

Genesis 15:1-6

FAITH

What does it mean to believe?

Sooke Baptist Church

Sunday
September 18
2022
10am

also on
Facebook Live Stream
and YouTube

Coffee/Question:
If you could ask anything of God, what would it be?

03:00

Someone asked me how the LORD made himself known to Abram. In the book of Joshua, we learn that Abram and his family were idol worshipers.

Joshua 24:2-3
Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel says: ‘Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants.’”

Abram and his family were idol worshipers even though God had clearly revealed in the creation the evidence of his person and power.

Romans 1:19-20

“...what may be known about God is plain to [all people] because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

With great mercy God appeared to Abram while he lived in Ur of the Chaldeans.

Acts 7:2

“The God of glory appeared to our father Abram while he was still living in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran.”

God appeared to Abram... and as Genesis 12:1 reads... spoke to him.
The LORD spoke with Abram after he and Lot parted ways – Genesis 13:14.
And in Genesis 14:19-20 after returning from his battle with the eastern kings, the LORD through Melchizedek, again, spoke to Abram.

In our passage for today, Genesis 15:1-6, again, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision.

Genesis 15:1a

After this...

What does “after this” refer to?

After the victory God gave Abram over his enemies.

After the blessing which Melchizedek spoke over Abram.

After the oath made by Abram to God when he rejected the wealth offered to him by Bera, king of Sodom.

After Abram had done these things, God appeared to him in a vision and spoke with him.

In Genesis 15 God was the initiator.

He appeared to... and he spoke with... Abram.

Genesis 15:1a

After this , the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield. Your very great reward.”

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After this , the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield. Your very great reward.”

God saw fear within Abram.

But fear of what?

We are not told.

Here we can only guess.

If I was Abram, I would be concerned about Kedorlaomer.

What we do know is that God often speaks similar words to his people, in different circumstances and in different times.

Genesis 26:24

Do not be afraid...

Joshua 1:9

Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged...

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear...

Matthew 13:27

Don't be afraid.

To Isaac, Abram's son, the LORD said, Genesis 26:24 – Do not be afraid...

To Joshua, the LORD said, 1:9 – Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged...

To the nation of Israel, the LORD said, Isaiah 41:10 – So do not fear...

To his disciples, Jesus said, Matthew 13:27 – ... Don't be afraid.

What I so appreciate about God is that when he tells his followers to not be afraid, he always explains why.

Genesis 26:24

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you.

Joshua 1:9

Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you.

Matthew 13:27

Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.

To Isaac, the son of Abram, in a time when the inhabitants of Canaan were blocking his access to water, the LORD said, Genesis 26:24 – Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you.

To Joshua, as he was about to lead the nation of Israel into the land God had promised to them, the LORD said, Joshua 1:9 – Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

To the nation of Israel, when the threat of Babylon was growing, the LORD said, Isaiah 41:10 – So do not fear, for I am with you.

To his disciples on the sea of Galilee, when the boat they were in was being buffeted by strong winds and waves, Jesus came to them, walking on the water and said, Matthew 14:27 – Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.

Do you see how the LORD, when he spoke with Abram, not only recognized and identified his fear, but he then presented himself... as the antidote for that fear?

Genesis 15:1a

After this , the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield. Your very great reward.”



“I am your shield.”

The LORD was Abram’s shield, his protector.

Isn’t it amazing that the LORD uses the analogy of a shield to help Abram grasp how the LORD would protect him?

What’s the purpose of a shield?

It protects one from the slashing of a sword... or the thrusting of a spear... or the piercing of an arrow.

God protects his people.

This is who he is and how he is present with them.

Look at King David's experience of God, Psalm 32:7

Psalm 32:7

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Jesus prayed this prayer the last night of his life, and I believe it continues to be a prayer which he makes on behalf of all who are his.

John 17:11

“Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name.”

