

More Than You Expected

Genesis 15:8-18

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"Walking by Faith" Series on the Life of Abraham - Lesson 12 of 20

Abraham was walking through a very dark time of his life. He knew that God had promised him an heir; however, nothing seemed to be happening so Abraham questioned God. Often, we react like Abraham when we don't see outward evidence that God is working on our problems. We draw the wrong conclusion and assume that God isn't going to help us. God's response to Abraham teaches us how to walk through the dark times of uncertainty in our own lives ... times when we find ourselves challenged by God's timing and by His way of doing things.

In Genesis 15:1, God wanted Abraham to learn that his relationship with Him was of greater value than anything that the Lord might do for him; *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."* God was in essence saying to Abraham, "I'm all you need. No one can take my place. Nothing can satisfy your deepest longings like I can." Abraham assumes that nothing is happening with the heir that God has promised him. Abraham presumes that perhaps God wanted his servant, Eliezer, to be his heir. God reassures Abraham that Eliezer is not his heir. In Genesis 15:4, God challenges Abraham not to settle for anything less than what has been promised to him; *The word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."*

Receiving New Revelations from God

Abraham asks God an honest question in Genesis 15:8, *And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"* Abraham asked God the same questions that we often ask Him ... "How will You accomplish this for me? When will it happen?" Abraham was asking God for specific details about his life and God graciously answered him.

First of all, God revealed to Abraham the "plan of salvation." He showed Abraham that the covenant of redemption would be established through the shedding of blood and the death of the innocent; *So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."* Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two (Genesis 15:9-10). God was showing Abraham how a "Holy God" would deal with the sins of mankind and restore their relationship to Him. The slain animals of Abraham's sacrifice pictured God's ultimate sacrifice. God would present His Son to be slain to pay sin's penalty and provide salvation to all who would ask.

The second revelation that God gave Abraham was a revelation of Himself; *And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces* (Genesis 15:17). The "fire" that passed through Abraham's sacrifice was the manifest presence of God, Himself. This was the same "fire" that led Moses and the Israelites through the wilderness. This was the same "fire" that consumed Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel when he challenged the prophets of Baal.

God was doing far more than just answering a question; He was establishing a covenant with Abraham. In the culture of the day, cutting a covenant was the surest thing on the earth. Covenants were always expected to be fulfilled and were never expected to be broken. God was giving Abraham the strongest sign of His promise that He could ... a promise tied to a covenant.

New Revelations Bring New Tests

Every new revelation from God is usually accompanied by a new test or challenge. Each new test or challenge is designed to reveal to us whether or not we really believe what God has shown to us. In Genesis 15:10, we read of how Abraham had made his commitment to God and had prepared his sacrifice; *Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.* After preparing his sacrifice, Abraham sat down and waited for God to respond.

Abraham was tested on his commitment while he was waiting on God in Genesis 15:11, *And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.* The vultures swooped down to tear and consume Abrahams' sacrifice. We need to realize that Satan will always oppose any significant new commitment that we make to have a deeper walk with God. Like the vultures seeking to take away Abraham's sacrifice, Satan always comes to try to destroy our new commitments to God.

Abraham stood his ground and drove the vultures away. When Satan comes to tear and devour your new commitment to God, rise up and stand your ground. In the Name of Jesus, confess the blood of the cross against him and he will flee; *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). When we claim the Blood of the Cross, it reminds Satan that he is defeated ... more importantly, it lets him know, that you know, he is defeated!

Satan knows ...

He was defeated at the Cross of Jesus he is betting that you don't know it!
The power in Jesus' Blood and Name he is betting that you don't know it!
The Word of God is absolute Truth he is betting that you don't know it!
God always keeps His promises he is betting that you don't know it!
The “armor of God” will protect you he is betting that you don't know it!
God's spiritual weapons will work he is betting that you don't know it!

