

Winning the Battle of Belief (Part 2)

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[0 : 0 0] There was a time in my life when singing songs like that! would have bored me to tears.

! By the Holy Spirit, to see their need for sin and call out to Jesus, why would any soul without that sing those songs?

It wouldn't. But we sing those songs because they rehearse the truth of our salvation in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So we sing hymns, we sing more contemporary songs that reflect the truth of the Lord, but in all that we sing, we make an effort to sing songs that honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Amen. And so we are so grateful to be able to come together on a Sunday in a place where nobody's going to bust through the door and try to do any bad stuff to us and round us up and haul us off somewhere and say, you can't do that.

You know, that's happening in many countries around the world right now. Christians are being persecuted at brand new levels of intensity. And so we need to be thankful for the fact that we can sing and shout out to the top of our lungs the glories of Jesus Christ and be free to do it.

[1 : 3 6] I don't want that to escape us. Well, this morning, we're in Genesis chapter 15 again. This is my second message in this chapter. I think what I'm going to end up doing is doing one more.

We're only going to be in verse 6 today, but it's a pivotal verse, and I'll go ahead and tell you, at verse 6 in this chapter is where everything hinges. And so there's a build up to verse 6 and then kind of a turn and then a direction that takes us into a different emphasis in the latter part of the chapter.

And so I wanted to be careful to make sure that I helped you understand this hinge part of this verse. And then we need to take some time to explain what verse 6 means and what it doesn't mean because it can be easily misunderstood to become a works-based righteousness.

And we don't want that. We don't believe here that we earn our salvation or that we merit it or that we deserve our salvation. We believe it's all a gift of God's special favor.

His grace. That's what grace means. The favor of God in Christ on His people. So that's what we'll be looking at. The title of my message for this morning then is Winning the Battle of Belief.

[2 : 5 3] Winning the Battle of Belief. What I do not mean by that is that we win the battle of saving faith on our own. Again, that's works-based. I'm talking about what it means for us to act faithfully to God's faithfulness in our life as believers.

How do you and I deal with the challenges of our faith? Or to our faith as we walk with God? You have them every day and so do I. So we want to win those battles, don't we? To God's glory.

We want to stay faithful. And that's what we're talking about in Winning the Battle of Belief. Now, as I begin this morning, let me ask you this. Because I wondered about this as I prepared all of this material.

I thought about you guys because I know most of you pretty well as your friend and pastor. And I wondered about you and so I wrote down this very thing. I wonder when you take time, when you take time to take stock of your life, what effect does it have on you when you do that?

You've probably done this on occasion. Most people will do something like this after something difficult they faced or something traumatic or tragic has happened in their life.

[4 : 04] It could be the death of a loved one or a friend or a co-worker that happens suddenly. It kind of shocks you and kind of makes you think about your life. It could be an accident.

You're driving along one day and all of a sudden you're in an accident and your car is totaled and you walk away going, I'm okay, right? I'm alright. Everything's here. But afterwards, you start thinking about what could have been.

You take a look at your car and you go, oh my goodness. You know, praise the Lord kind of thing. And it might make you start thinking a little bit about your life. It could be you get over a sickness and you think about what could have been.

Do you see what I mean about this? This is where Abram is. This is what's going on with him. Now, when that happens in your life, are you the kind of person that kind of nosedives into discouragement and depression and put your, yeah, see, I've got some heads going.

Thank you for your honesty. I don't want to be the only one up here with that problem. Or are you the kind of person that kind of grabs everything and just says, you know, I'm going to hitch it up and try even harder. And so now you're going to tough it out even more because it's about you and it's about getting it done.

[5 : 10] That's really more me. So that's when the Lord usually uses a two by four on my spirit and then, right? But whatever it is, this is a time in your life when you're kind of stepping back and taking stock of things.

Now, we have to be very careful with that. And God has some things to say about that. Even the Apostle Paul talked about that. Abraham or Abram in this case is taking stock of his life.

He fixes his focus on his world without seeing by faith who God is and what God has said. He does exactly what you and I do when we do that.

He begins to fret. He begins to worry. He puts his eyes on the stuff and on the circumstances and on himself. He starts doing the math and it's not adding up well and to his favor.

So he starts to worry. And he gets anxious and fearful. And he does this. And this is terrible and dangerous. He begins to follow his own heart.

[6 : 15] Don't do that. Do not listen to all the nonsense today and all the books that are written that tell you to follow your heart. That is a path to hell. Don't do it.

And hardship if you're a Christian. Don't do it. Don't follow your heart. What do you know? Is that okay for me to know? I said it. It's done.

What do I know? What does my heart know? I need to be informed by the truth of the Spirit of God about how to live my life, how to please the Lord because I don't know how to do that intuitively. And neither do you.

So we don't want to follow our heart. We don't want to live in fear. We don't want to fret. We don't want to worry. We don't want to be anxious. None of those things exalt God. People who live like that live like there's no God in the heavens.

