God Keeps His Promises

(God promises Abram Safety; Seed & Soil)

Genesis 15:1-27

6/7/1998

Introduction:

- ***Like Abraham, you can trust the Word of Him who is trustworthy!***

I. God Promises Abram SAFETY

(Protection & provision for his needs – v.1)

II. God Promises Abram SEED

(An Heir from his own loins – v. 2-6)

III. God Promises Abram SOIL

(A Land for his descendants – v.7-21)

"Faith is not a blind leap into the dark,
But a confident step into the light."
[of God's revealed Word]
Like Abraham, who *"against hope believed in hope,"*
We can BELIEVE God! With Him, nothing is impossible!
Trust Him this week!

God Keeps His Promises

(God promises Abram Safety; Seed & Soil)

Genesis 15:1-27

6/7/1998

Introduction:

Psalm 89:1,2,8,24,33,34

Definition: The Hebrew word for faithfulness literally refers to the firmness or stability of God. The Greek word means to be trustworthy; believable; reliable; dependable.

God's faithfulness rises far above human comprehension (Ps. 36:5).

God is clothed with the attribute of faithfulness (Ps. 89:8; Is. 11:5). This characteristic should be part of the believer's armor: we are to have "our loins girt about with truth" (Eph. 6:14).

God's faithfulness is an extension of His truthfulness. It is called "transitive truth". In the same way that God's righteousness is His holiness in action, God's faithfulness is His truthfulness in action.

When we say God is faithful, we are saying "God is worthy of my faith" or "I can have full faith in Him."

The thrust of Genesis 15 involves the word "trust."

Genesis 15 asks whether Abraham can, in fact, trust.

And it asks if Yahweh can, in fact, be trusted.

(W. Brueggemann, cited by Ross, p. 304)

- ***Like Abraham, you can trust the Word of Him who is trustworthy!***

I. God Promises Abram <u>SAFETY</u>

(<u>Protection</u> & <u>provision</u> for his needs – v.1)

"After these things" – After Abraham's victory and Lot's rescue.

An emotional low point of discouragement most often follows the emotional high of victory.

According to Hebrews 1:1, God spoke to His Old Testament prophets at various times and in various manners. Here, God speaks to Abraham by means of a "vision."

A vision is when God visually unfolds a direct revelation to a person in a conscious, awake state.

"Fear not" – Perhaps Abraham for a moment feared revenge and retaliation from the Eastern kings from whom He delivered Lot and victoriously conquered their armies.

"I am thy shield" – I am your defense; I will deflect every attack made against you. I will protect you from harm. *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

"I am . . . thy exceeding great reward" – God not only gives rewards to those who obey Him, but He says to Abraham, "I am your reward." To have God is to have all we need for now and eternity.
Not only is God our reward, but He is our **"exceeding great"** reward. Nothing surpasses the privilege of having God. To the person of wisdom, He is more desirable than anything this old world has to offer.

Abraham didn't need to worry about not having the king of Sodom's reward (14:23), because God was his reward (Psalm 84:11 - For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.)

"Your life is only as big as your faith, and your faith is only as big as your God. If you spend all of your time looking at yourself, you will get discouraged, but if you look to God by faith, you will be encouraged." (Wiersbe, p. 45).

II. God Promises Abram **SEED**

(An Heir from his own loins – v. 2-6)

v. 2

In effect Abraham is saying to God something like this, "Okay, God, You are my reward, but what about the promise You made me? Are You going to give me what You said You would in Gen. 12:2? Ten years ago You promised to make of me a great nation, and I'm still childless." [Remember that God always keeps His Word, though not on our timetable.]

The servant who oversaw and was responsible for Abraham's property was Eliezar (the same man who will later find Isaac a bride). Abraham suggests that God let Eliezar be the adopted heir through which God's promise of a "great nation" would be fulfilled.

"Tablets that have been discovered show that it was customary for wealthy, childless couples to adopt a servant and make him their heir." (Ryrie note)

v. 3

Abraham seeks to offer God what he things to be a solution to God's promise (of making him a great nation).

