

## **Abraham: Life of Faith**

### **Week 5 – Genesis 15:7-21**

#### ***Ice Breaker Question:***

What are some ways in our culture we use symbols and rituals to express our commitment?

How do you demonstrate your commitment to your best friend or loved one?

#### ***Going Deeper from Sunday***

##### **Sermon Synopsis**

To answer Abram's request for evidence that God would keep his promise, God asks Abram to prepare animals to ratify a covenant with Abram. He then puts Abram into a deep sleep. He reveals to Abram in a dream that Abram's descendants will be enslaved, and then they will return and take possession of the land. God, in the form of a smoking fire pot, then passes between the carcasses of the animals, in order to ratify his covenant with Abram.

##### **Key Application**

When two people in the ancient Near Eastern cultures made a covenant, they both walked between the carcasses of animals, signifying that if they broke the covenant they should suffer same fate as the animals. It is significant that only the Lord passes between the pieces while Abram remains in a deep sleep (v. 17). In the same way, God's covenant with us is 'one-sided' -- not dependent upon our works, but solely on grace through Christ's death on the cross.

##### **Follow-up Questions**

Read over Genesis 15 again. Are there any reflections or questions you had from Sunday's Sermon?

In verse 7, the focus shifts from Abram's offspring to his possession of the Promised Land. If Abram believes the Lord (v. 6), why do you think he seeks further assurance (v. 8)? Do you find yourself both believing God and yet seeking further assurance from Him?

How might God's 'cutting' of the covenant have given Abram assurance and helped him believe in God's promise? What is the significance that Abram was asleep while the covenant was actually ratified? (Hint: usually both parties would have walked together between the cut animals.)

Sandwiched between Abram's preparation for the covenant ceremony (vv. 9-11) and the actual ceremony itself (vv. 17-21) is a prophecy about Israel's enslavement in Egypt. During that enslavement, how would Israel's fears, questions and need for

assurance parallel those of Abram?

How would this prophesy have encouraged the Israelites during all those years as slaves in Egypt?

In what ways does seeing God's sweeping plan for Abram's descendants (which includes a prophesy of suffering for Israel) encourage you in the midst of your struggles and suffering?

### ***Mining the Scriptures***

Read John 16:28-33

This passage concludes a lengthy discourse by Jesus to his disciples about his immanent departure from the world. As Jesus explained to his disciples that he would be leaving them, what might some of their concerns have been? And how do these compare with Abram's needs for assurance in Genesis 15?

What other parallels do you see between God cutting the covenant with Abram and Jesus' last words to his disciples?

How do the expectations God gives to Abram for his descendants compare to the expectations given to Jesus' disciples? (Both speak of suffering, both include the reassurance that God's plan is being worked out in the midst of that suffering.)

How is God's walking through the covenant animals alone, similar to Jesus' dying on the cross for us?

Jesus 'overcame the world' by suffering and dying on the cross for our sins. How does believing that give us courage and confidence to trust God through our own struggles in this life? (see Romans 8:31-34)

### **Application questions**

Throughout the Bible people gain confidence about the future by remembering God's faithfulness in the past. How have you seen God demonstrate his grace and faithfulness to you? How can remembering this strengthen your faith in God and increase your hope for the future?

### **Close in prayer**

Begin your prayer time by thanking and praising God for his work of establishing a New Covenant by sending his own Son to die. Spend some time praying for each other.