

Sooke Baptist Church

Sunday, September 25, 2022, 10am

also on Facebook Live Stream and YouTube

Salvation is of the LORD

Genesis 15:7-21

Coffee/Question:

Agree? Disagree? Explain.

You contribute nothing to your salvation
except the sin that made it necessary.

Jonathan Edwards

03:00

The last night of his life, Jesus prayed that his disciples would know the Father, the only true God, and himself, Jesus Christ, whom the Father had sent. John 17:3. What kind of relationship does God desire to have with us?



Many of you have a Facebook page.

How many friends do you have? I have 340.

Some I know well.

Some I don't know at all.

And there are many I would describe as acquaintances... that I have met over the past 10 years.

Is being in relationship with God like being a Facebook friend of his? a super-casual relationship?

We see his posts from time to time, when its necessary... and he sees the posts of our lives whenever he wants.

But for the most part we do our thing, and he does his?

What kind of relationship does God purpose to have with human beings...
... with you and me?

This is a really important question... which Genesis 15 answers.

So far, in Genesis 12-15 we've seen that God and Abram communicated on a regular basis... and that a recurring topic of conversation concerned land and an heir.

Last week we studied Genesis 15:1-6.

This passage impressed upon us that whenever God's people step out in faith of him, the LORD meets them and encourages them.

Look again at what the LORD did for Abram...

Genesis 15:1a

"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

Surprisingly, this encouragement surfaced a question within Abram... that though it seems like it came out of a place of doubt, actually was a question of faith.

We know this because.... Abram addressed God as his...



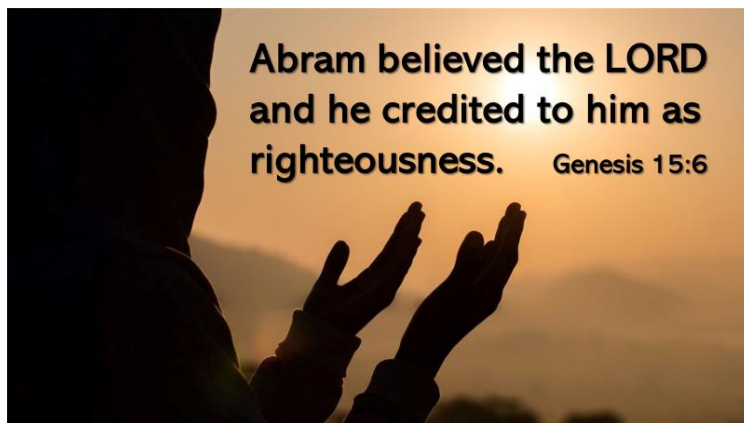
... and v.6 confirms to the reader that...



Abram's belief was not exercised for the first time that particular night when he and the LORD stood outside of his tent looking up at the night sky.



Since he and Sarai had left Ur, Abram had believed the LORD.
Look at the rest of v.6.



Abram's relationship with God was not the result of his moral efforts. He did not earn... favor and good standing with the LORD. How then did Abram become a friend of God... for the testimony of Scripture is that he was?

Isaiah 41:8-10a

But you Israel my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of **Abraham my friend** I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, "You are my servant;" I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.



It wasn't that Abram deposited righteousness every day into a spiritual bank until finally, he had accumulated enough to be God's friend. Abram's righteousness was gifted to him... from God... because he believed God.

Having confirmed to Abram that he would have an heir of his own flesh and blood, the LORD further confirmed his promise regarding the land.

And this is where we begin our study today.

Genesis 15:7

He also said to him,
“I am the LORD, who brought you out
of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this
land to take possession of it.”

The two promises made by the LORD to Abram were connected.
The two... an heir and land... went hand in hand.

As Abram heard what the LORD said, he again asked a question, arising, not from doubt, but from faith.

He again addressed the LORD as his...

Genesis 15:8

“O Sovereign LORD...”

What was Abram’s question?

Genesis 15:8

“O Sovereign LORD,
how can I know that I will gain
possession of [Canaan]?”

Abram’s question was a “how” question.

Genesis 15:8

"O Sovereign LORD,

how can I know that I will gain possession of [Canaan]?"

How would the Sovereign LORD give to him a land already possessed by others? This was not a question of whether or not the LORD could do so. Abram knew the LORD is Sovereign, which meant nothing is impossible for God.

Abrams' was a question of ... by what means.

Look at the LORD's answer.



v.9 – Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.

What was Abram's response to God's request?

Genesis 15:10

Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.

Abram knew what God was asking of him.

But for the sake of the reader v.18 explains.