The thought that went through Abraham's mind was this: "After all, Eliezar was born in my household." (Gen. 14:14)

Note: God's promises don't need to be explained away, "spiritualized," or fulfilled in a non-literal way. Be careful not to come up with alternative, crafty re-explanations to promises that God intends to literally fulfill.

Note: And God doesn't need any help in figuring out how to best keep His promises either! (i.e. "I see that it seems to be a little hard for you to give me a child of my own. How about if You just use Eliezar? That would be easier.")

v. 4

God very succinctly says: Eliezar shall not be your heir, but a product of your own loins shall be. You, Abraham will have a son; you will be a father; you will be dad to the heir.

v. 5

Abraham's descendents would be as numerous as the stars.

Without city lights to obscure the evening sky, Abraham saw a host of stars, which are, in fact, innumerable. Even today with high-powered telescopes and outer-space satellites, we have not discovered all of the stars and planets that exist.

Multiplied millions of Jews have lived throughout the ages as living proof that God keeps His Word.

Having already promised Abraham descendents as numerous as the "dust" of the earth (Gen. 13:16), God now uses the imagery of the numerous stars for comparison.

Later on, God will describe the multiplied nation as being like "the sand of the seashore" (17:17).

One reason why Satan has always fought against the Jews is because He hates God's Word and vainly fights against it coming to fulfillment.

Everyone from Haman to Herod to Hitler has tried to exterminate this nation, but their efforts were all foiled. The future Antichrist will fail as well.

v. 6
Note: This occasion did not mark the beginning of Abraham's faith. He believed in the Lord much earlier (Heb. 11:8). Here, his faith is confirmed and re-emphasized.

"Believed" – Hebrew aman – to give a confirming "Amen" to God's promise.

"Abraham amen-ed Yahweh." So be it! it will occur as You have said! I trust Your Word. This is faith!

"He counted it" – An accounting term which means "to credit to one's account"; to enter something into the books on someone's behalf.

Abraham, like all of us, had sin in his account; but God (in response to his faith) credited him with righteous. His sin was erased from the books and righteousness was written in its place.

Today, all who believe on Christ have the righteousness of God imputed to their formerly bankrupt spiritual lives (II Cor. 5:21) SEE: Romans 4:1-3

Faith takes God at His Word.

"God Himself is the object of his faith, the Word of God is the ground of his faith, and righteousness is the result of his faith" (W.H. Griffith Thomas, Genesis, p. 139).

Salvation (which always involved God's forgiveness and imputation of righteousness) has in every dispensation been based on man's trust in God's Word. The word that God gave man, He held man accountable for. All who believed God's word as revealed at that time, were justified.

Gen. 15:6 is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament.

III. God Promises Abram **SOIL**

(A Land for his descendants – v.7-21)

v. 7
The God who created the earth has the right to give any portion of it away to whomever He chooses.

To Abraham He promised Canaan land, the most desirable and strategic geographical location on the earth in Abraham's time. The "Land Bridge" of the world.

v. 8
Abraham "did not require a sign in order to believe, but after and on account of believing. It was not faithlessness, but a desire for confirmation." (Thomas, p. 142).

v. 9
"An heifer. . . goat. . . ram of three year's old" – Why 3 years old? Perhaps because God's ultimate sacrifice Jesus Christ would be offered after 3 years of public ministry [?]

v. 12
The supernatural slumber (cf. Gen. 2:21) prepared Abraham for the reception of God's revelation by detaching him from all things earthly which might divert his attention, and prevent the full teaching having its effect upon his life. The dread that fell upon him was doubtless due to the consciousness of a divine presence overshadowing him." (Thomas, p. 143).

v. 13-16
Note the specifics of God's prediction: God predicts:

1) Israel's going to Egypt (during famine times in the days of Joseph)
2) Israel's slavery ("shall serve them")
3) Israel's torment ("shall afflict them")
4) Israel's duration in Egypt [400 years, which is the 430 years of Exod. 12:40 rounded off to 4 generations of 100 years each (v. 16)]
5) The ten plagues ("I judge")
6) The Exodus ("come out")
7) Israel's wealth when they exited Egypt ("great substance" – Exod. 12:34-36)
8) Abraham's peaceful death (v. 15)
9) Abraham's longevity ("a good old age" – of 175 years – cp. Gen. 25:7-8)
10) Israelite's return to Canaan (v. 16)
11) The Amorites increased wickedness (v. 16b)

Why does God tell the future?

