to meet with God
- Let's pray and ask the Spirit to meet us here this morning
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Faith and Righteousness!**
- Last week we looked at the account of Abram rescuing his nephew Lot from four powerful kings
- This is a great spiritual victory fought and won by God
- What might come as a surprise to some people is what sometimes comes after God does something radical through them
- Spiritual victory is sometimes followed by spiritual attack
- It has been said that the greater the work you do for the Lord, the greater spiritual attacks you will experience
- And it is during those times that you need a big God
- Abram has one of those moments in his life
- **Genesis 15:1**
- God knows what Abram is feeling

- This is one of those truths that can be comforting or alarming, depending upon your perspective **Hebrews 4:13**
And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.
- There is no thought or feeling in you that God doesn't see as clearly as I see the words on the pages of my Bible
- Since I have learned that I can't hide anything from God I have learned that I don't need to try – be transparent – because you are
- In a vision God told Abram not to be afraid, because for some reason Abram was afraid
- He had just made enemies of four powerful kings
- Maybe he was afraid they would come back and wipe him out
- God tells him, 'I am your shield' – I stand between you and your enemies
- How brave could you be if you believed God was standing between you and whatever makes you afraid?
- Also says, 'I am...your exceedingly great reward'
- He didn't get anything out of rescuing Lot
- God is saying, 'You have me – that is enough!'
- If God was all you had – would that be enough? Job thought so **Job 1:20-22**

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

- Don't be afraid Abram – God is your shield and reward – ours too
- **Genesis 15:2-5**
- This is a cultural thing – You need an heir, not just to give all your stuff to, but to carry on your legacy – very important
- A common practice was to adopt an heir – Eliezer of Damascus
- God had promised to make Abram the father of a great nation
- Abram is thinking logically, If Sarai is barren and I am the beginning of a great nation, I need to adopt an heir so that God's promise can be fulfilled
- Abram does what most people do, they limit God's ability to their understanding – God is supernatural – outside the limits of our understanding

- A big God has no limits – there is nothing He can't do
- God tells Abram, No, you will be the biological father of this 'great nation'
- Then takes Abram outside to show him how great the nation would be
- Next comes one of the most important verses in the Bible – quoted three times in the NT
- **Genesis 15:6**
- Abram had been walking in faith for some time – since he heard God call him out of the land of Ur
- He believed in, or trusted in the Lord
- God has just told him again that he would father a great nation and Abram chose to believe in what God said – this is faith
- It was a faith that determined how he would live
- Earlier he was planning to make Eliezer his heir – not mentioned again
- Faith is like t-ball. God sets up the tee, places the ball on it, brings you up to the plate, and places a bat in your hand, and then invites you to swing. Faith is taking a swing.
- If you have ever watched a T-Ball game – they often don't hit it well
- With God and faith, hitting it well isn't the point – taking the swing is
- We are going to see in the next chapter – Abram and Sarai take a swing and miss – make another mistake – a big one
- God responds to Abram's faith – 'accounted to him for righteousness'
- 'righteousness' = rightness with God – to be righteous is not the same as being perfect
- To be righteous is to be in a right relationship to God
- And the key is faith – you can't be in a right relationship to God without faith **Hebrews 11:6**

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- It is not about knowing everything there is to know about God – it is believing everything you do know about God
- Faith is about standing wherever God puts you and taking your best swing at whatever He puts in front of you
- And if you do it wrong, you go to Him and let Him fix it
- And then you go back and take another swing

- The Lord then does something dramatic with Abram
- **Genesis 15:7-8**
- God is about to enter into a covenant with Abram and his descendants
- He prefaces this covenant with similar language that He will use as He gives Moses the Ten Commandments **Exodus 20:2**
I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
- Abram's response was one of ignorant faith
- He believed what God said but didn't understand how it would happen
- You should notice that as we continue, God doesn't answer Abram's question
- God's desire is that our faith be informed faith – based upon His Word taught and understood by the Holy Spirit
- True faith desires understanding but doesn't demand it
- I regularly come across people who will not believe because they don't understand – they try to put God or His works in the world into their worldview – that is backwards – doesn't work
- **Genesis 15:9**
- All of these animals would be integral to the sacrificial system of the Israelites
- **Genesis 15:10**
- Abram knew exactly what God was doing.
- This was a custom in his homeland.
- Two parties who wanted to enter into a covenant with each other would take an animal and cut it in two.
- They would then walk between to two parts in a self-imposed curse that should either of them break the covenant that they should become like the severed animal.
- In faith Abram does it and then sits back and waits
- **Genesis 15:11-14**
- God gave Abram a vision of what the future was for his descendants
- They would spend about 400 years in Egypt – most of that time as slaves
- But then God would rescue them

- As Moses is writing this down and sharing it, it was to the people would had just been delivered from that bondage
- **Genesis 15:15**
- This is the first occurrence of the Hebrew word we transliterate as Shalom
- Don't worry Abram, you won't experience the horror you saw
- **Genesis 15:16**
- Moses is writing this as the Israelites are making their way to Canaan – the Promised Land – a land flowing with milk and honey
- One problem – it is already occupied by Amorites – Canaanites
- These were not sweet, innocent people
- They practiced every imaginable sexual perversion and violence was common, including child sacrifice.
- God later warned the Israelites not to practice any of the practices of the Canaanites and told them that was why God was driving them out of the land **Leviticus 18:24**

Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.

- As Abram is getting this word from the Lord, the iniquity, wickedness, evil, and sin wasn't complete yet – God was going to give them more time – God's mercy – hundreds of years later
- As the Israelites stood on the border of the Promised Land with Joshua, they were overdue for God's judgment
- God is very patient, but there is a limit to His patience **Romans 2:4**
Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

- Some people struggle with how God dealt with the Amorites/Canaanites in the book of Joshua

Instead of questioning God's righteous judgment of the wicked we ought to be thanking Him for His patience for not judging us before we accepted Christ.

- The time was coming for the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, but it was not time yet
- **Genesis 15:17-21**
- God makes a covenant with Abram and his descendants
- Covenant = a contractual arrangement between God and humans.
- 'smoking oven and a burning torch' = theophany – a visual manifestation of God – burning bush is another

- The Lord names ten people groups and tells Abram, ‘All their land is yours.’
- Notice that only God passes through the pieces
- In a human covenant – both parties would pass through
- In this covenant – God is the only one obligated to fulfill it
- It is a unilateral and unconditional covenant – cannot be broken because God is incapable of going back on His Word
- The land of Israel is God’s – He decides who lives there – and He decided to give it to the Jews
- This powerful manifestation of God came as a response to Abram’s faith, which God reckoned to be righteousness
- Abram was learning to believe in a big God
- How big is your God? God is infinite!
- In your life, He is only as big as your faith
- If you don’t believe God can do something, He probably won’t
- If you believe God can do anything, and trust Him to do what He says, He will be surprised by what He does **Ephesians 3:20-21**

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- The abundant life Jesus promised us and died to give us is lived by faith
- And the more faith you have, the more abundant your life becomes
- There is a law with God, the more you experience Him by faith, the more he gives you of Himself
- And you begin to experience Him as your shield and exceedingly great reward
- I know I am not perfect, but by faith I know I am righteous
- And that causes my heart to overflow with joy, peace, hope, love, and many other things God has promised all of us
- This text began with God having to comfort and encourage Abram
- And maybe you need God’s comfort and encouragement
- By faith, open your heart and let His Spirit do that for you today
- **Pray!**