

Genesis 15 – God’s Covenant With Abram (The Word of God Deserves our Attention)

❖ No Mother’s Day Specific Sermon...

- **Except to say... the Promises of God to Abram... are promises to every Mother...**
 - The faithfulness of God to Abram... is the Faithfulness of God to all Mother’s Today...
 - God will be there for you... God will fulfill His Word to You...
 - So... Know that God’s Promise to Abram was also a promise to Sarah his wife...
 - That she would have a son who would bless all nations...
 - And you are her children if you have her same faith

❖ Recap in Regards to Abraham

- **Abraham is considered our Father in the Faith.**
 - Our Salvation... our relationship with God... Is pictured in the life of Abraham
- **As the man named Abram, he was called to leave his home and family**
 - **Genesis 12:1-4 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And 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. ³ 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.”**
 - God sent him to the land of Canaan
 - He called him out of the idol worshipping culture he had previously lived
- **So... Abram Trusts God and leaves Ur of the Chaldeans and then Haran and heads to Canaan**
 - He builds a couple altars to God and worships in the land of Canaan...
 - Serving as a witness to all around him as to who he worships...
- **A Famine occurs and he heads to Egypt...**
 - It is here that they pretend that Sarah is his sister and not his wife
 - The king of Egypt takes Sarah into his house to have her as one of his wives...
 - God plagues them... and the pharaoh realizes what happens...
 - He returns Sarah and scolds Abram...
- **As Abram returns to Canaan... the future nation of Israel...**
 - He stops and worships... He worships the Most High God...
- **God continues to bless him so much that he and Lot can not live together**
 - So Abram tells Lot he can have any land before him
 - Sodom chooses the area close to Sodom... a very rich area for his animals...
- **But... this was a bad choice because:**
 - During a rebellion of Kings against greater kings...
 - Lot and his people are taken captive...
- **So... Abram takes his men and allies...**
 - And goes to war against 4 kings...
 - And surprisingly he wins... due to some great military strategy... but mainly the hand of God...
- **Abram is then met by Melchizedek the King of Salem and Bera the King of Sodom**
 - He pays a tithe... a tenth of everything to Melchizedek who was also a priest of the Most High God
 - The King of Sodom offers to let him have all the possessions he recovered...
 - But he refused and made sure to give glory to God alone...
 - And to trust in God alone for his treasures...
- **And this is where we pick up on Abram’s Story... or God’s Story of His dealings with Abram...**
 - Here in Genesis 15... We see God’s Covenant with Abram... Here it is made official

Genesis 15:1-19 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ² But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” ⁴ 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.” ⁵ 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.” ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. ⁷ And he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” ⁸ But he said, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” ⁹ He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” ¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 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, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

❖ 1) This is a Monumental Chapter in the Bible...

- **I want you to understand this today... this is monumental.**
- **Here... Abram is struggling in his Faith.... He never loses it...**
 - He is not struggling with unbelief...
 - And those are two different things...
 - Abram is struggling to see how God is going to do what He says He is going to do...
- **The monumental part of the chapter is that God Confirms His Covenant with Abram**
 - He had already made promises to Abram... We already saw the Covenant....
- **Do you remember what a covenant is?**
 - **A covenant is like a contract b/w two parties...**
 - One says it will do something and the other says it will do something...
 - And God has already promised Abram something...
 - And Abram responded by following God in Faith...
- **But in Chapter 15... Abram is struggling with His Faith...**
 - So God is going to confirm the covenant with Abram in a very interesting manner...
 - This is a Monumental Chapter!!!

❖ 2) Abram Struggles with His Faith

- **The Word of the Lord comes to Abram in a vision....**
 - **After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”**
 - Now... I believe this Word of the Lord... is Jesus... This is Jesus before He becomes a man
 - **And the Word of the Lord says:**

- Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great...
- Amazingly this is right after Abram had defeated those kings...
 - ◆ He had trust in God to go and fight... God protected him
- He also had given of his possessions to the Priest of God...
 - ◆ And He had shunned the riches of Sodom...
- So God tells Him... I am your shield... you protection....
 - ◆ And your reward shall be very great...
- **But... Notice the two areas of struggle that Abram is having....**
 - 1) In regards to an heir.... He had no Son and he was old
 - 2) In regards to the land... He had no land he could call his own...
 - So God is going to give Abram something to see
 - And He is going to give him His Word...
- **1) He struggled In Regard to the Promised Heir**
 - ² But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."
 - So you see Abram is asking God... what will you give me?
 - So God Answers Him by showing him something and telling him something...
 - ⁴ 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." ⁵ 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."
 - **So the Word of the Lord takes him outside and tells him to number the stars...**
 - ◆ He says number them if you can... Which he can't...
 - **So the Word of the Lord tells Abram**
 - ◆ This man will not be your heir.... Your very own son shall be your heir...
 - ◆ **Your offspring will be like the stars of heaven... you will be unable to number them...**
 - He is not saying he will have the exact number of offspring as there are stars
 - He is simply saying there will be so many you can't even count them...
 - **How does Abram respond?**
 - Genesis 15:6 And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.
 - ◆ This is as foundational a verse as you will ever come across in the Bible...
 - ◆ Paul spends all of Romans 4 expounding on this one statement...
 - **Here we see the introduction of Faith as the means to righteousness...**
 - ◆ Not that it wasn't already the means of righteous in those days...
 - ◆ But here... we see it laid out for us specifically to see...
 - ◆ This is how a person is made right with God...
 - **He believed God would give him a Son... and God counted Abram righteous**
 - ◆ We will consider this statement in greater detail toward the end.
- **2) He also Struggled In Regard to the Promised Land**
 - **The Word of the Lord also said to Abram**
 - ⁷ I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."
 - **So Abram responded by asking him How?**
 - ⁸ But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?"
 - ◆ I want you to see... Abram is only struggling **within** his faith...
 - ◆ He wants to know how am I to know this?
 - ◆ It is not that he doesn't believe God... He just can not see it...

- **So God in His grace... Again will show him and tell him...**
 - And here is where we see what we could be considered an odd scene here in the Bible...
 - **The Word of the Lord tells Abram to go get him five things...**
 - ◆ A 3 year old heifer... a three year old female goat... a 3 year old ram
 - ◆ A turtle dove and a young pigeon
 - **Why these 5 things?**
 - ◆ Well... there is some division as to the exact reason it was these 5 things...
 - ◆ **So I will not say specifically... But I will say...**
 - They were **sacrificial**... We also see they are **prophetic**
 - as to the future sacrifices the people of Israel will required to make
 - They are also **cultural** for that day and time...as you will see
 - **And they are certainly given as a Real Life Example of Comparison**
 - **But... Mainly... we see they are used as a sign of covenant with God...**
 - Notice that Abram takes them and cuts the big animals in half....
 - And he lays them down opposite of each other...
 - So imagine one side of the animal on the left and one on the right...
 - And you walking right in between them...
 - And these sacrifices were going to be very significant...
 - **Covenant b/w Kings and their conquered people...**
 - In those days... when a king would conquer another tribe or nation...
 - They would become his vassals... He ruled over them...
 - And they would lay out animals just like this...
 - And the overlord... the conquering King...
 - He would make those he conquered pass b/w the animals...
 - And they would do this as a sign of loyalty... a promise...
 - **The Overlord's threat...**
 - **He would make them walk between the animals...**
 - ◆ And He did this to tell them... if you do not obey... you will be like these animals
 - ◆ This is what will be done to you...
 - **So they were saying... let us become like this animal if we do not obey**
 - ◆ If we are not loyal to you... let it be done to us as these animals...
- **God Confirms the Covenant...**
- **Abram falls into a deep sleep and it says... a dreadful and deep darkness came upon him...**
 - And I believe this was the presence of God...
 - **And we see the Lord speaking again...**
 - And notice in verse 13 how the Lord begins speaking...
 - **"Know for certain"...** God wants to assure Abram...
 - **And God tells Abram the future of his offspring...**
 - **Genesis 15:13-16 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. ¹⁴But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."**
 - ◆ And we all know this will happen as God says... when Israel is in Egypt and comes out...
 - ◆ And in the last verse of this chapter God details the land that will be given...
 - **But notice what God does to confirm to His promise that he will be given the land...**

- Genesis 15:17-18 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram,
 - ◆ **The smoking fire pot and flaming torch was a theophany....**
 - The appearance of God in another form...
 - He likely appeared... **like** these things in Abram's eyes...
 - This form being symbolic of the consuming fire nature of God...
 - Just as Moses saw God in the burning bush...
 - ◆ **God passes b/w the animals.... God does this... Abram doesn't**
 - Essentially saying... Let it be done to me as is done to the animals...
 - **If I am not loyal to you... If I do not do as I promise you....**
- **Now... let me close with two more things...**
 - 1) In regards to Jesus covenant with us
 - 2) In regards to faith being counted as righteousness