Genesis 15:18
**On that day the LORD
made a covenant
with Abram.**

This verse answers our earlier question of what kind of relationship God desires to have with those who follow him?

A covenant relationship.

A committed relationship.

The word covenant in our time is often associated with land – a freehold covenant, a restrictive covenant, a land use covenant.

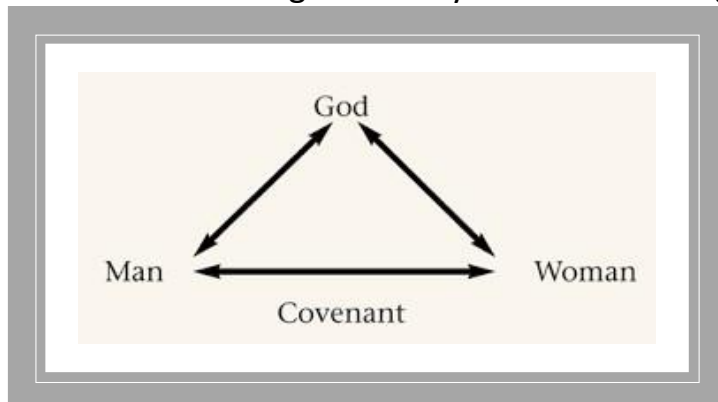
A term used more frequently and better understood... is the word contract... that lays out the details and obligations when purchasing or selling a home or defining the terms of employment.

God is very specific in the Bible.

The relationship he desires with his people is not a contract relationship, but a covenant relationship.

What is the difference?

The Bible provides us not just with technical language, but a living example: a Christian wedding ceremony and the resulting marriage.

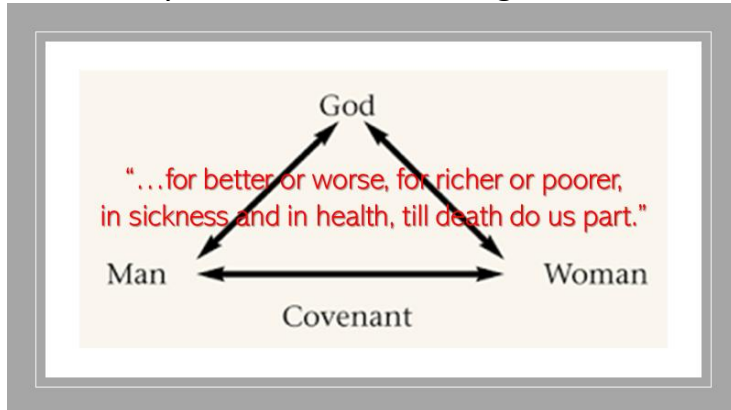


In the making of a marriage covenant, a man and a woman makes promises to one another in the presence of God.

God is both the witness of the vows made and the One who helps the man and the woman to fulfill those vows.

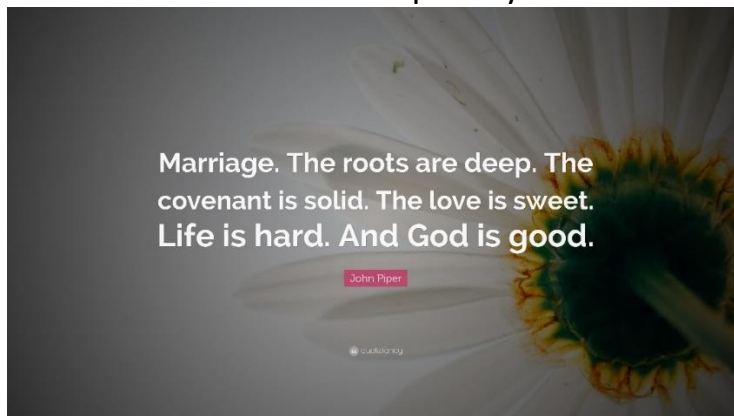
The promises spoken in the making of a marriage covenant... are understood to be binding, regardless of what the future might bring.

That is why the vows in a marriage covenant state...



It is within the parameters of the marriage covenant... that love flourishes and a marriage is built.

Of such a covenant John Piper says this...



While I've said this before, please let me say it again: a marriage covenant and the resulting marriage... made between a man and a woman, serves as a signpost that points to the kind of relationship that God desires to have with Jesus' followers.

Ephesians 5 speaks of this and calls it...

Ephesians 5:32

"This is a profound mystery..."

What is the mystery being referred to?

It is how a man and a woman who have bound their lives together in the making of a marriage covenant... become one flesh.

