

Trusting Our Covenant God ▪ Genesis 15

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Two of the most important words in our English language is, “Trust Me”.

Every relationship we have in our lives has to be one of trust.

From parents-children, husband-wife, at the job, with your friends.

Trust must be the backbone of every relationship.

- This is especially true in our relationship with God.
- Trust in the backbone of this text.
- Structurally, this text is split into two parts - (1-6) and (7-21).

In both sections there is a promise from GOD, question from Abraham, confirmation by the LORD— and then climaxes in the covenant.

Main Idea: The LORD proves he is trustworthy to his people.

- What does it look like at the tactical level?

Trusting for things above and beyond (1-5)

Eph. 3:20 is one of those faith strengthening passages to help us pray:

Ephesians 3:20 ESV

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

I hope that is our view of God as we pray and live.

- The trust that God calls Abraham to, certainly fits that.
- But first, the Lord has to come to Abraham in a trustworthy way. He does that by seeking him.

One characteristic of a trustworthy person is that they take initiative—*they are not reacting from a distance*.

Let me illustrate it this way. If my house is on fire, and a firefighter goes into my burning house to rescue my children—I'm going to trust him.

But, if he said, "I'm not going in...instead let me call your kids on the cellphone, and I'll walk them through what to do"....my trust has gone way down.

Here we see the trustworthy LORD taking the lead in seeking his people.

- V1. The LORD comes to Abraham with a very trustworthy appeal: "Fear not" —then uses images of protection and provision.

Now the words "Fear not" we may think this is taking place in a counselor's office—like calming Abraham's anxiety.

But remember the context:

- Linking this with the previous chapter—Abraham has entered into military action in rescuing Lot. He could be afraid of what retaliations might come.
- › *That is, unless, a more powerful King, the most powerful Sovereign, says: "Trust ME. I'll protect you."*
- Now reward can be very general (spoils of war).
 - Some translations interpret that God is the reward (KJV) —which is true in the ultimate sense.
 - The word reward is the same used for children in Ps. 127.

Psalm 127:3 ESV

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.

(Ps. 127:3) that's how Abraham understands it.

- Which leads to the first sign: *Look up*.

**(There is a grace-irony in this: Abraham used to look up to worship the sky, now he looks up to trust God.)*

In this first encounter, God was calling Abraham to look up and trust him with things that were *above* and *beyond* all he could ask or think.

And he did.

How about us? How far does our trust go?

Do you have a “far more abundant” view of God?

A far more abundant view keeps praying for prodigals, keeps hope that marriage can be redeemed, has confidence that a sin habit can be overcome.

Trusting through darkness and delays (7-20)

- If you really imagine this, the scene is eerie and intense: cloaked in darkness and dread (v12)
- Yet it begins with words that may sound familiar (v7). It’s very similar to the way Ex. 20 begins.

Exodus 20:2 ESV

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

*This was a typical way that a royal land covenant treaty sounded.

In the Ancient World, when people agreed to the terms of a covenant—this is how they sealed it or notarized it.

- Animals would be cut in half, and the two people would walk between symbolizing: “If I break this, let me be like one of these butchered animals.”

E.G .

Jeremiah 34:18 ESV

And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—

- V17 is key with a vital detail. Abraham does not walk through the animals, but the Lord does.

What this is saying: The Lord unconditionally commits himself to this covenant.

There is a lot of darkness in this text; Abraham is to look up at the stars earlier (v5).

The whole scene is set in darkness of night (v12 & 17).

(V12) Heb: Look. Terror. A great darkness was falling on him.

The sense is overwhelming.

A real encounter with the presence of God would be absolutely overwhelming.

This is lost on a lot of Christians...but even in the NT...it's how we should worship.

Hebrews 12:28–29 (ESV)

let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

- But why does this covenant ceremony becomes so dark and terrifying?
 - Thick-deep darkness is there in other major covenants.
 - (Ex. 19) At Sinai, when Moses is given the Law: (19:16-18; 20:18)—the mountain was wrapped in thick clouds of darkness.
 - At the death of Christ, when he enacts the New Covenant, it's terrifying darkness (Mt. 27:45).
- In context, God lays out the future of Israel—it will get very dark before it gets light.

