Knowing and Trusting God's Heart (A Review of God's Goodness)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 September 2025

Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] We will be in Genesis. We're back. With a bang. Well, I'm going to load you up.

So for those of you who are visiting,! We have been in Genesis verse by verse and we made it to chapter 17 and put the brakes on when my wife and I did a mission trip to Poland for a couple of weeks here about, what, two months ago?
And so since then, I've been doing some other things looking forward to getting back into Genesis and today's the day. Now, here's a caveat for all of us. Buckle up.
Because what I'm going to do is a review of two chapters. So I don't know how... I didn't count them. I didn't want to. I don't know how many sermons I preached in chapters 15 and 16, but I'm going to take all of that.
I have taken all of that. And wrapped it up. And I'm going to put it out there the best I can for you. And I'm going to already tell you that I have a goal in mind and all of it.
[1:01] I'm going to share some of that goal with you. But part of it is to overwhelm you. So this morning, if you end up feeling a bit overwhelmed more than usual with what I give you, that's by design.

What I want you to be overwhelmed with is this. I want you to be overwhelmed in the richness and in the depth of your Savior's goodness to you in just two chapters of the Bible and in the Old Testament nonetheless.
The Old Testament. And I want you to see how the Bible speaks to God's goodness and what that has to do with your practical living in holiness each and every day of your life.
So the title of my message this morning, Knowing and Trusting God's Heart. It's going to be a review of God's goodness. I made a big deal in the sermons in these chapters of the goodness of God and what He was doing in the life of His servant Abram.
So if you'll join me in chapter 15, I'm going to read down through both of these chapters for us. If you're following along and you're not used to the translation that I'm using, it's the New American Standard translation.
[2:12] I was introduced to that when I was saved in college and I've just stuck with it all these years. Chapter 15. After these things, all the stuff that's been going on in chapter 14, after these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision saying, now this is God speaking directly to Abram nevertheless in a dream, in a vision that He's having.

Do not fear, Abram. I am a shield to you. Your reward shall be very great. Now Abram's going to respond to this vision.
He's going to respond to the Lord. O Lord God, what will you give me since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eleazar of Damascus? And Abram said, since you have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.
So Abram is saying to God, I know you promised me years ago that you would bring me an heir from my own body, but now I'm an old man.
My wife has been barren all of her life. She's an old lady, way past childbearing years. So I've already made up my mind. The way to fulfill what you've promised is to name this man Eleazar, a servant in my household, my heir.
[3:37] And God said, no, that's not what I said. That's not what I promised. Notice what the Lord says to him next. Verse 4, Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him saying, This man will not be your heir, but one who will come forth from your own body.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

He shall be your heir. And he took him outside and said, Now look toward the heavens and count the stars if you're able to count them. And he said to him, So shall your descendants be, Abram. Then Abram believed in the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. God did. And then he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess it.
Now this is thousands of years ago. This promise is being made to Abram that the land of Israel will belong to him and his ancestors and it will be an eternal covenant or promise that this will take place.
Then he said, O Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it? How do I know that's the case? So he said to him, Bring me a three-year-old heifer and a three-year-old female goat and a three-year-old ram and a turtle dove and a young pigeon.
[5:02] Then Abram brought all these to God and cut them in two and laid each half opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds. The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses and Abram drove them away.

I know that's a bit enigmatic, but in my sermon, I took this apart verse by verse and explained all this. Now, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.
And God said to Abram, Know for certain that your descendants, did you catch that? Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed 400 years.
And that was Egypt, right? But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, Egypt, and afterward, they will come out with many possessions. They plundered the Egyptians.
As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation, they will return here.
[6:10] Return. Why return? Because this has always been the promise of God to give these people, the Jews, the Israelis, is what we know now today, this land.

For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete. It came about when the sun had set that it was very dark and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.
On that day, the Lord made a covenant. Now, this is the point that I'll be making this morning in this section. I can't take all this apart in detail, beloved. I've already done that.
But the flaming torch and the smoking oven represent God Himself. And this flaming torch and smoking oven passed between these two halves of these animals that Abram had cut into and placed on each side of him.
On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram. That's the point. To your descendants I have given this land from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, and the Amorite and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.
[7:29] So all of those peoples would be conquered and the land would be given to what would become Israel. Chapter 16. Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children.

Now remember, this is being said on the statement that I am making a covenant with you. I'm going to give you a son from your own body and I'm going to give you this land as an eternal inheritance and your people will own it.
This will be your home here on the earth. But now the next statement. His wife had borne him no children all this time later and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.
So Sarai said to her husband, Abram, now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. So she recognizes that God is the one who is purposely delaying her having any children. She's been barren all her life and God is delaying this. He is preventing it. Please then, her plan, go into my maid, Hagar, perhaps I will obtain children through her.
[8:42] And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. In other words, Abram took what she said and he did what she said. After Abram had lived, listen now, ten years, in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar, the Egyptian, her maid, gave her, Hagar, to Abram as his wife.

Then Abram did what everyone does. They get married and they consummate the marriage and that's exactly what Abram and Hagar did. And what happened as a result? Hagar conceived.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

She became pregnant. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress, Sarai, was despised in her sight. Hagar got all proud and looked down on Sarai, saying in her own heart, I'm able to do something with your husband, my husband now, that you haven't been able to do your whole life.
I have given him the joy of his heart. The one thing that fulfills his life that you couldn't do for him, I have given him a son, a child. And Sarai, in verse 5, responded this way.
Sarai said to Abram, not to Hagar, she went to Abram, May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms.
[10:01] In other words, I did this great thing for you. But when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me. Pretty harsh.

