

# The Promise Prevails Over Unbelief

**GENESIS 15:1-6 | JAKE LIEDKIE**

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And song's a fitting reminder that we cannot accomplish anything of spiritual benefit or profit apart from God intervening graciously and mercifully on our behalf. And it's good for us to remind ourselves of that and confess that and even request the Lord to do what it is that we need done so desperately. I invite you to take your Bibles this morning, turn with me to Genesis chapter 15, Genesis chapter 15, and I entitled this morning's message, The Promise Prevails Over Unbelief.

And I've heard from so many of you just the benefit of working through the life of Abram thus far, because we see in this man so much of ourselves and we see the way the Lord deals with him, the way that he comes alongside him and strengthens him and corrects him and nurtures his faith. And it's a reminder of our desperate need and all this, as well as the sufficiency that the Lord provides for us. And as we come to Genesis 15, this chapter is one that is personally very significant to me.

And I'll get into that next week. This morning, we're just going to cover the first six verses. Verses 7 through 21 are a bit enigmatic.

They're kind of one of those sections of Scripture where you read it at the end and you think, huh, that's interesting. You don't really know what to do with it. And then you move on.

But it is so rich and so profound for our understanding of our relationship with God. This week, we're going to see the Lord come alongside Abram and begin to strengthen him when his faith is yet again wavering. And so we've already seen kind of this yo-yo, this back and forth that the Father of our faith goes through where he has moments and expressions of great courage and faith.

And I mean, last week, he takes the hill for his nephew and then very suddenly finds himself back in kind of the same spot, struggling to trust the Lord and the basics again. And so our outline for this morning's passage is three familiar storylines as Abram goes from questioning to confident. Three familiar storylines as Abram goes from questioning to confident.

And so these are kind of familiar because it's the same kinds of things that we've been seeing week after week as Abram wrestles in his heart before the Lord. And then the Lord comes alongside him and so graciously shepherds him and nurtures his faith and strengthens him unto the result that he ultimately prevails in faith. Genesis 15, beginning in verse 1, after these things, the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying, Do not fear, Abram.

I am a shield to you. Your reward shall be very great. And Abram said, O Lord Yahweh, what will you give me as I go on being childless? Near of my house is Eleazar of Damascus.

And Abram said, Since you've given no seed to me, behold, one born in my house is my heir. And behold, the word of Yahweh came to him saying, This one will not be your heir, but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, Now, look toward the heavens and number the stars, if you are able to number them.

And he said to him, So shall your seed be. Then he believed in Yahweh and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, I am Yahweh who brought you out of her, of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.

And he said, O Lord Yahweh, how may I know that I will possess it? So he said to him, Bring me a three-year-old heifer and a three-year-old female goat and three-year-old ram and a turtle dove and a young pigeon. Then he brought all these things to him and split them into parts down the middle and laid each part opposite the other. But he did not split apart the birds.

Then the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses and Abram drove them away. Now it happened that when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

And God said to Abram, Know for certain that your seed will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and they will be enslaved and mistreated for 400 years. But I will also judge the nation to whom they are enslaved, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you will go to your fathers in peace.

You will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete. Now it happened that the sun had set and it was very dark.

And behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day Yahweh cut a covenant with Abram, saying, To your seed I have given this land from the river of Egypt, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, the

Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the Kadmonite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite. Three familiar storylines as Abram goes from questioning to confident.

This whole section happens in one kind of setting, but we're going to take it piece by piece. And this morning we're going to get through the first six verses, unless we're providentially hindered in some way that I'm not expecting between here and 1130. But our first point this morning as our familiar storylines unfold is, Abram understandably wrestles with misgivings.

Abram understandably wrestles with misgivings. Abram is starting to question the plan. Have you ever been in that spot? Lord, as I'm seeing this plan, I'm not convinced that it's a good plan or that it's working out.

And to say understandably is not condoning or affirming the validity of Abram's response. It is not a morally upright response. But when we say understandable, we say it's relatable.

Or to say it another way, if you and I were in the same situation, given the same exact circumstances, I trust we would be responding quite likely in the same way. Why? Because doubts are natural. With the remnant of the old man, our fallen human condition, it's just natural for us to distrust God.

Do you understand that? That's the default posture of our heart. It's not that we're in a default position of lovingly entrusting ourselves to God, and then sometimes we get off track. We tend to struggle, do we not, in our exercise of faith.

And so Abram understandably is wrestling here. He's grappling with these misgivings. He has questions.

There's one says, after these things. What are these things? Well, after Abram has just throttled a bunch of surrounding kings. You think, why would that be a temptation to any kind of doubts and fears? It was fight or flight, and we saw that Abram rose to the occasion.

He saw his nephew was in need. And apparently, quickly rose to action in faith. He came to his nephew's defense.