Look at what Jesus said in Matthew 19:4-6

Matthew 19:4-6

"At the beginning the Creator made them male and female.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Think about it – the two who are different, a man and a woman...as they enter into a marriage covenant, experience God joining their lives together as husband and wife.

This is the basis by which they become one in heart, in mind, in soul, in body, in love, and in purpose.

Now look at the rest of Ephesians 5:32.

Ephesians 5:32

"This is a profound mystery— but I am talking about Christ and the church."

Here, we see it again... two who are different – Jesus, the Son of God... and his followers – experience their lives being joined together by God the Father... when a person believes Jesus and receives him into their lives on the basis of the new covenant which Jesus inaugurated by the sacrifice of his life and his resurrection.

This is how the followers of Jesus become one in heart, in mind, in soul, in love and in purpose with their Savior.

Let's come back now to Genesis 15:18.

Genesis 15:18
**On that day the LORD
made a covenant
with Abram.**

The promises of the covenant were...

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you."
"All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
"I am your shield, your very great reward."
"A son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."
"Your offspring will be as numerous as the stars in the sky,
and like the dust of the earth that cannot be counted."
"I brought you out of Ur to give you this land to take
possession of."

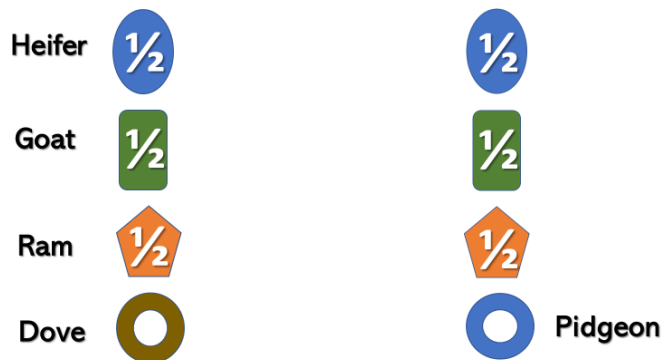
And so that there would be no confusion in the mind of Abram, nor his descendants, God specified that the land to be given to Abram was:

Genesis 15:19-21

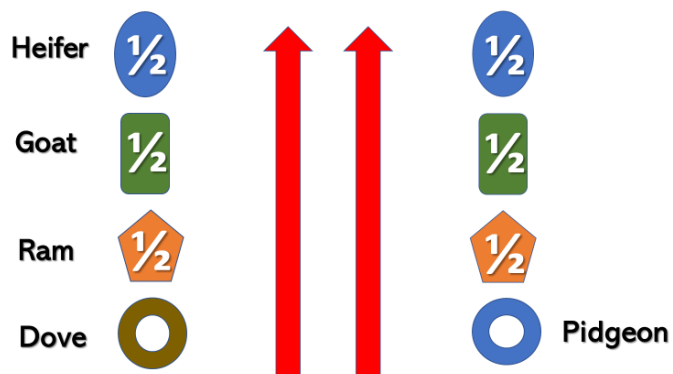
...the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.

But what about the animals God asked for?

Why did Abram cut them in two and lay them out as he did?



In Abram's time when a covenant was made... the two parties who entered into a covenant would walk in between the animals which had been cut in two.



What did this communicate?

"If I break the terms of this covenant, may I die."

This scene in Genesis 15 impresses upon the reader the seriousness of entering into a covenant with God... both on his part and on ours.

As night fell... Abram fell... into a deep sleep.

As he slept the LORD in a dream spoke to Abram... a message that was vivid and unforgettable.

God foretold to Abram a time of dreadful darkness... lasting four hundred years... that would come upon his descendants.

They would be strangers in a country not their own.

They would be enslaved.

They would be mistreated.

But God would come to their aid and rescue them and punish the nation who had harmed them.

Then they would come back to Canaan with great possessions.

But their return would not happen until the fourth generation.

Why such a long delay?

The LORD himself provided the answer... which reveals that the giving of extended opportunity to the peoples of the earth to repent and return to God... comes out of who the LORD is.

Abram's descendants would not possess Canaan for another four hundred years, because...

Genesis 15:16b

"The sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

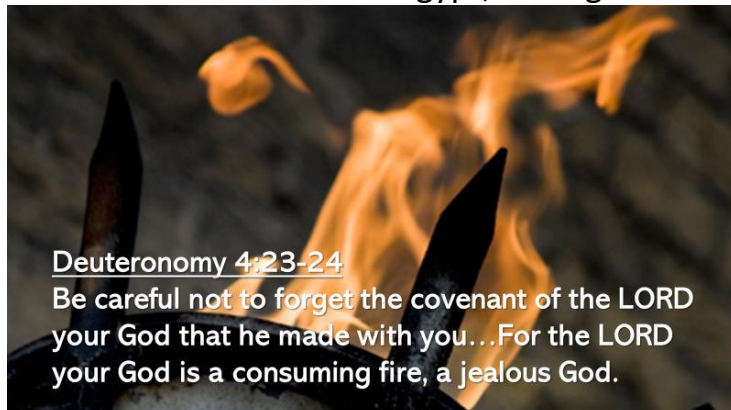
Once the LORD finished speaking with Abram, the extraordinary happened.

