

Text: Gen 15.1-21

Genesis 15 is one of the most significant chapters of the Bible.

We are telling the Bible story, and all aspects of the story play their role, but this chapter is directly cited in Romans, Galatians, and James, each one making a significant theological point about salvation.

Of all the repetitions of the Abrahamic Covenant, it may be the most extensive of all.

Today we will survey it, which is less attention than it deserves, but we our circumstances dictate how we approach it.

Before we get into the message, we should note the structure.

1-6: The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision

7-21: And He said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out ... to give you this land"

The chapter is divided into two unequal parts, almost as if of two separate visions, though we don't know if they occurred on the same day or not.

Each vision answers Abram's fears.

We've already seen Abram set out to the promised land without knowing where he was going.

He set out in obedience to God's call.

While we saw in Egypt his faith perhaps falter, there is no denying that Abram is full of faith.

Despite this, Abram also fears. We will see two fears mentioned today.

Everyone of us faces fears. Sometimes it seems that following the Lord puts us into positions where we can fear greatly. Are we doing the right thing? Are we serving in the right place? Are we as obedient as we ought to be? Shouldn't we see more fruit in our lives?

You can probably think of other fears.

Our title is, **Do Not Fear, Abram.**

I hope you can glean something from Abram's fears and their answers.

Proposition: God's promises overcome fears if we have faith.

Read Gen 15.1-21

I. Abram's fears

A. First, let's recall the first statement of the Abrahamic Covenant (12.1-3)

1. Go forth (1)
2. Promises (2)
 - a. Great nation
 - b. Bless you
 - c. Make your name great
 - d. Make you a blessing
 - e. Protection (3a)
 - f. Blessing the families of the earth (3b)
3. Essential features of this covenant
 - a. There must be a place (go to a land I will show you)
 - b. There must be an heir (how else to be a great nation?)

B. Abram expresses his fears

1. I am childless (15.2-3)
 - a. The word for child is *zera'*
 - 1) Compare *Eliezer*
 - a) Perhaps a play on words
 - b) I have no *zera'* just this *Eliezer*
 - 2) Eliezer is born in Abram's household, but is the only solution Abram can find for this problem
 - b. Recall that there was a suggestion by the commentaries that Lot might have occupied the role of heir (until the dispute)
 - c. Abram's options are narrowing as he ages: he fears for the fulfillment of God's promise

2. I am landless (15.8)

- a. The promise of the land is a lesser promise than the promise of a son
- b. But fear fills Abram's heart here as well
 - 1) He owns no land *at all* at this point (despite great wealth)
 - 2) He has received much assurance from the Lord about the land (remember, "walk through this land, I will give it you")
 - 3) Yet... time is wasting, Abram is aging, still no land
- c. Notice, however, Abraham's question is not "will I ever possess it" but "how shall I know that I will possess it" (8)

Abraham is looking for assurance. God's assurance assuages fears.

II. God's promises

A. Both expressions of fear follow a revelation from God

1. I am your shield, your great reward (1)
2. I have brought out of Ur to give you this land (7)

The fear nags at faith.

We, too, live by faith. We've never seen Christ; we have this book. We have the message preached to us. We believe.

But how do we know? We need God's help.

B. The explicit word about a son (4-5)

1. Eliezer will not be your heir
2. One coming from your own body (a literal son) will be heir
3. More than that: Count the stars — so shall your descendants be

C. The dramatic word about the land (9-21)

1. The Lord calls for sacrifices which Abram prepares and protects (9-11)
2. The Lord puts Abram in a trance like state (12ff.)
 - a. Your descendants will be strangers "in a land not theirs"
 - b. Your descendants will leave that land "with many possessions"
 - c. Your descendants will come here in the fourth generation

The promise will look like it has failed after all the drama that is yet to come in Joseph and Jacob and so on. Yet... it will come to pass

3. The Lord enacts a singular covenant (17ff.)

a. He makes a blood covenant

b. He in essence swears by his own life that the land belongs to Abram and his descendants

God has never gone back on this promise — modern Israel may have its faults, but the land belongs to them.

One day Israel will turn to the Lord and the new kingdom will arrive.

III. Abram's faith

A. We only have Abram's response in v. 6, much commented on in the NT

1. He believed God

2. God counted it for righteousness in Abram

B. In the NT, Abram's faith is the model of our faith

Rm 4.2-4 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.³ For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. (Also Rm 4.9, 22)

Gal 3.5-7 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?⁶ ¶ Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.⁷ Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

Jas 2.21-23 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

1. All these references are discussing saving faith
2. The way God's promises become real to anyone is when they believe in them
3. The way men show they believe God's promises is to live for them

Conclusion:

We face fears as we try to work our way through this life. Sometimes we are so challenged and discouraged that we wonder if God's word is true.

Follow Abram. Do not fear. Believe.

Proposition: God's promises overcome fears if we have faith.