But Abram said to Sarai right back, You know what? Your maid is in your power. You do what's good in your sight. So Sarai treated Hagar harshly and Hagar fled from her presence.
So Abram looked at his wife and said, Leave me out of this woman. This is between the two of you. You do what you think's right. Now the angel of the Lord found Hagar by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.
He said to Hagar, Now God, this angel, in the form of this angel, is going to speak directly to Hagar. Where have you come from and where are you going?
He's not asking because he doesn't know. He wants her to communicate with him. And she said, I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress, Sarai.
[11:00] Then the angel of the Lord said to her, Return to your mistress and submit yourself to her authority. Wow, that is the last thing Hagar wanted to hear.

That's what she's running from. Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count. The angel of the Lord said to her further, Behold, you are with child.
You will bear a son and you shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. Ishmael means to hear or to give heed to.
He will be a wild donkey of a man. Now here's the prophecy. He will be a wild donkey of a man. In other words, his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand will be against him and he will live to the east of all his brothers.
Now I want you to take note. He is not promising to give all of these descendants the land of Israel. That has already been promised by God and he can't break that promise to Israel.
[12:08] This is a land being promised to Ishmael's descendants east of where Israel is. East of where as we look at it everything's going to happen.

To the right of everything and sure enough this is where most of the Arab nations have settled. Verse 13 Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her You are a God who sees for she said Have I even remained alive here after seeing him?
Therefore the well was called Bir-Lahai-Roi Behold it is between Kadesh and Bered So Hagar bore Abram a son and Abram called the name of his son from Hagar Ishmael Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.
Now for those of you who were here for these messages through these two chapters you'll remember that we made quite a big deal of how bad this idea was and the consequences that it has perpetrated for even generations that are living today.
And so the wars that you see the conflict that you see this is all about this prophecy he will be a wild donkey of a man and everyone's hand will be against him and his hand will be against everyone.
[13:30] Folks we're living that out today. So I can say to you from this pulpit that a two state solution is not going to work even though by biblical design we have these two groups of people in their ancestry being separated by God geographically and so to think of a two state solution where one of the states is put inside the other is unbiblical.

Did you hear me say that? I'm not being political I'm being biblical. The Bible makes it clear that taking a Palestinian state if that's what we want to call it because that's not what it was called here and sticking it inside of Israel is not going to solve the problem.
Been there done that didn't work and it won't work. It is an unbiblical solution. Put that in your hopper as you hear all of the spin going on today and read the Bible because we've been provided with answers that not only work but honor God and the promises that he's made to these two groups.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Please see here that a promise is being made to Israel the descendants of Israel through Abram and a promise is also being made to another group of people who are the descendants of Ishmael. They will be many and they will live in these regions and Israel under Abram and his descendants will live in this region. And what did he say?
[15:10] Their hand will be against each other. And that's been promised and that's what we see today. This is the reality and truth of the scriptures.

Alright, now, as we read through this, I realize if this is one of the first times that you're seeing this and you've never heard anyone do an exposition of these chapters, you read some of this and go, man, that is weird.
What is going on there? And I understand that. But I want you to also understand this. Here in these chapters are very raw, remarkable, real-life encounters involving humanity and deity, truth and deceit, wisdom, as in the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man, or I could say the wisdom of God and the foolishness of man.
You see all of that here and more. God makes major promises to Abram and he delays their fulfillment without explanation.
He just says this is going to happen and I am going to do this. He doesn't tell him when, he doesn't tell him how, he just tells him it's going to happen. God then allows for human disobedience but God does not allow it to thwart his divine purposes.
[16:32] That's just amazing to me and so encouraging that I can't out-sin God's grace. I cannot out-sin God's design and purposes for my life because my sin is not greater than the grace of my God.

Now take comfort in that and hold on to that because that is an expression of God's goodness to us as his people. He is a good and gracious king.
God also bears the burden of the rebellious human heart and rescues it from itself. Now, here's what I want to do in the way of some goals this morning.
I want to encourage your hearts in two courses of spiritual action in response to what we just read in these chapters.
Now again, folks, I can't do a real deep dive this morning or we'll be here for two hours. What I want to do is give you an outline, outline form of different sermons that I preached through these.
[17:43] so you're going to get a lot of lists, a lot of bullet points coming at you. But again, remember that I'm doing that in the sense of I want you to be kind of your hair parted and blown back with the goodness of God as you sit here and see all this happen.

Just the remarkable ways that the Old Testament here is speaking into the life of Abram and so many practical ways about how to respond to God's goodness.
Abram, I promise this is what I will do for you. Now, how should you respond to me? The fact that I've delayed it doesn't change anything about my goodness or my grace to you, my love for you. The fact that I'm delaying the promise, why should that have any effect on the way that you honor me, walk with me, respond to me? It shouldn't. I'm still that same good God doing a good thing. That's what I want you to see in this. So how should we respond to these chapters? Well, first, first, look, we need to actively encourage each other in a lifestyle of trusting the good heart of this God Almighty.
[18:55] All right? And then, secondly, what I want to encourage you in, we need to discourage each other from a lifestyle of trusting our own deceitful hearts.