400 hundred years of oppressive darkness...before light really starts to break through; before all the promises materialize.

- This entire episode has delay as a theme:
 - It's what prompted Abraham to ask the question (v2) - "I continue childless".
 - 400 years before seeing the fulfillment of the land promise—that's quite a deal.

What do you do with these things when they hit your life personally. How do you see it?

First, we need to see delay the way the Lord does:

2 Peter 3:9 ESV

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

- › What we see as delay is the Lord keeping the door of repentance open.

Even to this very moment, the Lord has delayed the return of Christ and Final Judgment. Perhaps even personally for you, for today to be the day of repentance.

Yet also, delay is a way the LORD deepens our trust.

In a fast-paced, on demand world, that may not make sense.

For example even the ease which you can watch a movie has changed so much over a few decades. No more need to go to a store that rents movies. You have it on demand.

An on-demand culture will be challenged with delay.

Yet, when we face delay, God's Word tells us:

Trust. Keep trusting.

Psalm 25:2–3 (ESV)

O my God, in you I trust;

let me not be put to shame;

let not my enemies exult over me.

Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;

God can be trusted in darkness and delays.

Trusting the God who justifies (v6)

- There is one specific verse that comes into sharp focus: v6.

- Our English word translated “believe” is the Heb. word: *Amen*.

“Abraham’s Amen” (Meredith Kline)

Amen: It means that what was just said is *true, reliable, trustworthy*.

- *Abraham’s Amen proves that he sees God the LORD as trustworthy; he simply takes him at his Word and Promise —And he is declared righteous by God.*

This teaches us the high importance of knowing God as a God who justifies; who justifies the ungodly.

- › This trust becomes the backbone of the treasured teaching: Justification by Faith.

There has been a recent trend towards Roman Catholicism.

Some are drawn to the liturgy, experience, the intellectual sway of those who read Aquinas.

If you go that route: you gain a Pope, Icons, purgatory.

Yet most critically....

- › You lose the backbone of trust.

E.G.

Treasury of Merit Theology In R.C. doctrine: there is a treasury of merit you trust; a storehouse of good works for salvation.

From Catechism of Catholic Church:

“This treasury includes as well all the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary....In the treasury too are the prayers and good works of all the saints....who followed Christ and carried out their mission...In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in the saving of their brothers...”

Trust the treasury?

It’s one thing to quote Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon...but to trust they cooperate in saving me?!

A fatal error....the backbone is gone; hope is as firm as a jellyfish.

- › We don’t trust a treasury, but treasure a pure true doctrine: Justification by grace alone through Christ alone.

(1689 Confession)

Confessing the Faith: The 1689 Baptist Confession for the 21st Century XI. Justification

Those God effectually calls He also freely justifies. He does this, not by infusing righteousness into them but by pardoning their sins and accounting and accepting them as righteous. 2 He does this for Christ's sake alone and not for anything produced in them or done by them.

Justification at the end of the day is the simple question of trust.

Who do I trust to get right with God?

-Do I trusting something done by me,
or do I trust solely in the God who Justifies.

- Three different times the NT mentions this:

E.G.

Jas. 2:23—Used to show what a living faith looks like

Gal. 3:6—Used to defend the truth of Gospel

(Rom. 4)

- This is actually great commentary; Gen. 15:6 is quoted 3x; the word “counted” is 11 times.

› *The way of getting into a right relationship with God has always been the same: trust in God's promises.*

Romans 4:20–24 ESV

No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,

- When God promises eternal life and full forgiveness based on the perfect life, death, resurrection of His Son...what do we say? “I trust”; “I believe”; Amen!

We don't need a Savior who merely "Gets Us" ...We need one who justifies us.

Not one who merely washes feet, but washes away the filth of our sin.

1 Corinthians 6:11 (ESV)

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- › Trusting our Covenant God is trusting Christ; all that he has done, resting in his work and finding our reward in Him

Conclusion:

The LORD proves he is trustworthy to his people, doesn't he?

You can trust him with things above and beyond.

You can trust him in darkness and delays.

But most importantly, you can trust a God who justifies sinners by grace.

You can trust a Savior who loves you, was delivered up for your trespasses and raised for your justification.