The LORD had brought Abram to a land that was populated by other people groups... and to a region coveted by other emerging nation states, while resulted in Canaan regularly experiencing raids and skirmishes and war.

The LORD knew the risks that were all around Abram... and he assured him... I am your shield.

This is who God is, not just to Abram, but to all his people.

He is our helper, he is our defender, he is our protector.

The LORD said to Abram...

Genesis 15:1a

After this , the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, **your very great reward.**”

Again, this is who God is.

Look at the testimony of Hebrews 11:6...

Hebrews 11:6

“... [the Lord] rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Bera, the king of Sodom had offered to Abram the wealth of that city.

But the reward the LORD offered to Abram... was himself.

He said, “I am... your very great reward.”

Remember the parable of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value?



In both cases the merchant who found them, sold everything he had in order to buy those treasures.

Now according to Jesus what did the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value represent? **God himself.**

Another time, Jesus asked a question to help those who heard him, evaluate what it was their heart treasured. He said...



If we have Jesus, we have in him a treasure, that in comparison, is greater than the wealth of the whole world.

This too was the experience of the apostle Paul. He wrote...

“I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ...”

Philippians3:8

He considered everything that this world could offer him as rubbish when put alongside Jesus Christ.

The LORD said to Abram – Do not be afraid. I am... your very great reward. These words of promise apply to us as well.

Having heard what the LORD said to him, Abram responded to God with a question.

Every indication is that Abram's question was an honest one.

He asked it from the place of faith, not doubt... and there is a world of difference between the two.

The LORD welcomes our honest questions.

So what was it that Abram asked?

Genesis 15:2-3

"Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"

You have given me no children, so a servant in my household will be my heir."

Abram already had great possessions.

What he and Sarai didn't have was a child.

Again, I must state... Abram asked this question from a place of faith.

We know this because he addressed the LORD as his Sovereign.

Although speaking to God as one's Sovereign LORD was common among the Hebrew prophets, the use of this divine name is rare in the first five books of the Bible and was only used when appealing to God for his help in a desperate situation.

Let me show you.

When the people of Israel refused to obey God and go up and take possession of the land which he had given to them, the LORD threatened to destroy them and start over with Moses.

It was Moses who advocated with God on their behalf.

It was Moses who laid prostrate before the LORD for forty days and nights.

It was Moses who prayed for them, saying...

Deuteronomy 9:26-29: "Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin. Otherwise, the country from which you brought us will say, 'Because the LORD was not able to take them into the land he had promised them, and because he hated them, he brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.

But they are your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm."

When Moses was confronted by a desperate situation he prayed a desperate prayer to the Sovereign LORD.

Moses knew that...

- the Sovereign LORD does as he pleases.
- everything the Sovereign LORD does is right and good.
- the Sovereign LORD's wisdom far exceeds a human being's capacity to understand.
- there is no one who can trace out the manifold ways in which the Sovereign LORD directs all life upon the earth.

This was at the heart of Moses question.

"LORD, I don't understand."

"If you destroy the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... then you will have broken covenant with them, and in the eyes of all people, your character will not only be questioned, and your name mocked, but your glory will be diminished.

This same passion motivated Abram as he dialogued with God.

"Sovereign LORD, you've promised that you would make me into a great nation."

"You've said I will have offspring as numerous as the dust of the earth."

"I don't understand how you will do this when Sarai and I are childless."

Having heard Abram's question, look at how God responded to him.

Genesis 15:4

“This man [Eliezer] will not be your heir,
but a son who is your own flesh and blood
will be your heir.”

Don't you love how God good is to his people?!
He speaks his promises to us... again... and again... and again.

We find ourselves in a new circumstance, a new challenge... and our faith asks of him, “How will your promises play out in this new thing that is before me?
We ask such questions, even though our history with God confirms that his faithfulness is great; that he has never failed us.

To emphasize to Abram the certainty of his promise, look at what God did.