What is the purpose for studying prophecy?

1. To teach us what God's plans are
   A knowledge of Bible prophecy "provides the believer with an optimistic philosophy if history" (Alva McClain)
2. To inspire us about the greatness of God (Is. 46:9-11)
   (He is omniscient [He knows all] and He is sovereign [He controls all])
3. To assure us of the unity and reliability of Scripture
   A vast portion of the Bible is given to predictive prophecy. It is said that 333 distinct prophecies were literally and exactly fulfilled at the first coming of Christ (the chances of this happening by accident have been computed as 1 in 87,000--plus 90 more zeros).

   For every verse speaking of Jesus' first coming in Scripture, there are eight which speak of His second coming.

Why would God foretell the future:

4. To encourage us to be faithful to God and His Word
   God's future program is a source of:
   a. Comfort to the sorrowing Christian
      (I Thess. 4:13-14; John 14:1-4)
   b. Strength to the Christian enduring testing
      (II Cor. 4:14-18; Rom. 8)
   c. Warning to the lazy, unfaithful Christian (II Cor. 5:9, 10)
   d. Correction to the Christian who places too much value on this life
      (II Peter 3:10-12)
   e. Reproof to the Christian who becomes doctrinally careless (II Thess. 2:5; II Pet. 1:19)
   f. Cleansing for the Christian who keeps his eyes on Christ and His future glory (I Jn. 3:2-3)
      (cp. W.E. Blackstone, Jesus is Coming, p. 180)

5. To wake us up to realize the extreme urgency of the hour in which we live (Rom. 13:11-12). God's longsuffering is so that others might be saved (II Pet. 3:8-9, 15)

6. To prepare us for the most dreadful time of persecution in human history -- the 70th week of Daniel (commonly called "The Tribulation Period") (Rev. 14:12)

7. To bless us with God's revelation about the future (Rev. 1:3)

Through the symbolism of the birds of prey (v. 11) and the prediction of oppression (v. 13), we see a prophetic announcement of opposition to the covenant (Ross, p. 305) God's promises will always come under attack, but in the end His faithfulness shines forth.

v. 16
"The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" – Israel would be justified in taking the land, because the wickedness of the Canaanites would come to a climactic head. The people of the land would become so vile that the land itself would become sick of them (Lev. 18:25; Dt. 9:4). God, in the mean time, would be patient for 400 years until their sin would reach a peak that screamed for judgment (Israel would be that tool [weapon] God would use to execute His wrath on these Canaanite nations).

v. 17
The Hebrew word for covenant is *berith* and the Greek word is *diatheke*. Both words mean to cut in half. Hence, the expression "to cut a covenant."

When a covenant would be made with someone passing through the divided carcass of a sacrifice, what they would saying in effect is this: "May the same thing happen to me that happened to these animals if I fail to keep my covenant" (cp. Jer. 34:18-20).

The **"burning lamp that passed between"** symbolized God's presence (for our God is both light and a consuming fire).

By passing through the sacrifice God was taking an oath that He would be faithful to His unilateral, unconditional promise.

The blood-covenant was a well-known ancient way to ratify a solemn agreement.

All covenants in the Bible involved a bloody sacrifice. Examples:

1. The Noaic covenant
2. The Abrahamic covenant
3. The Mosaic covenant
4. The Davidic covenant
5. The New Testament covenant ("This is my blood of the New Covenant")

v. 18
The covenant God made to Abraham was:

1) Unconditional (no "ifs")
   --"I…give thee this land" (v. 8)
   --"I (have) given this land" (v. 18)
2) Unilateral (divinely one-sided)
   Only God passed through the pieces, and not Abraham as well.
3) Believable (It was sure)
   Heb. 6:17 - Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

v. 18-21
Although Solomon did govern that entire area (I Kings 4:21), this promise will have its ultimate fulfillment in the future millennial kingdom when Christ's returns. Then the land from the Nile to the Euphrates will be occupied by Israel and controlled by Christ Himself.