Abram was not woken up and asked by the LORD to walk with him between the animals.

In his dream, Abram saw a smoking firepot with a blazing torch.

These two represented the person and glory of God.

After Israel's rescue from Egypt, through Moses God said to the people,

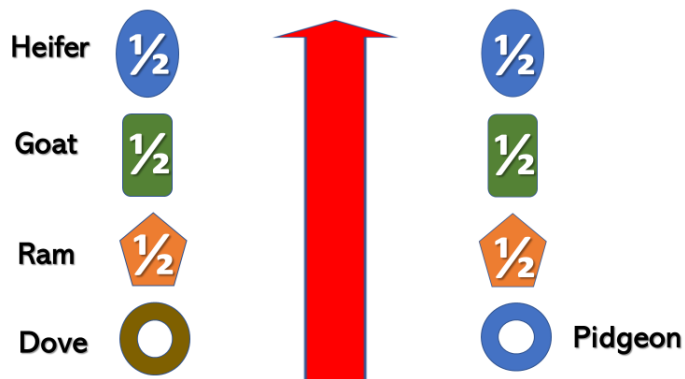


The LORD is a consuming fire... he is a jealous God.

In love he commits himself to his people like a husband does to his wife.

What is extraordinary in Genesis 15 is that Abram was not asked by the LORD to walk between the severed animals.

Only the LORD did so.



Do you know what this communicated?

To Abram and to his descendants and in turn to his who are Abram's spiritual descendants?

The responsibility for fulfilling the promises of the covenant rested solely upon the LORD.



This scene in Genesis 15 was a glorious signpost that pointed ahead to what the Rescuer would do.

I love how Ligonier Ministries explains it:

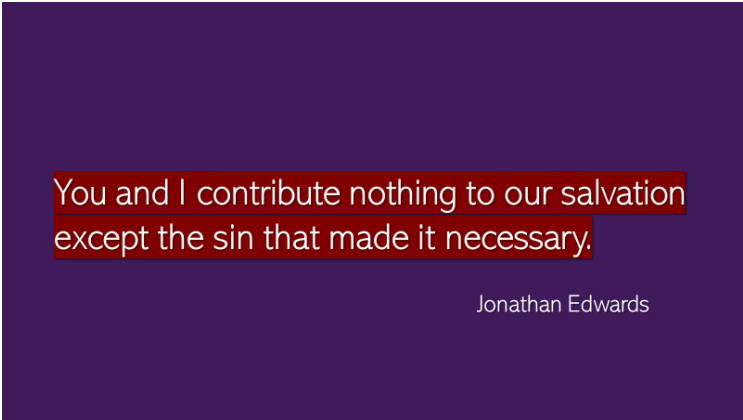
The glory of the gospel is that in love and with justice God took on the covenant curses in the person of Jesus Christ to save us.

What is the gospel in a nutshell that is portrayed in Genesis 15?

Salvation is of the LORD.

Salvation is not of our good works... or achieved by living a stellar moral lives.

Remember the coffee/question.



You and I contribute nothing to our salvation
except the sin that made it necessary.

Jonathan Edwards

Every aspect of our salvation is from God and is entirely dependent upon God.
The Apostle Paul affirmed this when he wrote...



Romans 11:36

“From Him
and through Him
and to Him
are all things.”

This is to say, salvation is...

Romans 11:36

“From Him
and through Him
and to Him
are all things.”

Salvation is:

...God determined

...God purchased

...God applied

...God secured.

Salvation is of the Lord alone. Ligonier Ministries

Scott Hubbard writes of this and says..

The living God is a rescuing, delivering God
who enters in from the outside and shatters the
bars of our expectations.

The LORD is a Pharoah-crushing, sea-parting
God; a Christ-giving, tomb-emptying God.
For Him, the impossible is only a word away.

Scott Hubbad

This truth is intended by God to grow our confidence, not in ourselves but in him.

- We have a strong Savior whose grace is greater than our sin.
- We have a strong Savior who not only cancels our sin debt, but who credits us with his righteousness.
- We have a strong Savior who by his Spirit is active to transform our lives, by breaking the power of our cancelled sin.