Like there's no Jesus who came and died on the cross for our sins to give us life in His name. We don't want to do that. Well, what do we want to do? Well, the Lord comes to Abram in this time of reflection.

- [7 : 15] He's come off of this intense battle where he's had to chase after Keterlamer, the king, who has come into this area and for months has wreaked havoc on all these cities and conquered all these different peoples.
- And he's carrying this huge entourage of spoil and slaves, people that he's captured. And they're moving off. Well, Lot, Abram's nephew, is part of the people that were conquered and taken off.
- And Abram said, I can't have that. I've got to go rescue Lot. So he goes after his nephew with a little over 300 men against this great army that has all of these battles that they've won successively.
- And they defeat this great army. And Abram, I think, comes off of that. And I'm sure he was wound up and intense. He knew the stakes were high and he's probably... And he's praising the Lord, but it's also making him think.
- He's taking stock of his life at 85 years old and he's thinking, you know, man, I don't have... I don't have what God said He'd give me yet.
- [8 : 21] And the days are getting dim and I could have died in that thing. Yeah, I could have died. Are you listening? I could have died kind of thing. He's taking stock and it's...
- This is why we see in verse 1 after these things, after what happened in chapter 14, the word of the Lord came to Abram and what did he tell him? Do not fear. Why do you have to tell him that?
- Because he's fearing. Do not fear. Do not worry. Don't get anxious over the fact that the promises I've made to you haven't been fulfilled yet. Abram, I've got this.
- I've got this. Don't fill your mind with all these things. God comes to him and tells him that he himself, God himself, will follow through on what he's promised to Abram so that as Abram shield, as Abram shield, God will protect Abram to fulfill his promise that he's made to him.
- God himself will greatly reward Abram. And what does the reward bring? Provision. So we've got the shield bringing protection and we've got the rewards that are bringing the blessing or provision of God.
- [9 : 28] So God's got him covered from A to Z. And God wants him to remember that. Don't live like there's no God in the heavens. I've got your back.
- So God comes to tell him this because Abram is dealing with the temptation to fret and fear over something in his life. And here's the thing. We know what that something is because of Abram's response to what God says to him in verse 1.
- I'll just give you the first few here. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram. That's just what he needs in this moment, right? The word of the Lord came to Abram and it came in a vision.
- We've already gone over all of this so I won't re-preach it. Do not fear, Abram. I am a shield to you. Your reward shall be very great. So he reinforces the promise that he's already made several times to Abram.
- And now what does Abram say? Oh Lord God, what will you give me? Well Abram, I just told you what I'm going to give you. Since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.
- [10 : 35] So he tells him, Lord, I hear what you're saying but I'm not seeing it happen. I hear what you're saying but I don't see any way for it to happen. I'm 85. My wife's 75.
- She's been barren her whole life. What am I supposed to do with that? I hear what you're saying and I want to believe you. I think I believe you but and Abram said in verse 3, since you've given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.

This is his problem. This is what's on his mind. I could have died. Things could have gone very wrong. Here I am. I'm kind of taking stock of this thing. I still don't have an heir.

I know what you've promised. However, and that's, he's just letting that just kind of boil inside of him. Well, the issue for Abram as we face off with this this morning, the issue for Abram is that he's basing his conclusions about his heir and his future on what he sees and not on what God has said.

Now that, that is an everyday temptation for every believer in this room. That's where you and I are going to join Abram in winning this battle of belief or this battle of remaining faithful to God through faith in him.

[11 : 56] Trusting him. Trusting him even in the times when we don't have all the details filled in like we'd like. So here's the deal. When confronted with the issues of life that stretch and challenge your faith, who will be your focus?

God or you? It comes down to that, Abram, Jeff. It comes down to that. Winning the spiritual battles that strain and drain your faith isn't about losing your salvation.

That's not what we're talking about. You can't do that. We believe here at Grace and teach here at Grace you cannot lose your salvation. You cannot and the world cannot take away from you what God has given to you in his son.

There's no power on earth that can do that. So that's not what this is about. And it isn't about tapping more deeply into your inner strength. That'll make it worse.

Believe me. Your victory of faith rests squarely on God and his covenant with you in Jesus Christ. That's an amen. God doesn't play games with his people and God never breaks his promises.

[13 : 08] And this is exactly what Abram needs to be reassured of and this is why God is coming to him and saying this to him now. Now again I'm going to review but I'm not going to re-preach all of this.

You can listen to the previous messages. The last couple would be helpful as I finish out this chapter God willing next week. Let's read down through verse 6 just to get the context for what we'll deal with.

After these things, after the battle and after all that happened in his life in chapter 14 the word of the Lord God's word came to Abram in a vision. So Abram is awake and God is manifesting to him and speaking to him.

Do not fear Abram I am a shield to you. Your reward shall be very great. Now Abram's reply O Lord God what will you give me since I'm childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus and so he's asking the Lord Lord how are you going to do this?