❖ 3) Jesus Covenant with Us

- **Jesus made a similar covenant with us before He died...**
 - **Luke 22:19-20** And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.
 - **The Lord's Supper was Jesus telling us what He was going to do...**
 - The Cross was Jesus' fulfilling the covenant...
 - The Blood of Christ was poured out on the cross as a new covenant for the people of God...
 - **With Abram...**
 - The Lord passed b/w the animals as a sign of the covenant b/w him and Abram
 - Saying... I will make it happen Abram... I will fulfill my promise to you....
 - You can be assured of that...
 - **At the Cross...**
 - God once again says He will make sure His promise is secure...
 - Before... the Lord passed b/w the carcasses... the sacrificial animals....
 - But here on the cross... **He was the sacrificial animal...**
 - **Jesus was the Lamb that was slain....**
 - **God had also promised Abram that through His offspring all nations would be blessed...**
 - Abram did not ask that question that day... He didn't say... **how will I know that?**
 - But... on the cross He showed it...
 - He showed that He was not lying that day He passed between the sacrificial animals...
 - **He was not unwilling to become like those animals...**
 - In fact... He would become one of those animals to fulfill His promise!
 - **This is the story of the gospel...**
 - That Jesus died as a sacrificial offering for the sins of the World...
 - But... not everyone gets to be a part of that covenant...
 - **Only those who are like Abram... those that Believe in the God of the Covenant...**
 - **You see... Abram did not struggle with unbelief...**
 - He struggled within his faith... But... he continued to trust God...
 - Notice what is said of Abram after God made the promise about him having a Son...

❖ 4) Faith is Counted as Righteousness

- **Genesis 15:6** ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

- He believed.... And God credited it to him as righteous...
- Before the laws were given to the people of Israel...
- We see very clearly laid out... how a person can be right with God...
- By Faith... not by law keeping!

➤ **I love Catholic People... I have Catholic Family members and many catholic friends...**

- There may be catholic people in here today...

- **I would no more want to hurt their feelings than I would my own children...**

- But... It is important to speak the truth of God's Word
- I would rather speak the truth in love than to keep my mouth shut in fear of hurt feelings

- **But... long before the Catholic Church...**

- Righteousness was granted by Faith Alone through God's Grace Alone...

- **Long Before the Pope and councils were elevated:**

- To the same authority of Scripture

- **Long before their sacraments of Grace**

- Before infant baptism
- Before indulgences (which are still taught)
 - ◆ Like payments, or pilgrimages people can perform
 - ◆ For the payment of their sins
- Before our own virtues helping accredit our righteousness
- Before the mass... the eucharist which they claim becomes Jesus blood and body
 - ◆ In essence giving salvation at that time to those who take it...

- **There was this One Solid Doctrine...**

- **Genesis 15:6** ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

- **There are things the Catholic Church gets right...**

- **But here... on this very monumental Doctrine... many have gotten it wrong...**

- **And this doctrine of Faith Alone for Righteousness... is the key to Salvation**

- (I also say... please don't get mad at me and never come back if you disagree...)
- (Come and sit down with me and lets look through Scripture and Pray together)
 - ◆ I think I'm enjoyable to hang out with!!!! I think!!!

➤ **Listen to what Paul says in Romans 4**

- **Romans 4:1-8** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

- **This does not negate the importance of works for the Believer...**

- It just puts them in their proper place and context....
- Good works follow true believing Faith... Naturally... they follow naturally...
- They are not the source of righteousness....
- Faith is the way we secure righteousness by the grace of God...
 - ◆ And Faith is the source of our Good Works...

➤ **Paul Continues in Romans 4**

- **And let me explain this... He begins to talk about circumcision...**

- Now... we don't have to get graphic this morning... but...
- This is something that happens to little boys when they are born... a piece of skin is cut off

- **And this act of circumcision was a sign that God was in covenant with His people...**
 - So Paul addresses this to show... the signs and things we do.... They do not come first...
 - Rather... faith comes first.... He says
 - **Romans 4:11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.**
 - ◆ Did you notice that? Righteousness came before the seal...
 - ◆ Accounted righteous before the seal of circumcision...
 - ◆ Before Good works... before baptism... Independent of them!

❖ **5) Invitation: Let's Close by tying it All Together...**

- **Let's continue what Paul is teaching in Romans 4... This is perfectly stated for us today**
 - After God makes his promise to Abram... Paul tells us Abram's thinking...
 - And then He quickly flips it around and it applies it to us!
 - It is magnificent what he does here...
- **Romans 4:21-25 (Abram) fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." 23 But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**
 - **It was counted to him... means... it was credited to his account...**
 - You know how you have a bank account... (mine never seems to have enough)
 - When you put money in it... they credit your account for the amount you put in...
 - We have an account in heaven with God... We have a book with our name in it...
 - So... in Abram's book... Righteousness was counted to his account...
 - **Why?.... look at the text... Because of His Faith...**
 - And here... Paul turns it toward us and applies it to you today...
 - He says... that what was written in Genesis 15:6 was not written for Abram's sake alone...
 - ◆ But for ours also....
 - ◆ And why? So we will understand how we gain salvation...
 - ◆ So we understand what to do with the Gospel... what to do with Jesus...
- **Look at how He ends chapter 4**
 - **It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**
 - Righteousness will be counted to us who believe in God... in what He has done in Jesus
 - **Jesus... who was delivered up for our trespasses...**
 - Jesus was delivered up for them....
 - Not our good works or sacraments or indulgences or sacrifices....
 - He was raised for our justification... so that we would be in right standing with God