He put their differences aside. He put even the fact that Lot had been selfish aside. Even as he could have maybe reasoned in his heart, Lot kind of had what was coming to him because he chose to live by Sodom, and this was a likely foreseeable outcome, aka, I told you so.

Abram sets that aside, and in faith he goes to rescue his nephew. But there was a catch to that, much like my story last week. If you were here, I was able to chase a guy down and

tackle him, and then as he was getting up off the ground, I realized I don't know what to do next.

I didn't really think through plan B. So here, Abram has gone to rescue his nephew. He's throttled these kings, and now suddenly his position in the land has changed. It's not that he was completely flying under the radar before, but he wasn't really a perceived threat in the way that he is now.

You've ever been on the playground, and you played king of the hill, right? You have all these alliances, and you're working together to try to get in that position, and then when you get to the top, what happens? Well, suddenly now it's everyone against you. It's the world is turned, because you're now the top dog. And so for Abram, he's experienced success at the hands of the Lord.

It was clear that the Lord delivered the army. The Lord delivered the victory. Now, Kisdet comes and says that, but now Abram's sitting there on the backside of success, and he's realizing, you know, I kind of have a bit of a target on my back here.

I've just leveled the kings, and now I would be the one to take down. And so in this moment, the Lord comes to him in a vision, and the first thing he says is, do not fear, Abram. Don't be afraid.

We're kind of used to messengers coming and scaring people, angels in the scriptures, and the first words out of their mouth are, do not be afraid. This vision is not an angelic being coming and startling Abram and needing to reassure him by saying, don't be afraid that I'm here right now. This is the Lord understanding.

Abram is fearing when he's not supposed to, and rather than coming down with a big stick to whack him and correct him forcefully for his unbelief, the Lord comes with a word of comfort and just says, Abram, Abram. In a minute, he's going to say, the one who called you out of Ur of the Chaldees, remember our relationship. Have you so quickly forgotten? Have you forgotten who delivered you? And so Abram gets a direct vision from the Lord.

It could have been a dream, and it's not the exact same, but usually there's some combination of visual and auditory experience that takes place. The writer of Hebrews would say that God spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions and in many ways. So here Abram is getting a personal vision from the Lord, and the Lord comes and says, do not fear.

One pastor writes, yet the first verse shows us that even such a believer as Abram needed comfort. Even such a believer as Abram needed comfort. He had fought boldly and conquered gloriously, and now he fears.

Cowards tremble before the fight and brave men after the victory. And so here's Abram. He's just a man.

He can one day go and essentially risk his life and his possessions and entrust it all to the Lord, and then very quickly after the victory find himself scared to death. The Lord gives this word of comfort, do not fear Abram. Why? Because I am a shield to you.

I'm a shield to you. Now some of you children in the room, if you like superheroes and things like that, I don't track with a lot of those, but I think there's some that have shields, right? They have different kinds of protection that they would have. This is an invisible shield.

So the Lord says, I'm your shield Abram, but you can't see the shield. You just have to believe that it's there. And here's what's tricky about believing in the shield is this shield is not designed to protect you from all difficulty or any suffering or perhaps even physical danger.

So it says I'm your shield, but it's a shield that you're going to take on by faith and it's to protect you from anything that I want to protect you from. Psalmist would say in Psalm 3, 3, you oh Yahweh are a shield about me, my glory and the one who lifts my head. Psalm 84, 11 Yahweh God is a son and a shield.

And so the Lord is coming to Abram and he's saying, Abram, I want to remind you right now that while you're feeling shaky as you're thinking through, okay, I've got how many guys that are trained? How many other people groups were not involved in that battle that are still living around us? They were here first. What are they thinking about the perceived threat? Okay. If maybe we could take these guys and these guys, and if those three got together, how do we be able to handle it? Whatever the reasoning was, the Lord's coming to him and he's saying, hold on.

It's a fleshly carnal way of thinking. I want to remind you, I'm the shield. And really the scriptures would teach it's vain for the watchman to stay awake unless the Lord guards the city.

So Abram, if I didn't want to protect you, guess what? It doesn't matter if you have 318 trained men in your household, or if you had 318,000 trained men in your household. I'm to be your shield. I'm to be your protection.

I know what we would like. We would like something that has a little bit more guarantees alongside it. Would we not? Like, Lord, could my shield be like a bubble wrap shield? Just protects me.

All the hard stuff, all the painful stuff, all the scary stuff, any kinds of threats. Just put like a triple thick hedge of protection around me so I don't have to face anything hard. No, this is a shield that protects you from what the Lord wants to protect you from.

And the idea is that Abram has begun to start to imagine tomorrow and what tomorrow might bring. And he started to wade into extrapolating what the circumstances could bring about. And what does the scriptures teach about whether or not it's okay to worry about tomorrow? It's not, right? We're to trust that the Lord alone is our shield.

And then he gives this encouraging, comforting word, your reward shall be very great. Remember what I said, Abram? You're a great nation. You're going to have a great name.