That's what what will you give me means. But Lord yes but how are you going to do this? You've told me this but I've already got a guy lined up to take over and the issue is since you have given no offspring to me one born in my house is my heir I've already got this thing lined up.

[14 : 22] This is how I know to fix the problem. And what does God come and tell him in verse 4? Behold again the word of the Lord came to Abram saying this man will not be your heir.

Notice he doesn't name him he just says this man this person the one you chose not me but one who will come forth from your own body shall be your heir.

Now that's very important because that's half the equation. who's being left out of this equation of an heir being brought in?

Who? That's right his wife. One coming from your body. That's going to become very important in chapter 16 if you've read ahead. Very important.

Nevertheless Abram takes oh so you are going to use me for this process. Yep. He's going to be your seed is what he's telling him. verse 5 and so now God took him outside and said I just boy I let my imagination do this with me.

[15 : 29] I think he took him outside. God took Abram. What did he do? Did he say come here? Come here. We're going outside. I got something I want to show you. I don't know but he took him outside.

How did you like to have God take you and talk to you? Isn't that good? I just that's the way it's going to be before long for us.

I may get there before you but it's going to be like that. So he takes him outside and he says now look toward the heavens and count the stars if you're able to count them which he's not. And he said to him God said to Abram so shall your descendants be.

Look I'm going to give you so many they're going to be uncountable. Now look what he says to him in 6. Then Abram believed in the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Now we need to take that apart in the context and carefully deal with what he's saying. Here's what we're dealing with as we move into the text together. Genesis 15 presents us with common challenges that is challenges we all face to taking God at his word which is what we need to do every day.

[16 : 40] It grounds the single solution for those challenges in the character of God. Not in a change in circumstances. Did you see that? The passage presents us with four truths that I'm going to highlight that guide our hearts to trust and obey the Lord instead of giving in to fears and doubts and worries and anxieties about our future, about how things are going to work out, about how all this stuff is going to happen, and how is it going to affect me.

Now last time we dealt with the first and second of these truths or essential elements in winning the battle of belief, and I'm going to give you a quick review for those of you who might not have been here.

The first of these four was our object of belief from verse one, our object of belief. The issue here is in whom and in what are we to believe, and the text tells us in verse one, the word of the Lord.

That's what Abram needed. He needed to hear from God. And so the word of the Lord came to Abram. God refutes Abram's view. Notice that?

God refutes Abram's plan for the situation, and clearly tells him the truth. He says that Abram's air is going to come from his own body, even though it seems otherwise.

[18 : 01] Nothing about Abram's life can give credence, credibility to what God is saying. There is nothing in Abram's life that he can look at and go, oh, I get it, I see.

Nothing. Everything that Abram's looking at says, I don't see it, Lord. Now, have you ever been there? Have you ever tried to stand on the promises of God and trust in the faithfulness of God, and yet your circumstances didn't give you any hope at all?

Then why do you look at your circumstances? Why do you focus on your circumstances? Why would you do that to yourself? Do you want me to tell you?

You already know the answer because you're a control freak. We have a room full of control freaks. And I'm right there with you.

I face the same temptation you do. Being a pastor doesn't make me immune to the temptation to try to control my life when I want something, or I want it to be a certain way. Well, Abram's going to get himself in a lot of trouble if that's the pathway he takes.

[19 : 10] And you and I do that too. This has a lot to say to us. Abram is now faced with the challenge of winning the battle of belief about this issue in his life.

Whatever is going to come, right now he needs to take care of this. So here's what. Will Abram take and trust God at his word?

Will he take his word into his heart? Will he trust God's word in his heart? Which will mean, notice, waiting on the Lord. If he's going to take the word and trust the word that God's bringing him, which is nothing like his plan, Abram's plan, nothing like that.

He's going to have to give up Eleazar and all that mess in order to embrace the Lord's plan. So he needs to wait on the Lord. That's patient trust. It's not worry.

It's not anxiety. It's not control. It's not manipulation. And then he needs to walk with the Lord in that. It's not just waiting on the Lord like you just sit on your spiritual hands and do nothing.

[20 : 15] He needs to walk with the Lord in this faithfulness. He needs to live his life in the Lord. Go about his life. So this is a persevering faithfulness with a certain hope.

In Christ. In God. In his Savior. It's not faint hearted. He's not laying around and pouting and moping and complaining and woe is mean.

He's not doing that. Now the second truth I want us to look at reveals the issue of what Abram's soul is battling. Again this is all in review. And it was the enemies of belief in verses 2 through 5.

The enemies of belief in the way that he will now, Abram will respond to what God has said. Now we summarize the work of the world, the flesh, and the devil against Abram's faith in God and his promises in three aspects of attack.

This was last week. How's he being attacked? And this is just me trying to summarize what I see in the passage. We could use other words, other descriptors because there's other things going on.