Another way I might say this, and I will say it as we move along, we don't want to trust and try to put forward our agenda in opposition to God's wise agenda for us.
And we do that, and the result is what we call sin. Sin. We don't want to do that. All right? Now, to do what I'm encouraging you to do up here on the screen in the way of an encourage and a discourage, the only way that that's going to happen, it requires, notice at the bottom of the screen, it requires God's wisdom and understanding applied to everyday life, applied to each situation you live in.
These were some of the points that I made throughout the sermons in these two chapters. All right? So, let's talk about this for just a second. I mentioned goodness. I mentioned the good heart of God acting, initiating toward Abram, and now that should solicit and merit a godly response.
A good God doing something for Abram, promising Abram, taking care of Abram. Now, Abram, you're in the position to respond to that goodness.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[20:17] What should that look like? That's the rest of the sermon. So, let's define goodness. The goodness of God. Goodness is a moral attribute of God Himself.

Right? In other words, the Scripture tells us in Psalm 119, verse 68, the psalmist says, you, God, are good and you do good.
He just makes the statement. You are good and you do good. good. So, a moral attribute concerns an aspect of your character as it applies to you, which serves as the basis for right attitudes and right actions.
And so, the right attitudes and right actions that you're having are an aspect of the goodness of your character that God is working in you.
This is a goodness God works in you. Not an innate goodness that you work up from within yourself. It's something God works in you. We're going to cover that in just a few minutes and clear that up for you.
[21:27] So, the goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good and all that God is and does is worthy of approval.

There is no higher standard of goodness than God's own character. character. And so, God's approval of whatever is consistent with that character is good.
But we need God to make that stamp on what is good. We turn to the Lord to tell us, here is what good is. That would be God, Christ.
And here is what good looks like. That would be the character of Jesus being lived out as we read the Gospels and see God working. And God calls us to live in that same character from that same goodness that He works in our lives.
This should be how Christians live. This should be the difference. The goodness of Jesus working out in your life is the difference between you and an unbeliever by the power of the Holy Spirit.
[22:33] Alright? So, by His own standard of good, God is good and God does good. So, that we can say without doubt that His Word, God's Word, and all its promises, all its wisdom, are thoroughly good.

His wisdom and ways are altogether good and perfect. It comes out in this brief verse from Psalm 18.
As for God, His way is what? Blameless. The Word of the Lord is tried. Another word that we could have used there is the word refined.
The Word of the Lord is pure. He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. And so, three concepts are in that verse why I chose it that speak to this issue of the Lord.
He is blameless, that is, He has the highest degree of goodness and integrity. His Word is also pure, and He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.
[23:36] Keeps His promises, doesn't He? It's a wonderful, wonderful little verse. Now, I want you to do something with me real quickly before we start moving into some of these lists that I'm going to give you for you to think about.

All right? To take all that I've said so far and kind of stick it in where you live so that this doesn't sound academic or ethereal. I don't want it floating out here somewhere. I want you to be able to grab it and really take it in.
All right? So, think of this. Think of a specific situational reality you are currently experiencing. Think of especially a difficult one.
If you're in a season of trial or difficulty in some aspect or area of your life, then this is going to fit well. Most of us have something.
For instance, with me right now, with Suzanne, with my wife, that's the one I would probably go to as I think about this. So, think of a specific situational reality you're currently experiencing that you would make changes to if you could.
[24:46] Something going on in your life that you'd make different if you had the power to do it. I mean, right now. All right? Think of that. Got it?

Maybe these changes would be related to health and medical issues. You could see why that one came up right away in my mind, right? There have been many times in my life where I have prayed for healing for my wife, and God has chosen not to fully heal her, but He has helped her body adapt to do things that most people's bodies can't do in this stone situation.
So, you know, if I could, Jeff, would you change it in a heartbeat? Well, listen to where this takes us. Listen to where this takes us. It's very interesting. Maybe the changes are related to health and

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

medical issues for you or someone you know or love.
Listen to this one. Maybe we're talking about a change that you would make to a loved one or a friend's spiritual condition. Because you have friends and loved ones that don't know Christ.
I do too. And I wonder if I had the ability to just snap my fingers and see them saved. I have a neighbor right now praying for and trying to be a friend to and witness to.
[26:05] They've been living next to us now for six months or so, a little more. If I could, could I just walk over and I'd call his name and snap my fingers and he'd go, Jeff, I love Jesus.

And we'd be done. I'd give him a big hug and say welcome to the family. Mark, I know. Or other people in my life, maybe we could do that.
Or maybe you would make changes in your job situation for whatever reasons right now. Your family situation, your financial situation, it could be a number of things, alright?
Now think of this, walk through this with me. Is God in control of these circumstances? Okay, yes? Is God good in designing these trials in your life? So in other words, let me clarify, because I don't want our visitors to think that I'm extolling disease here.
[27:10] My wife has a kidney disease. I'm sorry I'm using her so much, but she's on my mind. My wife has a kidney disease. I am not saying that I'm coming up to God and saying, God, this kidney disease is good.

It's not. This kidney disease is a result of the fall. It's an aspect of the brokenness of life. And it's a horrible disease. It's horrible. But what I am saying to God is, all the goodness of your own heart and your good purposes working through this disease give me joy and hope.
My wife is not suffering for nothing. She's not at home right now in pain suffering for nothing. All her suffering has an eternal purpose, and many of those purposes I can't even see.
But faith teaches me that from the truth of the scriptures. And so the fact that God hasn't healed my wife means that I'm going to look up into heaven and say, you're not good.
I have proof. Why would you let my wife suffer like this if you were good? People do that. Just like Abram. You've delayed your promise.
[28:21] You have not kept your promise. So Eleazar is going to be my heir. So I don't know. I'm kind of doubting the goodness here, bro. That's not. Boy, we just need help, don't we, brother?