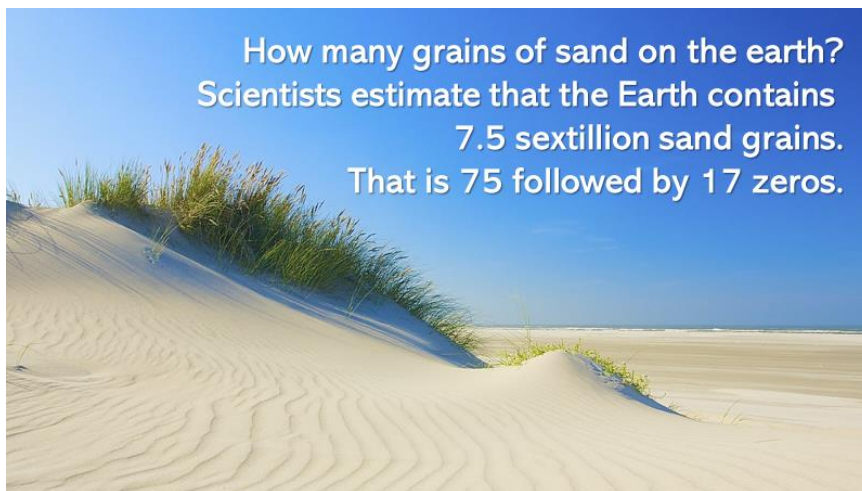


The LORD took Abram outside.
He asked Abram to look up at the sky.
He asked Abram to count the stars, if he could.

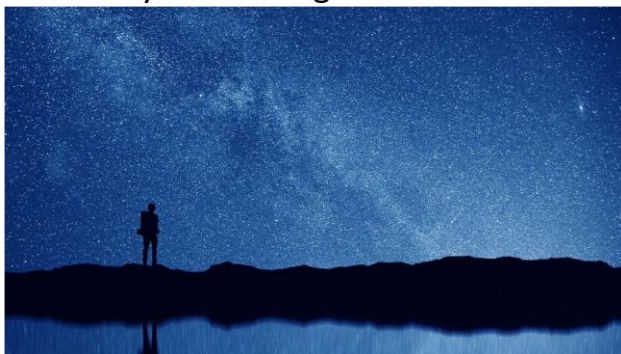


And then the LORD said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Earlier in chapter 13:16 the LORD had said to Abram that the offspring of he and Sarai would be like the dust of the earth.

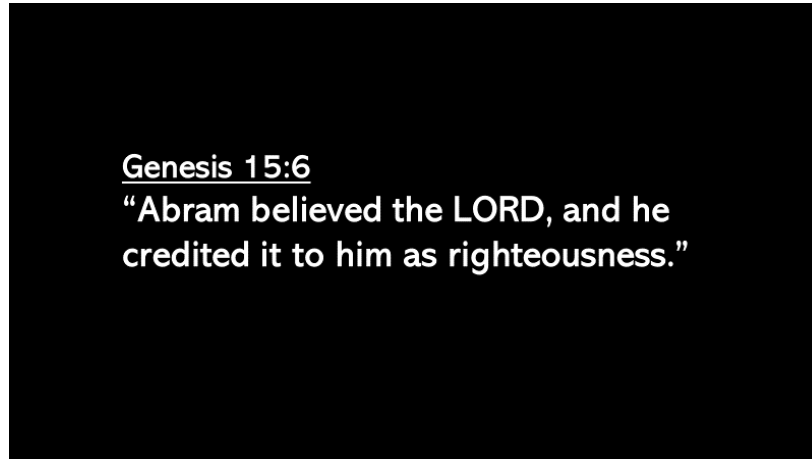


The point made by God was not to give to Abram an exact number, but to impress upon he and Sarai that the number of their descendants would be far beyond what they could imagine.