[21 : 17] But these are the three that I chose. Darkness. What is that? Well this is Abram dealing with fear of the unknown. His circumstances aren't changing.

He's still as old as he is. His wife is still barren. She's still as old as she is. He's still got no air from his body. That's not changing. And it won't change for a while. Then doubt.

That's the fear of the known. You ever had fear of what you do know? Oh dear, now I've got to do it. I know the truth, but I don't see that truth working in my life the way I expect, so I doubt its application to me.

Do you do that? You tempted with that? Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's the truth, but, and that little word but gets in the way so much. So where do we make the adjustment in our thinking?

Now just look at that second one. Here's the question. Where do we make the adjustment in our thinking? Do we expect the truth to conform to us or do we conform to the truth?

[22 : 29] Where do we make the adjustment? We make the adjustment at the level of I know the truth and I know who stands behind the truth and I choose to trust the truth.

Not what I see. Because I'm walking by faith. I'm putting my faith in what God's promised and who God is. Not in my circumstances and what's not happening the way that I want it to happen.

Because when I look at that I'm going to have problems with contentment. I'm not going to have joy. I'm not going to be thankful. And that's going to spiral me into discouragement. And then I'm going to have to do some things to kind of get myself pumped up or pepped up.

I'm going to shoot stuff. I'm going to take stuff. I'm going to drink stuff. I'm going to do stuff. whatever my thing is that fixes me.

Only it doesn't fix me, does it Mike? It doesn't fix anything. That makes it all worse. This is where Abram finds himself in this situation.

[23 : 33] And then finally deception. He's battling deception. Fear, worry, and anxiety make you more vulnerable to self-deception and satanic deception.

You become more vulnerable in these ways when you're more about fear and more about focusing on yourself. Because the Bible tells us that our hearts are desperately wicked.

We can't know our hearts. That's why I tell you, don't follow your heart. Follow the Lord. Follow the truth. Now, what the narrative bears out next is the single solution to Abram's struggle with trusting God's promise and plan.

What is it? It's the fear of the Lord based on what Abram knows about the character of the Lord. So based on what I know about God, I need to fix my soul in a high and holy reverence for God.

Because God is good and He always does good and He's shown me that. He saved me. I need to settle my soul in the Lord. That's what I need to do. This is where He needs to win the battle.

[24 : 44] So winning the battle of belief is always, please hear me friends, winning the battle of belief in these circumstances you face each day is always based in the character of God.

Not in your character. Not in my character. Not in your ability to out manipulate, out clever, and out control the circumstances. First and foremost, winning the battle of belief and the issues of life is about basing your faith in the character of God.

You've got a God that is rock solid for you. He doesn't change. He's not going to shift. You cannot make Him not love you and you can't make Him love you more.

He loves you as much as He can love you in His Son. And that will never change. You can't change it. You can't change God's heart about you. Are you glad?

I'm particularly glad about that. You can't change God's heart about you. This is why it's grace church, not Jeff's church, or Greg's church, or whomever.

[25 : 49] It's grace church. We live by the grace, the special favor of God in Christ. This is what we're seeing in Abram's life. as you struggle against fear, and doubt, and worry, and the unknown, against deceitful desires that want to masquerade as legitimate desires, as you struggle with apathy, as you struggle with idleness, pride, greed, and other expressions of self.

Look, you cannot put your faith and hope in what the world most commonly trusts in. When you're struggling like that, don't put your faith in what the world puts their faith in.

They don't know Christ. Here's what they put their faith in. A change in your circumstances. Isn't that what they do? They try to force a change in circumstances because they don't like what they're in.

And so they're going to do whatever they can to bring change about, even if it's something that isn't as healthy as it should be, right? They may do something that is even worse just to get a little relief.

Why do you think people drink to excess or do any other thing to excess that hurts them? What are they trying to do? Escape. They're trying to get out of the reality of the moment.

[27 : 08] And it doesn't help. Why? Because sooner or later they sober up and reality comes crashing back down on them. And it's a cycle, isn't it? Do you see? Did you know this was all in the Bible?

Am I? This is in the Bible. Bible. God's good. God made us. He knows us. They also put their faith in experience. Their experiences.

Yours or others. Don't do that. Experience doesn't top. It doesn't trump. It doesn't beat God's truth. It's not the card that you throw down and everybody else goes, oh, there it is.

They won. Our experiences do not trump the truth of God. But we often do that. We'll grab an experience from somebody else's life or in our past and make experience the thing.

And so we chase after that experience from that time in our life, even though maybe it doesn't match up with what's going on now. And we expect the past experience that I did this and maybe that will get me out of this thing.

[28 : 15] And maybe it makes it worse. And then finally this one, man's wisdom. This is what I've been talking about. This is you coping, doping, moping, or hoping for a way out.

Don't do that. Way around. Here's what I found. Every single time in my life, especially as a young man, you know, Mr.