We need help. And here's the help. Here's the help. And we better run to this, the cross.
All right, let me keep going just a little bit more. Is he good in designing these trials? Yes. Now listen to this one. Is God good and wise in denying or maybe delaying the changes you'd make?
Boy, it kind of just got, didn't it? It just hit life right where it's hardest. We're pretty fine with God and His goodness when things are kind of rocking along pretty smoothly, you know, kind of.
But let stuff start getting a little bit difficult and we start getting rocked. And now we're vulnerable to this temptation from our arch enemy.
[29:32] Does God really know what He's doing? You want to just knock on the heavens door and say, you still remember I'm here, right? It can feel like that. And so this is why we're encouraged, don't live by your feelings.

Live by the truth. Live by the truth. Abram and Sarai and Hagar got into the mess they got into because they took the agenda and they made it their agenda and they ran with it apart from what God said.
They didn't heed the word of the living God. And when we do that, we're in big, big trouble. Yes, God is good and He is wise in denying or maybe even delaying changes that you'd make.
that doesn't at all express any aspect of a negative in His goodness. It means He's wise and it means you're not God, friend.
Now, this is Abram and Sarai's dilemma. Will they persevere and go on patiently believing that God is good, that God is wise in delaying His promises to them?
[30:39] Will they faithfully serve Him with joy, with hope, with thankfulness in their hearts? Is God's Word true? After all, that's the basis. Is His Word true?

And is God good in how He works His Word in your life? How is God working His Word in your life? Is He good in what He's doing? See, our great privilege is to realize, it's to recognize, and to receive, and to relate, to, to live according to the goodness of Almighty God and the gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ.
God and this requires godly wisdom. Why? Because what the wisdom of God and the purposes of God work in our life like, don't always correspond to good feelings.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And so sometimes we can equate not feeling good about this context or this situation or whatever is going on, we can equate that negativity with some kind of negative aspect in the way God's dealing with us.
We can even go so far as to ascribe that negativity to God Himself. And that's exactly what Satan wants us to do. But folks, those things are not axiomatic.
[31:53] They're not automatic truths. They don't correspond in that way. A negative circumstance in your life does not portend a negative God working in a negative way.

this is the wisdom of God. It takes wisdom to live like this. And so that's why we need the Word and the power of the Spirit. Alright, so we're going to begin the effort to understand and own this according to the goodness of the Lord by believing rightly biblically in who God is and in what God has said.
And so here's the first one I'll throw up there for you in the way of the outlines that I worked from when I brought these sermons to you. All these sermons are online on our website. You can go back if you want to and listen to any of them that you like.
The first thing that I told you about chapter 15 beginning in verse 1 after these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision and then God spoke to him. So this is the object of belief.
That's what's being presented to us here. Abram I'm telling you what you need to believe. What you need to believe. So in what and in whom are we to believe?
[33:05] The answer comes back the word of the Lord. That's the what. We are to believe the word of the Lord that is the written scriptures for us. There are many competitors and counterfeits my friends.

So we need to be aware of that. The word of the Lord is what makes our faith in God possible. Apart from the scriptures there is no faith in God because how would the scriptures point us to the truth of who God is his character how he works in our lives what he loves what he hates it is the sure sufficient truthful word of God and it instructs our hearts in what and in who to believe so Abram needs to believe the word of the Lord and at the same time dismiss all its competitors and counterfeits Jeff what are you talking about competitors and counterfeits that is something that would replace God's no or perhaps God's wait with another answer we pray and we get an answer and the answer is no and we don't like it so what do we do we find another answer somebody who will tell us what we want to hear or we pray and we hear
God's wait and when I say hear I just simply mean it's obvious that's not being answered in the way so we either shift our prayers or we step back and say God's doing something else right now beyond my knowledge to pray about I'll just continue to pray that God helps me stay faithful sometimes that's that's all you got and you take a step in the life that you have and you stay there and you trust the Lord I'm not trying to make it sound simple I know how difficult it can be but this is the truth so a counterfeit is something that would replace God's no or God's weight with some other answer some other agenda we don't want that God's word is the only trustworthy truth for our obedience Jeff doesn't need to depend on Jeff for that obedience I'm going to get in trouble so Abram needs to believe in the Lord of the word because what good is God's word if God isn't the one standing behind it and keeping it and Abram needs to think about that the
Lord of the word is the primary object of Abram's belief we love the Bible we exalt the scriptures as God's word but we worship the God behind the scriptures don't we we we are people of the word because it is God's word and we worship the Lord and so that brings us to the next one the Lord of the word the object of our belief yes the scriptures because the scriptures introduce us to the Lord of the word and that takes us back to who it is that stands behind the promises being made here to Abram throughout these two chapters in chapter 14 for example he is God most high that's how he's described when Abram goes out and defeats the armies of Keter Lamer and rescues his nephew Lot God most high delivered me then in chapter 15 he's a shield he is the Lord who brought you out Melchizedek said he is the Lord who brought you out in chapter 16 he is
El Roy God sees me Ishmael God hears me and in chapter 17 we'll see he is God almighty he is El Shaddai he is the God of the object of belief I also brought you in the outline the enemies of belief and that took us through verses 2 through 5 in chapter 15 for the sake of the time I won't reread that to you but this is where we are and what we're dealing with is this what temptations common to being human common to you and I worked against Abram's faith in God to be on alert with what are those enemies of belief that we can extract and glean from what's going on in Abram and Sarai's life here well folks listen we live in constant threat of further deception from

