

Faithful Living in a Fallen World: A Study in the Life of Abraham

Lesson #5: *Genesis 15:1-6*

When God's Promises and Our Problems Collide



Some people have estimated over 8,000 promises in the Bible – promises from a God Who is by His very nature A Promise Keeper. And with those promises come great privileges, and problems. In fact, more often than not, we tend to think this way:

“God, you’ve promised me this _____ but right now this _____ is happening. What gives, God?”

Some examples: (*cf Exodus 23:25*) * God has caused all my enemies to perish? * God promises me PEACE? * God promises to bless me when I WITNESS for the Gospel? * God

promises to bless me when I get involved in a CHURCH? * If I raise my FAMILY right, they won’t turn away from the Faith? * **“WORSHIP the Lord your God, and His blessing will be on your FOOD and WATER; I will take away SICKNESSES from you.”** We read / hear / say to ourselves, but we wonder, “What’s up?” GOD gives me PROMISES, but I have PROBLEMS! What’s going on, here??

What happens when God’s promises and our problems collide? **OUR FAITH GETS WOBBLY. WE STRUGGLE.** Is there something wrong with my FAITH? Or with GOD? We either doubt OURSELVES or we doubt GOD.

How do we deal with this struggle in our lives? **3 Reminders.**

1. God's PEOPLE struggle with God's PROMISES.

- What does the command in **Vs 1** assume about God’s people?
We don’t know the precise nature of the FEAR Yahweh is addressing in Abraham’s life, but we DO know this: THESE VERY WORDS TELL US THAT GOD KNOWS THAT EVEN HIS FOLLOWERS ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE FEARS! (You’re a Xn. What do you fear?)
- What insight do **Vv 1-3** give us about an issue we often have with the promises of God?
(*cf 12:1-3*)
The ISSUE is, there is a passage of time without the fulfillment of the promises of God. Abraham has the promise but his circumstances have NOT changed. He still doesn’t have a child! We ALL live in the “gap” between what God has promised and the fulfillment of His promises. Eg New Heaven & New earth! The assurance of salvation. Healing and wholeness for me & my loved ones.
- What do these **Vs** teach us about the freedom we have and the way we express our freedom?
We are free to complain to God. But EVEN w/our complaints, we don’t rant and rave and shake our fist & jump up and down like a spoiled brat throwing a hissy fit. We may have a complain, or a question, but we ALWAYS remember WE are the servant, Yahweh is the Sovereign. There’s candor, but there’s respect. He’s “Lord Yahweh / Adonai Yahweh,” after all!

- What good thing *may* complaining to God reveal about us?

If we are having difficulties with the promises of God, then maybe it's because the promises of God really do matter to us [... The 3rd Saturday of October ... 1935 Bear Bryant played for the U of A. BAMA lost to MSU & Bryant broke his fibula in the game. Was supposed just to suit up for the game to give moral support but ended up playing, catching a pass for a first down that led to a touchdown + a lateral for a TD. BAMA won 25-0 in the big game Vs TN. That move by Bryant was NOT smart, but it WAS revealing. What did it REVEAL? IT SHOWED HOW IMPORTANT FOOTBALL REALLY WAS TO HIM!

When the promises of God matter to us & we want them, we will cast our questions / bewilderment at the feet of the Lord!

Here's the difference between how belief and unbelief act when God's promises have not yet been fulfilled:

***** Unbelief SPITS on God's Promises; only Faith STRUGGLES over them. Unbelief DISMISSES promises; only Faith DEBATES them – with God. *****

It's ok to take your struggles to the Lord . . . it's NOT like He doesn't know about them already. The question is, are YOU aware of your struggles and are you going to verbally voice your struggles to the Lord?

2. God gives us PICTURES of His Promises.

- What two dynamics do we see working together in Vs 5?

There's the SIGN, and there's the SPOKEN WORD interpreting the sign. We're NOT a "SIGN DRIVEN" faith, and people who are always looking for a sign can be a little cray-cray! [Edra, "It's a SIGN!"] But God DOES in His Word give us SIGNS and GOD HIMSELF interprets the signs! Psalm 19:1 . . . Rainbow and Genesis 9...

- What does having a "visual" do to our Faith?