Charge Hard, every single time I tried to get a way around or a way under or something like that, I thought that I would be somewhere and I would find as I looked up and sobered up, kind of, you know, come to my senses as it were, I was right back where I was and God had just kind of taken me and gone, I don't think so, and put me right back.

Now, we going to do this my way or we going to try to, okay, go ahead, there you go again. Hang on, I'll put you back again. Right? That's what he does.

God's going to take you through it. He's going to take you through it because he's good, because he knows what he's doing and he knows you better than you know yourself.

[29 : 25] So trust him. You'll do yourself a great favor by trusting him on the front end right away and save yourself a lot of heartache and the people around you as well because the people closest to you are going to suffer with you and sometimes because of you.

Now, that's sobering. We're going to see in another chapter how many, many, many people are going to suffer because of Abram's lack of judgment.

We don't want that. Well, verses 6 through 21, we'll only do six today, describe the path for winning the battle to trust and that path involves you knowing this, God is good.

Amen. It involves this, God does good. Amen. He does good to you. He doesn't just do good, He does it to you.

It may not feel like it in the moment and so we cap it all off with this. God is good, does good to me always. He never makes a mistake.

[30 : 36] In every circumstance and situation of your life, you can trust God to be your rock. You can. And so you don't want to go by feelings.

Now, this third one that we'll deal with, what is the source of Abram's obedience and what is the solution to Abram's doubts? And this is exactly where we are.

Lord, I want to obey you. I want to be faithful. I don't want to be full of fear and doubt and control and manipulation. I don't want to be that kind of person. So, Lord, help me understand what's the solution to me being obedient to you in these times when I'm tempted like I am.

Well, that brings us to this blessings of belief issue. The questions that we're asking here are answered for us in verse 6.

Then Abram believed in the Lord and God reckoned it to Abram as righteousness. God is coming to Abram because God has called Abram to relationship.

[31 : 44] Please don't think in your mind that God has called you to salvation so that he can make you do all of these rules. Yes, the Lord wants you to obey him, but he wants you to obey him out of a love relationship with him because you know him and you love him.

You're thankful to him. It's the same way you guys are married when you come together or you have a really, really close friend. You want to do for each other because you love each other.

You want to take care of each other. You want to please each other because you love each other. This is what God wants. God has set his love on Abram.

God has made promises to Abram which the Lord has called Abram to believe and to order or define his life by. Live by these promises, Abram.

Now in verse 6, what's happening? What's happening in verse 6? Abram is responding to God's character of faithfulness. Hold on to that line.

[32 : 44] Write it in the margin of your Bible. God here has Abram responding to God's character of faithfulness. Whatever you understand about verse 6, that's important.

The clause, then he believed in the Lord, helps us see this. Believed conveys the ideas of reliability, steadfastness, stability, dependability.

So the syntax and the grammar that are used here are helping us nuance how we are to understand the believing aspect of what's going on.

And Stephen, you're probably the only guy in here that can understand those nuances of the Hebrew text. He's studying this and has been for how long, Ro? See, three years.

So he's ahead of me in this. So what we're seeing here is a present tense verb in the hyphil and it has prefixed the vav.

[33 : 45] It doesn't have it after the verb. So it's not a vav consecutive, it's a different construction. So he understands that. All of that tells us that this is not to be understood as Abram is believing as a result of something that God has done in the way of, well, God, I'll believe and so now you have to act on what I've done.

It's the reverse. It's not Abram leading out and God responding. It's Abram responding to God. So it's not works-based. Now I'm going to explain this to you.

I've got to, yeah, we're going to go through this. Click, click, click, okay? Because this is, look, there are people who use this verse as a proof text for works righteousness.

That we can use this to earn God's favor. And they base it on the fact that the text reads, then he believed in the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Or some have, and he believed in the Lord. And it can start to sound like, oh, we've got all of these things that are going on. And so Abram believes now and as Abram believes, God is going to make him righteous because Abram did this wonderful thing and God saw it and went, oh, look at that.

[35 : 08] Okay, you get this. You have to understand what's going on. There is a part of that, but there's more to it. So let me try to explain it to you now. The meaning of all of this, the meaning of believe, the reliability, the steadfastness, can also be understood as to place confident trust in someone.

This is, again, the grammar is bringing this out. To place confident trust in someone or to consider something dependable or reliable and because you consider that person or whatever dependable or reliable, you act on that trust.

trust. It's like you depend on that chair to hold you up. And because you're confident that chair will hold you up, what do you do? You sit in it. You have an action that corresponds to what you believe.

This is what is being nuanced here. This is what the word believe means. He knows that he can trust the Lord and so he acts in belief on what he knows about the character of Almighty God.

Abram is declaring his trust in God and entrusting his future to God in this belief. Now this brings great blessings to Abram's soul.

[36 : 28] This is going to help strip away the fret, the worry, the anxiety in his life. And here's what he's doing now. At the bottom of the screen you see it.

Abram is choosing to settle his soul in the peace of trusting God to be faithful to him. Okay God, I don't see how you're going to do it but I trust your promise.