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[37:29] Satan's schemes as he seeks to render us ineffective in our service to the Lord now how does he do that there are a number of!

fear and doubt are very powerful weapons in Satan's arsenal against us on a spiritual level fear and doubt and now I want you to see these as I explain them to you again I can't do a super deep dive but this is stuff that I expounded on the first one I want you to see that he uses Satan uses against us is darkness he knows the human soul he knows human nature he can't read the future like God can but he knows your heart he knows your soul he knows the weaknesses of your spiritual life darkness is one of his tools darkness darkness is something I I am using as a lack of knowledge and so a lack of knowledge and a lack of understanding a lack of being able to fill in the blanks can foster fear and worry and anxiety ok you with me on that it can do that it doesn't have to but it can and it often does so this refers to a darkness or an uncertainty that stems from
I can't fill in I'm trying to figure out where this is going God is not yet filling in the blanks of what we don't or can't know in this moment now Abram then is in the dark about some things but dwelling on the dark dwelling on the unknown dwelling on the uncertain dwelling on what I can't know!
and fill in because I'm not God dwelling on the uncontrollable focuses our attention on us and our limits do you see that I tell people don't live in the dark don't go to the dark place the unknown place the uncertain place that's not a place of hope all that's going to do is remind you of the fact that you're not God and you can't control all of this and you can't fix all this and you can't change you can try to do all of that but God is deliberately keeping these things from you to remind you you're not God all right so is God still good and is he still working just because you can't fill in all the blanks that you want filled in you and me because what's that's going to do is you focus on that dark it's going to focus your eyes on you it's going to expound in your mind the limitations of your own abilities to deal with what's in front of you it's not going to point you to the
Lord it's going to keep you mired and cycle you down and so what you're going to do is find ways to cope and you're going to create all these strategies that help you deal with that spiral down because you feel it you feel it pushing you down I'll show you where it takes you dwelling on what we don't know dwelling on what we can't control is a prideful way of exercising faith in ourselves so when our faith in ourselves proves futile proves empty proves ineffective those feelings of failure make us vulnerable to anxiety and fear of course you're going to fail and feel empty of course it's going to exacerbate the issue and not make it better and yet we go right back and do it again why because we love the illusion of control this is human nature and your enemy knows it and he knows how to exploit it in your life this begins the cycle all over again it leads to more of the same it fosters yet another set of troublesome enemies of your faith this is what we're talking about right now
[41:33] I told you what the objects of your beliefs should be now I'm telling you the enemies that would try to draw self the God of the word what's another one doubt and discouragement now we could have picked a number of these but these are the ones that I see probably most often and I'm familiar with fighting them myself all right look at this doubt here on the screen doubt stems from a lack of trust in God's goodness and in scripture sufficiency and so Abraham has to ask himself has a!

good God made me a good promise and is his word good and sufficient am I going to allow the word of God to be sufficient to carry me through this trial or am I going to turn to someone or something else that's Abraham's dilemma it's our dilemma now look at this discouragement is the product of self focus it's when you're not looking to the Lord from a heart of trusting discouragement more potent cousin depression is anger turned inward on yourself this is the way the Bible deals with this not psychology I'm not giving you psychology 101 here this is Bible 101 this is how the Bible the God who made us describes the way our soul our nature works when the darkness is something that we're focused on instead of the light this is why we get discouraged this is why we get depressed discouragement is the product of a self focus when you're not looking to the
Lord and its cousin it's more potent cousin depression is when you then get angry and you turn that anger in on yourself and you feel the shame the guilt the insecurity the loneliness all right look these these are ungodly responses of our hearts to what we cannot control and cannot change and we feel that tension now if Abram gives in to the temptation to set his mind on what he cannot control or change and if in pride he follows his own heart in this matter he tries to create his own agenda he will not act in God's wisdom and instead he'll do what is right in his own eyes and that is exactly what happened that path leads to hopelessness loneliness and unbelief and it puts all kinds of tension in your relationships with other people then you compound the problem by wanting to find

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

fault in them because we're blame shifters that just makes the deception all the more deep this is the
Bible I didn't have to go to college and sit under psychology to learn this I learned this by reading the Bible and thinking about what God is telling me about Jeff Jackson's nature because this is Abram's nature and Sarai's nature and Hagar's nature and God has given us an answer and the answer gets better and better and better and better as we go through the Bible because as we get then to the Gospels we see the answer in a person in a relationship with Jesus who counters sin and deception and lies he is the light that dispels the darkness and gives us hope beyond ourselves and so to the degree that I allow this person to be my Lord and my Savior to the degree that I allow his word to speak its wisdom into my heart and define my I will live in the light in the truth following that man who is the way the truth and the life that's what we want
Abram needs what you and I need when we're battling the realities of unbelief when we're battling the realities of a weak faith we need to be reminded of the blessings of belief in God and in his promises and in the goodness of his ways now another one I shared with you the blessings of belief then follow right on the heels in verse six I will read this one to us then Abram believed in the Lord and God reckoned it to him as righteousness that is I did one sermon on that verse one entire sermon on just that verse that's how important that verse is to the entire Bible so I can't say a lot about that in this one I just want to say this what treasure did Abram gain from winning the battle of belief in God and in his word and the answer comes in a word look relationship and I just described that relationship to you didn't I there seems to be much to tempt
[46:33] Abram to doubt God because as I mentioned listen to this this is the circumstantial! helped us not to think about God being good not to think about God's plan being good and to convince us we need to find a way to help God out and that's what they did Abram is 85 years old Sarai his wife is 75 years old they've been living for a decade now under these promises that are yet fulfilled They've been delayed by God his wife is way age and she's been barren a barren womb all her adult life now she's gone through menopause she's not even physically able to have a child if she wasn't barren all that's working against him but there's a much greater life defining reality at Abram's situation if if he will trust