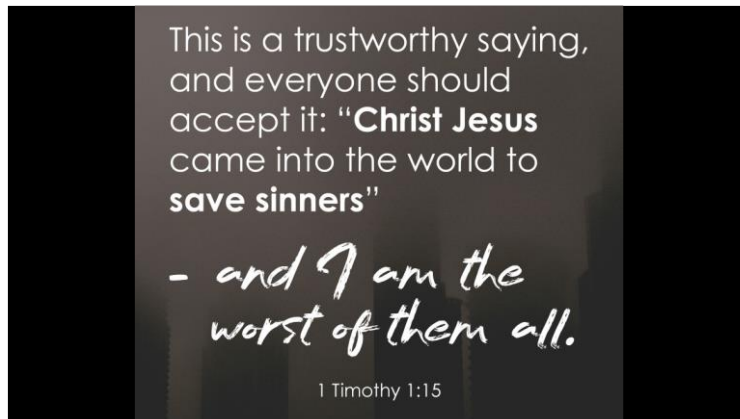
This is why we passionately live for Jesus Christ.

We do so, not to earn his favor, but to express our gratitude for favor granted.

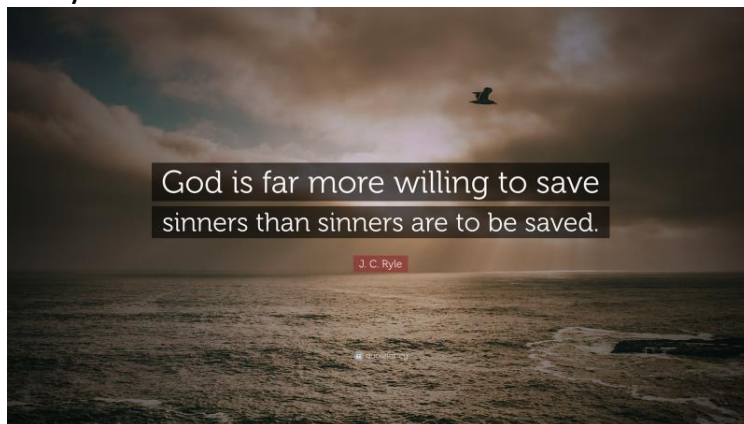
This truth is also intended by God to embolden our witness.

If salvation is of the LORD, and not of human moral effort or good deeds, then the gospel is powerful to save all sinners, even the worst.

This was the testimony of the apostle Paul to Timothy.



But the gospel confronts humanity's desperate need.
JC Ryle wrote of this need...



Think about it.
How many of us ran from God?
How many of us resisted him, again and again?
And yet... God persistently pursued us.

Why did he do so?
Because it is the glory of God to save sinners and bring them into relationship with himself on the basis of the new covenant enacted by Jesus.

The gospel is the power of God to save.
It is this we remember week by week as we gather in worship of our great God.

And it is this good news and its invitation that we extend to any and all who yet have not come home to God.
Jesus Christ came into the world to save you.
Will you believe him and receive him today?

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...

We praise you for answered prayers.

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 the municipal election of a mayor,
city councillors and school trustees.
May your will be done.

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 with the power of the
Spirit that they may speak clearly and be understood as
they share testimony and Scripture.

God made a covenant with Abraham in which He promised, “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:1–3).

This covenant with Abram was reiterated in Genesis 15 and 17.
It too was an unconditional covenant.

God made a covenant with the nation of Israel regarding their use of the land of Canaan (Exodus 19—24).
The land had been given to Abraham's descendants unconditionally.
However, the use of the land by any specific generation of Israelites was conditional upon their obedience.

As a result, at times, though the Hebrew people lived in the land, they were oppressed and not able to enjoy the full benefits of it, as seen in the book of Judges.

There came a point in history when the Israelites were exiled from the land due to their ongoing disobedience and idolatry.
However, God promised that he would bring a later generation back to the land (Isaiah 11:11–12).

The LORD kept His word, as recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

God made a covenant with David that he would have a descendant who would sit on his throne forever (2 Samuel 7).
This was an unconditional covenant, although the length of reign for any specific Davidic ruler could be limited by his disobedience.

This covenant with David was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of David.

In Jeremiah 31, God promised a New Covenant with Israel.
Why did God do this?
Because Israel had repeatedly violated the terms of the covenant made at Mt. Sinai.

God promised his new covenant would be different because the hearts of the people would be changed by him so that they would want to be faithful.

This promise was fulfilled in the New Testament with the coming of Christ and the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit, who gives the people of God the desire to obey Him.