You say you're going to do it, you're going to do it. So Abram is grounding his soul in God's character of goodness and grace. He's patiently waiting for God to act to keep his promises.

Do you see that? This is what this means. Now the second half of verse 6 tells us the immediate favor of God on Abram's faith.

So there is favor here, but we have to understand how it comes about. Notice that it says in the text and God reckoned it to Abram as righteousness.

[37 : 26] Reckoned means counted or credited. It means to assign value. To assign value. And in this particular context, it means that the Lord assigned Abram's faith the value of righteousness.

That did happen. But now you've got to catch this next part. God counted Abram's response of faith in a way that reflected God's recognition and favor on Abram.

Yes, what is the blessing here then? What is the blessing in this particular instance? The word righteousness helps us understand this blessing of Abram's response of faith.

There is blessing here from God. So I'm not saying that God is not blessing Abram's faith. He is. He blesses your faith as well. What can we say about it though?

How do we understand it? Look at righteousness here is used to mean conformity to God's standard. Doing what is right in God's eyes.

[38 : 39] So God is assigning righteous value to Abram's faith because Abram's right response reveals God's work of making Abram's heart right with God.

Are you with me on that? That last part is super important. Why is Abram doing what he's doing? Because Abram's response reveals God's work of making Abram's heart right with God.

In other words, Abram would never have done this faith response if God hasn't first worked in him to bring about that response. It's the same thing with you and I. Anytime we respond to God in faithfulness it's because God has already worked faith in us.

so we working out what God has worked in and so we need to make sure God is working it in huh? Is God working it in?

This is where we are. This is how we deal with salvation and come to a confidence that we are saved. What I'm talking about right now. I want you to understand further.

[39 : 48] So let me say it in a little bit different way. You see it just coming up on the screen there. God counted Abram's faith as right because it came from a heart that God made right.

There would be no expression of right if God hadn't worked right into his heart. And so God is simply here counting and blessing and bestowing on Abram what God had already worked in his heart and his faith is giving evidence of.

I hope I'm not making this too muddy. Are you with me? Okay. I hope most of us are tracking here. Let me go on to say a few more things.

Being righteous means that you are in right standing with God. You are without fault. You are beyond accusation before God concerning your relationship to God's holy standard of sinless perfection.

You say, Jeff, that's me. It's you if you're a believer. If you're a Christian, that's you. You say, who could possibly claim that?

[41 : 07] That sounds so prideful. I know I'm a sinner. There is no perfection in me like this. How could I stand before the Lord when I know there's sin in my life?

Well, what's the answer? Jesus. Jesus makes the difference. He is the difference. So, I'll put this up here. Look, the right standing being reckoned, imputed, or credited to Abram's life is obviously, by definition, a righteousness outside himself.

Because none of us could ever stand before the Lord like that. It didn't originally belong to or come from within Abram. It was bestowed on him.

Alright, so here's what this is not. This is not Abram getting saved. He's already a believer prior to this. And Abram is expressing faith in the Lord as the Lord recounts his promise to him.

It's as if the text is telling us and Abram continued to believe. He just needed to be reminded and refreshed in the truth.

[42 : 17] And so that happened to him. And as God reminded him and refreshed him in his truth, refreshed him in his spirit, Abram continued to believe. Yes, thank you Lord, that's what I need.

You just put my feet right back in the truth again. And I'm going to stay in the peace of that truth. See? And so because Abram is expressing the work of God done in his heart, what does God do?

Bestow on him that righteousness that makes him right before the Lord. It's as if God is doubling down on what it means for us to know him and be saved by him and walk with him, which is exactly what Abram needs.

He needs God to come and double down to give him peace in his soul. And God does it. He condescends and comes to this fretting man and reassures him.

This is what the Lord does. And God does it in his timing. See, here's where you struggle and where I struggle. It doesn't happen when we want it to happen. How about right now?

[43 : 19] And it may be days. It may be weeks. What? Of moping? Coping? Doping? What? Weeks of what? Well, in Abram's case, he's calling him to faithfulness.

Why? Listen, because it's going to be years before this promise is going to be fulfilled in Abram's life. And he will never see it fully done.

He'll never see all these numbers of people. He doesn't even have one son yet. He's 85. Somebody tell me how old he was when God finally brought Isaac into his life.

99. God has got a ways to wait. And in chapter 16, his wife is going to have something to say about that. And it's not going to go well.

So all of this again is in the way of saying that Abram is responding to God's character and God now is bestowing this grace. He doesn't deserve it.

[44 : 24] He didn't earn it. God is rewarding him in the sense of God bestowing this grace on him out of God's kindness and tenderness in his heart. And so we ask this question again.

Making Abram right before the Lord. God coming and reassuring Abram of his steadfastness to Abram. You are right with me. I have done this work in your heart.

Just like I've saved you, I'm going to keep my promises to you, Abram. I promise I'm going to keep my promise kind of thing. Where did this righteousness come from?