God from a believing heart God has called Abram to relationship that should make all the difference in what Abram's facing right now we live and face life out of the relationship we have with Jesus Christ or we don't it's that straightforward God has set his love on Abram God has made promises to Abram which the Lord the Lord then in his goodness has called Abram to believe and live by so believing in the Lord in his goodness that's the heart of knowing him loving him serving him that's where it all stems and this is what God has done in us through Jesus so Abram's purpose was to glorify God through his life of faith in God and in his goodness to show the world the goodness of his God working through his life because he's surrounded by pagans by unbelievers and God has chosen him to be that light shining to the people in his!
Now knowing God in his goodness means trusting God to make every aspect of your life purposeful that's why I can say with hope in my heart and certainty in my heart that my wife's suffering is purposed in the Lord and there are purposes being served in her suffering that I can't even see but my faith trains my heart to know a good God is doing a good thing through a horrible thing and that is something only God can do because he's God you see how that makes my heart sore Satan wants to beat me down in my physical weariness he wants to beat me down and depress me so I walk into the pulpit and I don't really have anything good to say today you know things are pretty bad right now and I don't know I guess God isn't coming through so let's just pray we'll be done I need to get home
I heard a guy preach a sermon like that once at a funeral it was at my sister's funeral we can do that we can live like that I'm tired yeah I feel the weariness I feel the weight I feel the burden I cried my tears for my wife as I watched her suffer and sat there sure but they're not tears of joylessness they're not tears of hopelessness and despair we're weeping over the fact that sin does this to us the fallenness of this world it reminds us this is not our home and then our hearts begin to look to Christ and think of eternity and that changes the context of how our souls are interpreting it doesn't change the circumstance it's all still there but it changes the way that we understand what God's doing in it he's keeping his promises to us in
Christ he's faithful he knows and we can turn to him folks relationship is a blessing of true belief which trusts God here's another blessing it's an R righteousness I don't want to skip over this being

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

righteous listen being righteous is a state of being all right being righteous is a state of being it puts you in right relationship with God if you don't have God give you his righteousness you cannot go to heaven you cannot know Christ you cannot be forgiven for your sins so this is really important it all happens in verse 6 where a declaration is made of a past reality Abram is trusting God Abram does belong to God God does love Abram that happened before chapter 15 and now verse 6 in chapter 15 is stating!
[51:31] the fact Abram you have believed in me by my power to gift you belief and righteousness right standing with me and so I am reckoning that to you as a righteousness that will bring you to heaven with me that's what he's saying isn't that wonderful and that's what we have in the cross that's what we have in the resurrection of Jesus the promise that God's righteousness living in you through Jesus Christ will bring you on that day of your physical death to new spiritual life in his son for all eternity and all the promises God has made to you will be complete in Jesus in that moment as you join him in heaven it's another reminder this is not our home God gifted all of this to Abram through the channel of Abram's faith in God what was the!

God gave this righteousness how did it come to Abram how did it get into Abram through the channel through the conduit through the pipe of faith the gift of faith was what God used to minister serve bring imbue this righteousness to Abram's life this declaration then came from heaven that said you are now my child and you are in right standing with me the great judge of the universe declared Abram right with me no more condemnation judgment shame guilt Jesus took all of that for Abram that's God's gift of righteousness and I've got a couple of verses I want to share with you from the New Testament that tells us about this notice what Romans 3 10 says about every human being spiritual condition before God without Jesus Christ there is none righteous not even one that's humanity's spiritual condition before
God without God's righteousness in Jesus Christ now look at this and Paul said that I may be found in Jesus in him not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law from from morality!
from being a good person there's no such thing but that which is through faith in Christ the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith how's that righteousness come to us through faith?
through the pipeline of faith where's faith come from? it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast isn't this beautiful? this is a powerful way to live folks a very very powerful way to live in the goodness and in the grace of almighty God I have to hurry now the wisdom of belief all of this I expounded on in great detail through these sermons you see the passages there from chapter 15 what does the heavenly wisdom of belief in God his word and his goodness to us establish in us for daily living on this earth God puts all that in us as he does that how does it help us in daily living?
[54:38] well that's his wisdom it gives us a knowledge of God and his ways we need to know God and we need to know his ways so that we can live by his wisdom so that's straightforward one of the blessings of living in righteous relationship to God established for us in Christ is that we gain a growing hear me a growing knowledge of God and his ways as we walk with God and relate to God through Jesus Christ we grow in understanding who God is we get to know him better and better love him more and more and we adopt more and more of his ways because now we better understand what those ways are that's what happens in a relationship I have grown to love my wife more and more and more you think man 41 years I think we're going to be 42 years this year 41 years of being with each other and you love each other more yeah that's a grace of God I'm telling you right you love each other more yeah I remember

