

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #35

Genesis 15:1-6

Abram had obeyed God and left the land God wanted him to leave but ever since doing that, things had not been smooth - 1) The land he was supposed to receive was inhabited by Canaanites - 12:5; 2) He had to face a famine - 12:10; 3) He lost his wife to an Egyptian Pharaoh - 12:11-15; He faced a family squabble with Lot - 13:1-18; He had to go to war against Chedorlaomer and his mighty army - 14:1-24. God knew Abram needed some encouragement.

IN SPITE OF ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES AND HUMAN FRAILTIES AND LAPSES OF TIME, GOD WILL ALWAYS FULFILL HIS PROMISES TO THOSE WHO TRUST HIM.

Genesis 14 is a chapter that focuses on Abram's actions, whereas Genesis 15 is a chapter that focuses on Abram's emotions.

REALITY #1 - God gave Abram His encouragement. 15:1

(Fact #1) - God's encouragement came at the Divine Time. 15:1a

The phrase "after these things" are all of the things that had happened to Abram since he followed God. After Abram had stayed faithful through very difficult times, God's encouragement came to him.

(Fact #2) - God's encouragement came in the Divine Way. 15:1b

The word "vision" is one that refers to seeing or beholding something in one's mind.

(Fact #3) - God's encouragement came with the Divine message. 15:1b

Message #1 - Faithful believers do not need to fear.

This is the first "do not fear" message in the Bible. Contextually the fear was caused by Abram just destroying four kings and thinking they could regroup and come against him and his family. Plus he had just been rude to the King of Sodom.

Four reasons from Isaiah for not fearing:

- 1) God is with you (41:10); 2) God will help you (41:13-14);
- 3) God has redeemed you (43:1); 4) God has chosen you (44:2).

Message #2 - Faithful believers have God as their shield.

A shield protects against enemy assaults. There are four Hebrew words for "shield" and this is the smaller one, the one that looked least impressive humanly speaking.

Message #3 - Faithful believers will have God give them rewards.

Here is a very important matter - God chose Israel as a reward to Abram.

REALITY #2 - Abram responded to encouragement. 15:2-3

Since Abram had no heir of his own, he wondered precisely what his reward was going to be. He did trust God, but God didn't seem to be doing anything.

REALITY #3 - God gave Abram His promise. 15:4-5

The phrase "so shall your descendants (or seed) be" refers to: 1) Innumerable number of Jews who would come through Abram physically; 2) The great seed Jesus Christ, who would come through Abram physically; 3) A great spiritual seed that will come after Jesus Christ, who would come through Abram spiritually.

REALITY #4 - Abram placed his faith in the promise of God. 15:6

Here is one of the most famous verses in the O.T. and one of the most important to N.T. salvation. This particular verse is quoted in the O.T. by Habakkuk (2:4) and in the N.T. by Paul (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6); once by the writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 10:38) and once by James (James 2:23). This verse contains, as Dr. Leupold said: "...the first instance of the use of the word "believe" in the Scriptures" (Vol. 1, pp. 476-477) and it eliminates any thought of a work righteousness. John Calvin made a good point when he said there is no verse in all of the Bible that Satan has labored more assiduously to extinguish and smother than this verse right here (Calvin, p. 405).

There are three critical words in this verse you must see - believe, reckon, righteousness.

Question #1 - What does it mean to believe?

The word "believe" means to trust in or have confidence in something. The literal Hebrew word used here is the word "Amen" (אָמֵן) which means "I believe and trust it is true." The object of Abram's trust or confidence was in what the LORD had promised. So we may accurately conclude that **a faith that is calculated by God as righteous is one that places its confidence in God and not in self.**

Question #2 - What did Abram believe?

Abram, knowing full well that he could do nothing to produce a seed (he and his wife were aging and they had not been able to have a child) **put his confidence and trust in the fact that God could produce a child.**

Actually, as Dr. S.L. Johnson observes, Abram's faith was really one that believed realizing he couldn't achieve. His righteousness was most definitely a faith righteousness and not a works righteousness (Johnson, Study #28, p. 4).

Question #3 - How did God calculate or reckon Abram's faith?

The word "reckon" or "count" is one that means God mentally computes or calculates one as righteous (Gesenius, p.311).

When Abram stood helpless before God and admitted that he did believe that through him would come God's seed, even though there was nothing humanly possible that he could do, God calculated Abram as righteous. **Notice carefully how righteousness comes to an individual, by God's calculation, not by man's works.**

How is it that one may be calculated as righteous by God today? The answer is clearly seen in Romans 4:5 - by faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness is imputed to one who believes.

Abram had accomplished some impressive things for God and God had done some very special things for Abram, but when he stood totally helpless before God and trusted in God's word, God declared him righteous.

The call of Abram occurred in Genesis 12, but the justification of Abram occurred in Genesis 15.