Where did it come from? It comes from Jesus Christ. If you go over with me to the book of Galatians, I know that you're having to work a little bit here with me this morning.

This is why we're only doing verse 6. You have to really put your thinking caps on this morning. Maybe extra duty here. Galatians chapter 3 and we will begin in verse 6 where Paul the apostle is chastising the Galatians for turning away from a faith based righteousness and salvation.

[45 : 41] A righteousness that is based in the reality that God has given them the faith to believe in him and they're kind of turning away and they're being tempted to move toward more of a works based and so in verse 6 of Galatians 3 he says this even so Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness he quotes right out of our passage therefore because of that be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles non-Jews by faith preached the gospel beforehand notice to Abraham the gospel was preached to Abraham yes here it is all the nations will be blessed in you so so then those who are of faith are blessed with

Abraham the believer and so what are we saying here according to this passage which quotes from our passage in Genesis 15 6 Abraham knew God's gospel of bringing a savior a messiah a deliverer to the world through Abraham's line he had told Abraham in 12 3 and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed so Abraham came to understand that through this godly line bloodline from Abraham's own body this seed that will come from his body God will use that bloodline to bring this savior this messiah this deliverer into the world and Abraham put his faith in that promise just like you do because even though Abraham didn't know his name was Jesus Christ and have all the details we have and he didn't know the truth of the cross yet that was kept a mystery until the new testament

Abraham knew that he was coming and Abraham knew that God would use him to deliver and that many many people around the world even non Jews would be brought into the family of God which right now is impossible for these people to even get their minds around even non Hebrews will be brought into the family of God and he's saying Abraham this is why I told you you won't even be able to count them because we're not just talking about Jews who believe here we're talking about generation after generation around the world of people who will come to believe you won't even be able to count them and that's going to happen until Jesus comes back every tribe tongue and nation black white red purple green fuchsia whatever that's that's how God's going to do it and this tells us this so Abraham believed God's promise to send a redeemer who would come from his own line and he looked to the promise of

God for a savior! He was saved exactly the way you and I are in Christ alone now admittedly Abraham lacked the details of how God would achieve this he did not see Mount Moriah coming he did not see God bringing his son Isaac into the world and the whole sacrifice he didn't know any of that at this time all he still knows remember his circumstances haven't changed he still he still 85 Sarai is 75 Abram is living in the realm of the unknown God didn't bring him this vision and say here let me show you exactly how this is going to come off every single time I used this illustration years ago with you every single time I come across something like this or I get tested this way I think of Moses standing at the Red Sea with

Pharaoh's army bearing down on them and Pharaoh's army is going to wipe them out this is a take no prisoners effort right Pharaoh has been shamed and he's coming after him and he wants blood so he's got the sea on one side and Pharaoh's army on the other and they're in between there's nowhere to go and so God says raise your staff and he raises his staff and he commands the oceans to part and the waters part and the land is immediately dry there's no muck there's no muddy and they start walking across I can see Moses standing there going watching it happen and going whoa okay here's the thing nobody makes a move until God explains this to me when I understand how this is happening we'll all go how ridiculous isn't that what we do we want to figure it out we want to know the details when God wasn't about to say well why don't you sit down

[50 : 54] I'll hold Pharaoh off just sit down and I'll tell you how I'm doing this see that's not how we live it's not reality what did they do they went across and enjoyed the blessing of God's protection he provided salvation for that entire troop of people and so what does Abram need to do friends here it is up on the screen Abram needs to wait on the Lord he needs to wait that is probably not the answer you want to hear or I want to hear but that's the answer now I want to help your soul know God's peace as you apply it to the unknown areas so rather than take the last few minutes that I have and do a little bit more with the text I wanted to move into more of an applicational part here pastorally and kind of help you work this peace into your life as you face these unknown areas in your walk with the Lord now we can know God we can and we can know God's truth by what he's revealed to us in the Bible this is how we know God this is where he chose to reveal himself to us he wrote it down in a book he doesn't come to you in visions and he doesn't come to you you know oh now I hear something but what do you hear you don't know what you hear so go to what you can rely on and God will lead you he's given everything we need for life and godliness in his word that's what Peter tells us now listen to this this is how we know God and know his ways so that through the scripture so that notice the lack of biblical truth at work in your life for whatever reason means you will lack an understanding of how to apply God's truth to your life all of us want to hear sermons!

that help us apply it well tell me how to apply it tell me what to do everybody likes sermons like that you know five things to make your marriage a romantic heaven you know and they flock to that you do this kind of stuff where you have to sit and think you know you have to interact you have to repent you feel the conviction of the spirit on your life and you're called this is what I'm talking about a lack of the truth of God working in your life is going to make it impossible for you to apply that truth to your life it's not going to be relevant to your life because it's not working in you you got to interact with the word Greg Pastor Greg was talking about this in his announcements for our Bible reading plan this morning you can't live what you don't know you can't live what you don't know so to help you with this