A picture has a way helping us visualize something abstract / a picture captures and fires our IMAGINATIONS. Pictures make a difference. [recipe... That SOUNDS good! But, open up a page of Southern Living Magazine and see the dish in all it's multi-colored gastronomical glory, and you say, "Wow! That LOOKS good. I WANT that!" / How to prepare videos on FB, & the finished product are VIDEOS and NOT articles. We NEED appeals to our imagination! We are IMAGE-DRIVEN people.

Or you may want to put it this way. A PICTURE doesn't make God's Word or promises more CERTAIN, but it sure does make the promises more VIVID! [Coach Ogeron & how he recruits]. We need our IMAGINATIONS captured, and so God says to us, "Here, let Me give you a picture of what this looks like..."

- What would be an example in our church of a visual and what it does to our Faith?

CROSS reminds us of the sacrificial, substitutionary death of Jesus. A visual ASSISTS our Faith, and gives it something CONCRETE to anchor our faith to. WHAT ABOUT THE BREAD AND THE CUP? You see this bread? It represents something you can count on! Same with the cup! IF I WENT THIS FAR FOR YOU, THEN YOU MATTER TO ME, AND BECAUSE I MET YOUR GREATEST NEED, I WILL MEET YOUR LESSER NEEDS, ALSO!

3. God shows us what sufficient FAITH looks like.

Verse 6 consists of only 5 words in the original language. Dynamite comes in small packages!

- Some observations about the verse:

➤ It's a **OBSERVATION** by the writer, and not part of the conversation.

It's God's own commentary on what's happening. It's not about how ABE interprets what's going on. It's about GOD.

➤ The word "believed" carries a certain perspective of the Faith of Abraham.

It's best translated "had believed . . . Abram remained firm . . ." low, even in the midst of trials & struggles, Abrams faith remained strong. Abram is maintaining the Faith he's had since Chapter 12. For Abram, it's about remaining firm in the Faith, no matter what the circumstances are!

➤ This Vs features a lot of "firsts"!

The first use of "righteousness". First use of "credited / counted / reckoned" And GOD did the reckoning.

- What is the SIGNIFICANCE of Vs 6?

GOD decided that Abraham's FAITH (his steadfast belief in the promises of God AND of the One who promises the promises) was what God wanted from Abram. GOD makes the decision that it's Faith makes people righteous, & not the other way around! It's about GRACE = GOD'S initiative!

- What is the overflow of this Text? (Romans 4:22-24)

God STILL determines He will make people right with God through FAITH . . . in Jesus! But it is by GRACE through FAITH we have been saved. FAITH doesn't save us. God's GRACE saves us! And FAITH is the instrument. God Himself gives us the HANDS by which we receive the Gift of GRACE that's ours in Jesus!

- What is the OBJECT of Abraham's Faith, and why is that important to us?

The OBJECT of Faith is THE LORD HIMSELF. It's NOT faith in the PROMISE. It's Faith in the One who is MAKING the PROMISE. We don't believe in just ANY promise. We believe what GOD says, because our FAITH is in the GOD Who says it!

Also, if the OBJECT of our faith is what matters, we should NOT be overly concerned with how MUCH faith you have! It's not the strength or weakness of our faith that counts, it's the OBJECT of our Faith. Are you TRUSTING in the right person to save you? [2 Pharmacists. 1 is a fraud. The other, trained @ UMC. If you REALLY believe the bogus prescription from the fraud will make you better, will you get better? No. Because you are trusting in the wrong PERSON to give you the

prescription you need. // Is it the strength of your belief that a bridge will hold up your car, or the strength of the bridge itself holds up your car? FAITH is ONLY as good as it's OBJECT.

***** Bible Faith looks AWAY from itself to the ONE Who promises, and it finds REST in there. *****

We rest in the PROMISES of God in the Bible, b/c it is GOD – GOD is The One Who is making the promises! [...story of a slowly dying man who wanted to make sure of his status after death, John 6:37 written on a card . . . The man carried that verse around w/him for the remaining 3 years he lived, NOT b/c that verse had some kind of magic; but b/c that verse was a clear promise from Jesus Himself, and by leaning on the PROMISE of John 6:37, that man was leaning on the One Who made that promise, namely, JESUS!]

Friends, Lean on the PROMISES of the Bible b/c of the ONE Who MAKES the promises!

PRAYER: We give you thanks O Lord for the trouble you take to help us keep on believing. Lord, help us not to be as concerned about the INTENSITY of our Faith as about the OBJECT of our Faith. Lord, convince us that even a WEAK Faith can lay hold of a STRONG Christ. AMEN.