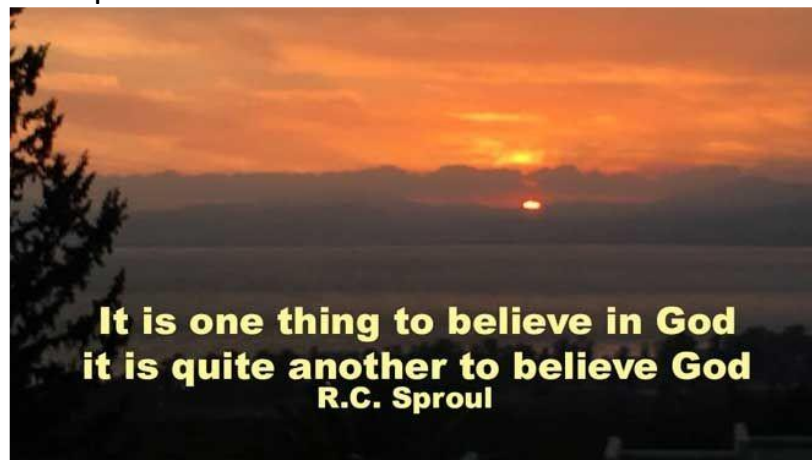


In Genesis 15 the LORD again used a stunning visual... to drive home the truth ... Abram and Sarai' s descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Look at verse 6.



R.C. Sproul writes...



Abram believed God... he considered the LORD to be trustworthy and reliable. It is important in understanding this passage, and particularly verse 6, to state that this was not the first time that Abram believed the LORD.

- Abram had believed the LORD when he left Ur and Harran and made his home in Canaan.
- Abram had believed the LORD when he came back to Canaan from Egypt.
- Abram had believed the LORD when he and Lot had separated.
- He had believed the LORD when he went to rescue Lot.
- He had believed the LORD when he swore an oath to him that he would take nothing belonging to Bera, king of Sodom.



Faith is the lens by which the unseen reality of God, not only influences, but shapes how the followers of Jesus live in this world on God's terms.

Abram's belief was not a leap into the dark, even though to an outsider it might have seemed that way.

Look at the testimony of Hebrews 11.

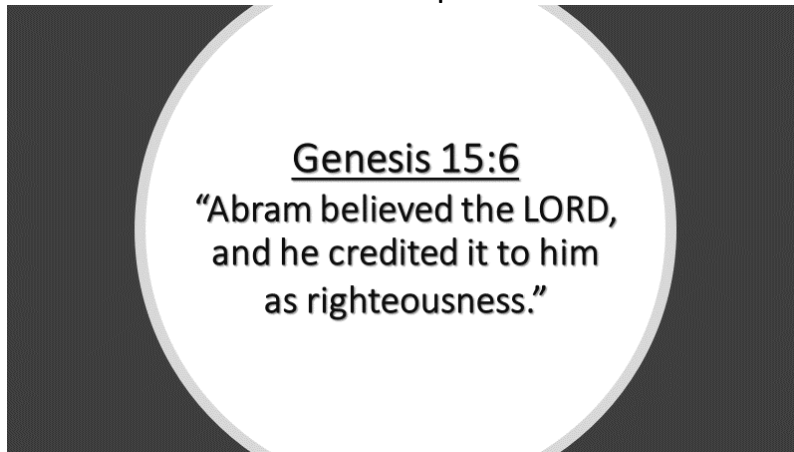
Hebrews 11:8-12: "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he didn't know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country... And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so, from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore."

Abram and Sarai believed God... they considered him faithful.
He was their Sovereign.
They staked their lives on the person of God.

Again, to the outsider, it might look like a leap into the dark.
As the LORD and Abram dialogued outside of Abram's tent, Abram still didn't know "how" God would give to him and Sarai a child of their own flesh and blood.

But Abram had believed God since he had left Ur and was convinced, though he did not the how, that God did... and that the LORD would fulfill his promise.

What did the LORD do in response to Abram's belief?