I'm going to share an acronym with you and I pray that it's going to help you hold on to the truths that it expresses as you follow the Lord especially in these seasons and circumstances when the Lord isn't making the details of his will known to you you!

you don't know all the details you have just enough light to make the next step that's all he's given you so take that step and be content in it when it's time for you to take the next one he'll give you light for that one I know this is hard to live this way but it's what we're called to it's how we walk with the Lord it's walk with so let's get to this now a couple things this is how you actively wait on the Lord most people don't think of waiting on the Lord is something they do they think it's sitting back or something because that's what it tends to communicate no that's not it now from the perspective of Abram as husband and spiritual leader I'm going to share these with you because this is the!

[55 : 06] we're talking here about Abram waiting on the Lord he is a father he is a husband or father of many people in the sense of spiritually overseeing these he's a spiritual leader so he's got all these people he's got his wife that are depending on him to make these decisions that will be a blessing to them in the Lord so I want to speak to you from this acronym in that perspective the first one that we're going to deal with it's the acronym WAIT WAIT what does it mean to wait on the Lord watch for God's goodness this is how you actively participate in waiting on the Lord you watch for God's goodness you're spiritually watchful for ways in your life that God is expressing!

goodness to you because when you're not getting what you want! the temptation is to not be thankful and not recognize blessings you mope you cope you dope you pout you complain no ten years of Abram being blessed should have taught him to recognize and reflect on God's goodness see God has a track record with you did you get up and breathe his air today you're blessed your heart still beaten you're blessed but most of all is there a time in your life where God opened your eyes to your need for his forgiveness in Christ then brother and sister you're blessed that hasn't gone away so rejoice look for God's goodness look for the evidences that God's being good to his world and to you that's where you start A adorn

God's truth what does this mean well this is from Titus 2 10 it means to labor together in this instant Abram and his wife and his family to make God's truth attractive through wise submissive holy living so this involves applying God's truth to life here's where you begin to make more application of that goodness that God is ministering to you this is where you get thankful you have a grateful attitude before the Lord this is where you become trusting and obedient and joyful and you step out to do what's right because it's right it may not change your circumstances that's not the point and then I you invest in God's people people this helps you get outside yourself one of the things that happens when we get into these moods with circumstances and our eyes fixed on ourselves is we turn in don't we we turn in to self we need something that will take those hands and push them out and get them involved in other people's lives doing for other people reminding ourselves this is not all about!

me so invest in God's people your church people set your heart to serve your wife set your heart to serve others and serve God's people as an expression of who you are in the Lord pour yourself and your resources into what God values have you ever had this happen where invariably when you've done something like this and it might have just come as a!

result of you living your life not necessarily making a concerted effort at this but you meet somebody and you listen to their story and you go man they're worse off than I am have you ever had that well that's always the case but that doesn't change your circumstances does it but it might have an effect on you because what we're talking about in this waiting is what God does to change you it's what God circumstances because he may keep you in the circumstances to continue to refine you to squeeze out all the junk spelled J-E-F-F Jennifer and put J-E-S-U-S more in there you see just not to put too fine a point on it alright last one T thank God for his blessing see if you do W-A-I you should be at the place of T you should at this point be thankful for

[59 : 41] God and for God's blessings I'm not going to turn there but in Colossians 3 15 through 17 that should say 17 not 7 15 through 17 in each one of these verses God speaks to the issue of us being thankful to him and that takes us back to the W so this waiting is an active cycle spiritual cycle that helps you be participatory in what God is doing in you based on his character while you wait on the Lord for more details see you're not just sitting on your hands thankfulness brings you back up to W where you start again in your watchfulness and it just keeps!

going so watch adorn invest and be thankful as you live each day in the Lord in short the Lord's wisdom enlightens purifies trains our hearts in simplicity and purity to devotion to Christ now God willing when we're together next Lord's day I'll finish out chapter 15 so that we can then march into the narrative of 16 and we'll see what God does with it there I need another sermon to cover the covenant aspects of what God does in this Abrahamic covenant of chapter 15 because that's going to carry through the rest of the Bible all right thank you for your kind attention as we work through some of these wonderful aspects of God's character together in the life of Abram wait on the Lord wait on the Lord let's pray together our father and our God I thank you for the fresh new faces that we've!

seen in our congregation this morning pray your blessings on their souls as they have sat under your word as we get to sing to you again before we close out our service I thank you for their friendship I thank you for their soulship that we share with them a belief and faith in the Lord Jesus and that makes us blood kin in his blood and I thank you almighty God for my brothers and sisters here at grace for the members here and those who are contemplating membership I thank you for bringing them out this morning in faithfulness to you and pray God that you would help us to take your word into our hearts so that we can walk with you in the love of your heart based on your character and goodness to us and that we will have a joy in our step as we look to you throughout the week in Jesus name I pray amen