I remember the guy who bad counsel told me I shared this with my folks once before he told me before I get married dude you really need to think he wasn't a friend you really need to think this through you're about to make a commitment you're going to eat the same cereal for the rest of your life you sure you want to do that well in the power of the Lord it's beautiful that takes the Lord doesn't it all right look what am I talking about in the knowledge of God and his ways this is the spiritual life knowledge you see that up there we're talking about spiritual life knowledge that Peter so earnestly desired for his readers in 2nd Peter 3 18 what did he say but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that was the last thing Peter said in the final letter he wrote to his readers his beloved readers his congregations spread across a vast land before they martyred him before they killed him crucified him in traditional says crucified him upside down that was the last thing he said grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Jesus Christ now look Abram needed this ministry of the Holy Spirit just like we do because he faced the same need he faced the same battle of persevering in belief in God and his promises are you going to hope in God or not not in yourself not in others not in the world in the Lord and the point here can be summed up with the question who do you heed who is giving you your instruction for life who do you listen to most who has the most influence and impact on how you live every day of your life and boy if you say me run you're in trouble when I say me I mean you you understand if you're listening to you you're in trouble listen to Christ and if Pastor Jeff or Pastor Greg passes on what Jesus says to you listen to that when it when it came to time to ratify or make binding the covenant between God and Abram in chapter 15 that I read to you in those latter verses only God passed between the halves of the animals remember that this signified that the covenant the promise and its fulfillment was based on

God's faithfulness not Abram's Abram didn't pass between God did and God said this is me keeping my promise it's binding now I explained that in the sermon I'm not going to do it now so trusting God's goodness means we'll look to God for his wisdom we'll walk with God according to his ways we'll trust God's safeguards in our life to keep us from going to those counterfeits those imposters now real quickly chapter 16 it shows us our hearts are naturally drawn to the glitter naturally drawn to the glamour of worldly wisdom's promise to prosper us in some way this is why so much of the world follows the worldly idols and icons like rock stars and you know all that kind of stuff well you listen you watch the rock stars and you listen to some of their music and you hear what it glorifies and you see them up there doing what they do and there's no way we want to ever bring that and emulate that in the church this isn't a performance this is a worship time and we're not worshiping the devil or ourselves or music we're worshiping the Lord we're worshiping the God who gave us Jesus and the cross it's a sober moment it's also a joyful moment and that joy stems from what God's doing in our hearts we don't have to have cool music to motivate us to worship God we have to have the wisdom of the Lord and a growing love for Christ that's enough all the world has to offer is anti-God that's their wisdom and so what we saw in chapter 16 in the first part here where Abram's listening to his wife's ungodly plan to give Abram her maid in matrimony that's not God's design that's all terrible that is the wisdom of the world and the world's wisdom deceives our hearts and relationships I said the world's wisdom means how ungodly society thinks about and resolves the everyday issues of life so it's the empty or futile reasoning and false wisdom of self pride and idols so these are some of the counterfeits that I mentioned earlier the world's wisdom also defiles our hearts and relationships and I know that word isn't a word we use a lot defiles but it simply means to pollute or to corrupt so the world's wisdom is sinful and it always births corruption in our relationship with God and with others say Jeff why because people sometimes will say good things and they'll do good deeds to each other here's why on an ultimate level that that kind of life is never going to give them the purpose and sense of meaning and fulfillment that a life with [61:15] Jesus can here's why because none of that stuff is being done or lived out for the glory of God it has nothing to do with God God's not even on their radar that's what the Bible says now don't get mad at me if you don't like hearing that that's what the Lord says a sinfully deceived heart look a sinfully deceived heart births sinful actions when it's left unchecked by God's truth see you don't have to sin like that in the way that you're tempted and constantly fall into what can short circuit this habit of sin that I've built remember I showed you the cycle and I told you you find all kinds of coping mechanisms to help you in that cycle because you're trying to cope you're trying to deal with something that is self destructive you feel it you feel the weight but you don't know how to get out of that spin cycle and so what can arrest that what can stop that downward spiral and even begin to cycle you out the truth of

God's word only God's truth has the power to dispel lies and change souls it's what God does he changes souls listen not just circumstances he changes souls in the circumstance and he uses the circumstances to do it so he is more powerful than the circumstance you don't have to be defined by circumstances you can be in hard things and God can still be defining your heart your life your joy your sense of purpose he can give you hope the world doesn't know how to live like that and that's why the wisdom that Abram followed with what his desperate wife said was bad news it is never going to help him a sinfully deceived heart births sinful actions every time unless it's checked by the truth of the

Lord and then finally the world's wisdom demands our relational allegiance that's verses five and six so we see it as selfishness and pride you know Sarai demanding Hagar do this then blaming Abram