The LORD didn't give righteousness to Abram because he had earned it. Abram's obedience to God was an act of gratitude, it was how Abram expressed his thanks to the LORD for his mercy, for his faithfulness, for his goodness and providential care.

I say it again...Abram's obedience didn't earn him righteousness.

Rather, God credited him with righteousness.

In other words, this credited righteousness from God was a gift to Abram.

Do you remember our call to worship.

"The wages of sin is death..."

This is what human beings earn.

This is what is owed to us... because...

- there is no one righteous, not even one.
- there is no one who does good, not even one.
- there is no one who seeks God.
- we have all turned away.
- we have all become worthless.

Human goodness always falls short of the glory of God.

What does that mean?

It doesn't mean that our goodness comes close.



Or that our goodness with some effort could be like that of God's.



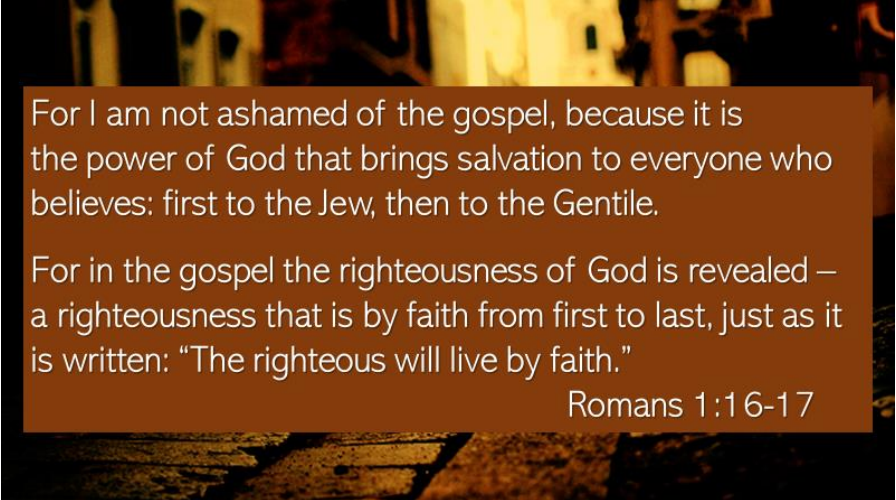
What it means is that the chasm between God's goodness and ours is beyond our efforts to attain.



We cannot earn enough righteousness to bring about our own salvation.

But the good news of the gospel, which Abram experienced, and which pointed ahead to what God's Messiah would do when he came to rescue the fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, is that what we cannot earn, is given to us as a gift when we place our trust in, when we believe God.

This is the good news... this is the gospel of Jesus Christ.



For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 1:16-17

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayers of the People

I choose today, to rejoice in the goodness of God.

From Psalm 16

I say to the LORD, "You are my Master!

Every good thing I have comes from you.

I will bless the LORD who guides me during the day and who at night instructs me. I know you are always with me.

I will not be shaken, for you are right beside me."

Lectio 24/7

Prayers of the People

We ask for those in our church family who are facing ...

... health challenges...

... spiritual challenges...

Prayers of the People

We remember the children and youth of this church.

We ask that they would be saved and grow strong in their faith.

We ask that through their families and through those who teach them the Word of God they would learn to have you as the focus of their lives.

Please guard their hearts and minds.

Prayers of the People

We pray for our municipal election.

Prayers of the People

We remember Rick Wismer.

Thank you for the opportunities you are giving to him.

We ask that the teaching of your Word by him and his team would be effective and that it would bring life from heaven to those who hear it.

Prayers of the People

We remember our sister church El Redil Caldas.

May the sufficiency of your grace encourage them today.

We pray for the Colombia Team and their sharing of the gospel on **Sunday, November 27** with parents and children of the community.

May you bless the team members who share testimony and from the Word with the power of the Spirit that they may speak clearly and be understood.