God is worthy of our trust (faith), for 2 major reasons:

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS <u>PROMISES</u>
(He keeps His covenants)

Rom. 4:19-21 - *"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform."*

Heb. 11:11 - *"Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."*

Examples:

1) God's promise as evidenced by the <u>rainbow</u>

Gen.9:16 - *"And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."*

2) God's promise of deliverance from <u>Egypt</u> (Ex.6:4-5)

3) God's promise to keep His <u>Word</u>

I Kings 8:56 - *"Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant."*

4) God's promise to give the believer <u>eternal life</u>

Titus 1:2 - *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."*

cp.II Cor.1:20

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS <u>PEOPLE</u>
(He protects and provides for His chosen ones)

1) God will be faithful to <u>Israel</u>

a. Isaiah 44:21 - *"Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me."*

b. Jeremiah 31:31-37 -

2) God will be faithful to <u>His Church</u>

Because God is faithful,
We have <u>eternal security</u>

I Cor.1:8,9 - *"Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."*

"The Lord . . . forsaketh not His saints; they are preserved forever" (Ps. 37:28).

a) God's salvation comes with an irrevocable <u>promise</u> - Titus 1:2 - "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" (cp. Heb. 6:12-20).

b) God's salvation comes with an unconditional <u>guarantee</u> - I Cor. 1:8, 9 (v. 8 - "confirm" = guarantee).

God does <u>not</u> say, "I will keep you saved <u>if</u> you do . . ." Our security is not dependent upon our faithfulness to Him (this would be works salvation) but on <u>His</u> faithfulness to us.

Some might twist this blessed truth, to then say: "This means I can live anyway I want." No.

Because God is faithful to us (since we are His children by the new birth), He will be faithful in disciplining us (heb. 12) so that we will not be able to live anyway we want. Also, because of what He did for us, we will not <u>want</u> to live anyway we want.

Unlike the unfaithfulness prevalent (in marriages etc) in our society today, God will never be unfaithful to His Bride. He promises, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

What should our response be to God's faithfulness?

1. Daily thank and praise Him for being faithful

   Ps.92:1 - *"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High."*

2. Tell others about His faithfulness

   Ps.89:1 - *"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."*

3. Always keep your word (do what you say you will do)

4. Be faithful (dependable; consistent)

   Prov.20:6 - *"Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?"*

   Examples of faithful men:
   1) Moses was said to be "faithful in all his house" (Heb. 3:2, 5).
   2) David - Abimelech the priest said this to King Saul: "Who is so faithful among all thy servants as David?" (I Sam. 22:14).
   3) Hananiah - Nehemiah put Hananiah in "charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man and feared God above many" (Neh. 7:2).

   EX: the faithfulness of Micaiah, who, when asked to tickle the ears of the king like all the other prophets had done, said: "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (I Ki. 22:14).

   Be faithful in little things. Luke 16:10 - "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

   Be faithful in your stewardship (I Cor. 4:2).

   Mt. 25:23 - "Well done, good and faithful servant."

   ILLUS: The consistency of a man to church attendance saved his life (Knight's, p. 120).

5. Step out by faith (trust and obey whatever God says, even if it looks impossible, and leave the results to Him)

   If Israel had understood God's faithfulness, they would not have murmured.

   If Thomas had believed Christ, he would not have doubted.

Many times we trust man more than God!

We trust forecasters to predict accurately.
We trust airplanes not to crash.
We trust elevator cables not to snap
We trust social security to provide for retirement.
We trust the U.S. military to protect our country.

"Trust God's wisdom to guide,
Trust His goodness to provide;
Trust His saving love and power,
Trust Him every day and hour;
Trust Him as the only light,
Trust Him in the darkest night;
Trust Him in sickness, trust in health,
Trust in poverty and wealth;
Trust Him living, dying too,
Trust Him all the journey through."

"Faith is not a blind leap into the dark,
But a confident step into the light."
[of God's revealed Word]
Like Abraham, who *"against hope believed in hope,"*
We can BELIEVE God! With Him, nothing is impossible!
Trust Him this week!