More Than Expected

Sometimes when we are walking in the center of God's will we may end up in times of darkness. There are times when we can't see any evidence of God working on our problems. There are times when we don't sense His presence. Our faith rests on our conviction regarding the promises of His Word that He will never leave us or forsake us.

Abraham enters a time of darkness in Genesis 15:12, *Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.* However, don't stop there! You must continue reading in Genesis 15:13, *“Then He said to Abram.”* The very first thing Abraham hears in this time of deep darkness was God's voice. God reassured Abraham that He was with him.

God started answering Abraham's questions, but in doing so, He gave Abraham far more information than he had requested. In Genesis 15:13-14, 16, God gives Abraham details of his descendants. They will live in captivity in a strange land and will be delivered after four-hundred years of slavery to Egypt; *Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. “And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”* In Genesis 15:15, God promises Abraham that he would live a long and full life; *“Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.”* At the time this event takes place, Abraham is seventy-five years old. He would live another one-hundred years just as God promised!

God is not finished answering Abraham's questions yet. God gave Abraham the dimensions of his inheritance in Genesis 15:18, *On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates."* Earlier, in Genesis 13:17, God had instructed Abraham to walk through the land of his inheritance; *"Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you"*. Abraham had walked through the land as God had instructed him. He walked from Hebron in the north, all the way to Egypt in the south. God was making it clear to Abraham that his inheritance was bigger than he thought and that it all belonged to him and to his descendants.

God is Always Faithful

God always gives us more information and blessings than we ask for, or can even imagine. Ephesians 3:20 tells us, *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.* Things may not be happening on our terms, or within our time frames, but God is always faithful! We need to remember that He is orchestrating something in us that will work for our good and will be observed by those in our circle of influence; *We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28). God is faithful to address those things that concern us. The Psalmist of old knew that people were watching him go through his trials and he knew that they would be impacted by his reactions to his problems ...

Psalm 40:1-3

*I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God;
Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD.*

We need to remember that what we see today is not the final picture of how things will turn out. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:17-19 as he told the young church at Ephesus of his prayers for them; *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.*

Paul would go on to tell this young church of his confidence that God was doing a greater work in them than they were able to realize in Ephesians 3:14-21, *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

We tend to look at things the way they are right now. We often assume that this is the way things will always be for us. This is not true! In our wildest imaginations, we cannot even begin to conceive of the things that the Lord has prepared for those who love Him; *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him"* (I Corinthians 2:9).

In essence, Abraham was telling God that he couldn't see anything progressing in regards to the promise of an heir. In Genesis 15:5-6, God took Abraham for a walk and told him to look up and count the stars; *Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.* He was telling Abraham that this is what His promise would look like when it was fulfilled. The stars became the sign of God's promise and Abraham chose to believe God.

Abraham couldn't comprehend the pattern of the stars but, he believed God!
Abraham couldn't explain the origin of the stars but, he believed God!
Abraham couldn't count the number of the stars but, he believed God!

God's Silent Questions

God makes a statement to Abraham in Genesis 15:1, *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."* But, in the statement, there is a silent question as well; "Abraham, am I enough reward for you?" This silent question is also relevant to us; is God enough, or do we have to have Him perform for us before we believe Him and worship Him? I often ask the question, "If God never answers another prayer for you, will you still love, serve and worship Him?" Don't answer too quickly as our impatience and frustration with God may betray us.

God makes a statement to Abraham in Genesis 15:5, *Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."* Once again, there is a silent question; "Abraham, are My promises enough for you to believe Me?" God wants to know whether or not the promises of His Word are enough for us to believe Him. Is His Word enough for us to build our lives on by faith; or, do we need Him to perform in order for us to trust His promises? Again, we shouldn't answer too hastily, as our circumventing His Word in order to solve our problems may betray us.

Ask Yourself the Hard Questions:

"Is Knowing God Enough for Me?"

OR

"Do I Need More from Him to Be Satisfied?"

"Are the Promises of God's Word Enough to Prove God is Faithful to Me?"

OR

"Do I Need Him to Demonstrate His Power Before I Will Believe Him?"