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

it's a terrible reality I shifted over then to talk to you about the wisdom of the Lord the Lord's wisdom enlightens so the Lord's wisdom leads you in the light and keeps you in the light let love be without hypocrisy when you're living in the dark you're living as a hypocrite when I say dark I mean when you're living by your agenda as a Christian and you're not walking in the light of God's love and truth then you're following a darkness that is going to destroy you in the professing one thing and you're living another even in the moment and
God abhors hypocrisy let love be without hypocrisy Romans 12 the Lord's wisdom sanctifies God's truth establishes you in a life pattern of God like Jesus pleasing thought speech and behavior and the Lord wisdom serves the Lord's wisdom serves God's word instructs us in his will for loving God and others through submission to God and by self denial the world doesn't know anything about self denial the world is a self promoter this is one of the reasons people pursue what they pursue!
and pay what they pay when they're told this will give you this they're willing to shove out all kinds of money time resources because the promise is this will promote you and God tells us in Christ deny yourself take up your cross and follow me so following God's wisdom as the Lord has spoken it to Abram meant that Abram needed to wait on the Lord and he needed to trust the Lord he needed to trust God's timing and God's ways but Abram didn't wait!
[66:00] that wasn't God's plan and God told him it wasn't his plan so here's a start on how you wait on the Lord I'm just going to put it up here because I spent some time talking about this acronym W-A-I-T watch for God's goodness adorn God's truth invest in God's people and thank God for his blessing I explained how to wait on the Lord that's what that is it's a biblical explanation of what it means for you to wait on the Lord when God is delaying fulfillment or denying fulfillment and you're going on and you're persevering in prayer you're waiting on the Lord to give you further light so you can step out into that light being faithful in the light you have that's what it means to wait on the Lord it isn't sitting on your hands and doing nothing alright I won't say more about that again because the sermon is available that outlines it the point is this friends God has us covered even when we do what's right in our own eyes he has us covered!

God has us covered and we see this as the chapter moves on in chapter 16 notice verse 7 where God seeks us 16 verse 7 now the angel of the Lord found Hagar by a spring of water see he sought her he knew where she was Hagar didn't run to God God came to Hagar isn't that beautiful and she didn't deserve it because she wasn't trusting God looking to God believing in God hoping in God she she's trying to get ahead in the world Sarai presented her with an opportunity to do that and Hagar took it and it blew up in her face look when God seeks us it causes us to stop running away from him but only God seeking!
us can do! you cannot talk anybody into trusting God and following God you hear me present the truth love them in the truth pray the truth into their lives live the truth before them but you can't save anybody God has to seek them and when God seeks them and God gets them they stop running away and they turn to him and that what happened to you certainly what happened to me and then what does God do he speaks when he speaks he causes us to stop rebelling against him because he tells the truth to our heart and our heart grabs the truth by faith but we need God to speak to us after he seeks us he needs to tell us something what does he need to tell you he needs to tell you the truth about!
he needs! to say to you in love you are your worst enemy and I am going to save you from you Jeff I am going to save you from you and he did and then he gave me this to do miracle of miracles how does he do this real quickly he searches our hearts because he knows us better than we know ourselves he commands our hearts in other words he counters lies and leads us in what's true he comforts our hearts because he went before us and suffered on our behalf he hears our hearts that is he heeds the cry of the broken hearted and the afflicted that's our God right there that's our God he searches commands comforts and hears then God saves us he causes us to begin a new life with him he seeks us he speaks to us and he saves us that is all in chapter 16 of Genesis you'll find that in verses 13 through 16
God saves us and that's what Abram and Hagar and Sarai need they made a mess of their relationships with each other because they disobeyed and distrusted God they ran out and tried to do their own agenda and so now what's God doing God is leading them in repentance God is forgiving them and he's graciously blessing them beyond anything they deserve and that is the same biblical pattern beloved that we traced for our own application of wisdom when we sin what do you do with your sin see when you sin what do you do with it because it's not going away so you

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

need to do something with it and this tells us what look I'm going to you sin when you sin the first thing you need to do is receive the wisdom of
[71:02] God about what that sin is you need to let God tell you what that sin is because you've embraced something that will destroy you and that's insane you need God to speak reality to your life and you need to receive it the next thing you need to do is repent by God's wisdom you need to let that wisdom make you turn away from what will destroy you and start moving in a different direction and that wisdom of God you need to move in a different direction according to how God will instruct your heart and then you need to repeat because you're going to sin again just like Abram will sin again so folks listen by moving you through this running rehearsal I hope that you are somewhat overwhelmed with man there's that much practicality for my spiritual life in just those two chapters of the

Old Testament alone all the way back in Genesis talking about these people who've been dead for thousands of years I know that is the wisdom of God I'll end with this look at chapter 17 verse 1 this is where we're going God willing next week now when Abram was 99 years old oh my goodness what when we left him last he's 86 now when Abram was 99 years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him I am God almighty walk before me and be blameless okay and then what well you'll have to wait to find out unless you read ahead which you're welcome to do now what's going to happen in chapter 17 look realize God's goodness receive God's goodness into your heart and then resolve to relate to God and others from that goodness that fills your soul whatever your circumstances we can always speak hope to each other no matter the circumstance because
God is on his throne and he loves us through his son Jesus Christ and that's never going to change those two things are never going to change he's on his throne and he loves you and his son you're set you're okay take a deep breath and look to Christ let's pray together father we have rapidly covered a great deal of material in a short time and it has overwhelmed us there's no way we could walk out of here with all this under our belt but one thing it's done for me is it's caused me to be exuberant once again in the joy of knowing that you are a good and gracious God you are merciful and kind you are forgiving so I pray that for each soul here whatever each soul might be facing in the way of hardship uncertainty doubt fear worry anxiety that you will come and minister to their hearts based on this truth that you will bring them that undeserved favor that graciousness that will help them navigate the difficulty with hope with love with a sense of knowledge and confidence that you have purposes for them beyond what they can even see and understand help them to grasp the reality that you are a good
God loving them through a difficult thing because you want to conform them to the image of your son and this is how you chosen to do it so God help us not to bend against your will but help us to lean into it by faith trusting your good heart and the love that you have for us and sending us Jesus let the cross be the symbol of that deep love for your people in Jesus name we pray amen you

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host