

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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GOD'S REASSURANCES TO ABRAM

Genesis 15

July 21, 2019

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There are four points to my message today:

- God reassured Abram through a vision.
- God reassured Abram by reminding him of the past.
- God reassured Abram by telling him about the future.
- God reassured Abram by giving him a sign.

INTRODUCTION: Here's the quick view of Abram so far:

- * Abram was a man God called to set out on a journey of faith.
- * Abram had no children but God told him he'd make Abram the father of a great nation.
- * As he traveled, Abram stopped to build altars and worship God.
- * At one stop, God told him the land he saw was the land he would give to his descendants who would number so many they'd be impossible to count.
- * Abram and his relationship with God was growing until a famine came. He decided to take a detour and go to Egypt where there was plenty of food.
- * Abram's time in Egypt had its share of problems and he was expelled by the Pharaoh.
- * He returned to the place where he last worshipped God before going to Egypt.
- * Abram and his nephew Lot parted ways because their two estates had grown to the point that they had conflict.
- * Abram and Lot parted ways because their servants quarreled and the land could not sustain all their belongings.
- * Lot, his family, servants, and all his belongings were captured by an enemy coalition.

* Abram and his army of servants overtook the enemy and rescued Lot.

GOD REASSURED ABRAM THROUGH A VISION

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 15:1-5

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.”

² *But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”*

⁴ *Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.”* ⁵ *He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”*

How many times now had God told Abram the same thing? Why did he keep telling him over and over? I believe he did it because he knew Abram’s nature, which was very similar to our nature.

APPLICATION: We need constant reassurance. If we don’t hear from our loved ones, “I love you,” then we are emotionally starved. I think of the old story, told as a joke, of the woman who asked her husband why he never said he loved her...to which he replied, “I told you I loved you when I married you. If I change my mind, I’ll let you know.” We laugh when we hear that but all too often it’s commonplace. If we follow God’s example, then we’ll reassure people without having to be asked. Think about that. Reassuring is God’s nature. He wants his children to feel secure.

In this case, he gave Abram a vision. And when God reassured Abram...

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 15:6 *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

GOD REASSURED ABRAM BY REMINDING HIM OF THE PAST

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 15:17

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.”

EXPLANATION: Abram already knew who the Lord was, but God reminded him. Abram knew God had brought him about of the land of Ur, but God reminded him. Why?

I looked for, but couldn't find, a list of times God reminded people how he had been faithful and people reminded God of what he had promised -- Moses and the people of Israel, King David, the list could go on and on.

This interaction between God and people is quite interesting, this reassuring, remembering, and reminding. Because he was meeting Abram on Abram's level. And apparently, like many of us, Abram's memory must have been prone to fading.

I believe the answer is found in the overall way God relates to people on our level. Why does he do that? Because we cannot relate to him on his level. The closest we can come to relating to God on his level is by following his son, Jesus.

In chapter 12 verse 1 God said he would show Abram a land he would give him. In verse 7, he showed him that land.

In chapter 13, verse 14, he shows him the land again and reassures him of his promise.

In chapter 14, he reassures him again through the priest Melchizedek.

Here in chapter 15, he reassures him again, but this time he does it several times in one chapter. You can easily deduce that God is leading up to something.

GOD REASSURED ABRAM BY TELLING HIM ABOUT THE FUTURE

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 15:8-16

But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

⁹ So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

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. ¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to him, “Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

¹⁵ You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age.

¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

EXPLANATION: God gave Abram a glimpse of the future – in fact, he gave him the good, the bad, and the ugly. Who wants to hear a prophecy that one’s descendants will be slaves? Who wants to hear a prophecy that it’ll take four generations for a promise to be fulfilled? Abram had reached a point in his faith that God revealed to him what had not revealed to this point.

When Abram was in Ur, before he packed his bags, God didn’t tell him all of this because he would have been confused. He would not have been able to handle it.

APPLICATION: Think for a moment of the progression of your life. If what you know now you had known at age 10, you would not have been able to handle it. It would have been information overload. You would have been afraid.

You see, God reveals things to us through progressive revelation. He doesn’t dump it all on us at once. He reveals things to us over time, as we mature, as our faith grows. When we travel down a road we’ve never been on before, we don’t know what’s ahead until we get there... and that pattern continues until we reach our destination.

GOD REASSURED ABRAM WITH A SIGN

Abram had followed the Lord's command. He had slain the animals. What in the world was this all about? In the ancient Middle East, when people made a covenant with each other, they would sacrifice animals like this: cut them in half and walk between the halves. The idea behind the covenant was, "If I break the covenant, may what has happened to these animals happen to me." In this case, however, Abram was not asked to join in on the covenant.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 15:17-20

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

God himself appeared as a smoking firepot and a torch and went through the halves. The covenant with Abram was not a mutual covenant, it was a covenant from God to Abram. God obligated himself to Abram and his descendants. Since we know the rest of the story and the history of the people, we are witnesses to the historical facts that God did indeed keep his covenant with Abram.

CONCLUSION: I want to point out as clearly as possible that God might indeed reassure us in the ways he did to Abram. None of us should put any limits on God, but keep in mind that Abram did not have a Bible. He did not have God's written word like we do. We have all the reassurances we need, right here. God's number one way of reassuring people is through the scripture.

I've never been one to shame people for not reading their Bibles enough. I think we've had a steady, lifetime diet of that, but I know this for a fact – those who know their Bible – and I don't mean people who know objective facts about the Bible, like there are 66 books – but people who really study the Bible and learn, they are the strongest believers. They are the people with the most faith.

The reason God reassures us is because he loves us and doesn't want us to wander aimlessly, and in insecurity, seeking his approval.

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Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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