You're going to have a great reward. And Abram has a classic response. It is not a great response by Abram.

It says in verse 2, O Lord Yahweh, what will you give me as I go on being childless in the air of my house as Eleazar of Damascus? This is kind of, I hear him speaking. I don't know what his exact tone was, but in an Eeyore voice. Well, what does the great reward matter anyway? I guess it'll just go to Eleazar.

I mean, Abram here has been caught in his own way of thinking for too long. And so suddenly the promise of God isn't even a comfort to him. Have you ever been in that spot? You read a promise of God that's supposed to bring comfort and you find it's just falling off.

Here he's saying, I don't really care what you give me because I don't really have anyone to give it to. Okay? He's already thinking through his will. You haven't created a will yet.

It's super fun. You need to think about what happens when you die and who gets your stuff and who's going to be in charge of distributing it. I'm being sarcastic.

It's not very fun. Abram's thinking through, okay, so I get a reward. I get the land.

I get an inheritance. And right now I don't have anybody to give it to. Not in my bloodline.

So what he's describing here is an ancient near Eastern custom of inheritance by servant. One commentator writes, in those instances where the head of a household had no male heir, it was possible for a servant to be legally adopted as the heir. This would most likely be a course of last resort since it would mean transference of property to a person and his line who was originally a servant or bondsman and not a blood relative.

He goes on and says it signals then the frustration of the childless Abram that he tells God that he has designated Eleazar of Damascus as his heir. In other words, Abram is starting to

wade into that territory for us as believers that's so dangerous. We start to speculate and muse a little bit on our circumstances apart from faith and we try to start reasoning in our own corrupt fallen way of thinking and trying to figure out what God is doing and how we need to control a situation.

And so Abram's doubts now have caused him to disregard the blessing of God because he doesn't see it applying to him anymore. And so the logic in Abram's really faithless thinking at the moment is even if I get a reward who cares because I don't have anyone to give it to anyway. The best I could do is give it to my servant.

And then Abram lets out what's really going on in his heart. Verse 3, and Abram said, since you, he's talking to the Lord right now, since you have given no seed to me behold one born in my house is my heir. Now, Abram is half right.

Okay, if you get partial credit here give him 50 percent still enough but he gets some partial credit. Who controls the womb? I mean undoubtedly it is the Lord. Genesis 29 31, when Yahweh saw that Leah was unloved he opened her womb.

Hannah would pray in 1 Samuel 5 6, or excuse me in the discussion of Hannah before her prayer, we read Yahweh closed her womb. And then it's repeated again that she struggled each day because Yahweh had closed her womb. So part of this is good theology for everyone to say, hey it's your fault that we don't have a kid right now.

True in the ultimate sense. And ostensibly you could say we like we've been doing our part you haven't showed up yet. But the problem is that he doesn't say since you've given no seed to me I'm continually waiting upon your promise.

He says because you haven't given me a seed behold I came up with plan B. In other words, because it hasn't happened yet that you've fulfilled your promise I've concluded it's not going to happen at all. And so I came up with a little scheme that I concocted to make the situation work. And so he takes probably a slave who had been born in the home and grown up around the family perhaps.

Maybe Abram had kind of taken him in and he was a bit of a surrogate grandfather figure. We don't know. But probably a meaningful relationship in some fashion.

And he said this is the best that we can do. And so Abram has begun to find a way to try to crack the code to live life apart from faith. You ever tried to do that? Man we are pretty committed at times in our striving to crack the code on how to live life apart from faith.

How do I get this to change here and this in place here and make this happen over here? And if I just I kind of get all the pieces just right then I'll have the relief of no longer having

to walk trusting the Lord. Can you relate to that? Of course you can. It's exactly what Abram's doing.

I came up with a plan. And in that we struggle to take the promise of God and entrust ourselves to it personally. I love what Charles Spurgeon said about faith.

It's just so relatable. He says this, I can believe all the promises in regard to other people. Okay so I can hand them out.

Here you go. Here you go. Believe it.

Believe it. Believe it. Believe it.

It's good for you. Here's the promise. The promise.

The promise. I can believe all the promises in regard to other people. I find faith in regard to my dear friend to be a very easy matter.

But oh when it comes to close grips and to laying hold for yourself, here is the difficulty. I could see my friend in 10 troubles and believe that the Lord would not forsake him. I could read a saintly biography and finding that the Lord never failed his servant when he went through fire and through water.

I do not wonder at it. But when it comes to one's own self, the wonder begins. Is that not so true? My parents in the room, how much easier is it to tell your kids to trust the Lord in something or your spouse than to actually take that prescription yourself? There's a gap here.

And the gap that Spurgeon is acknowledging and what Abram is wrestling with right now is the wrestling art of a believer which says, I affirm that the Lord is true and faithful. And from a technical standpoint, I don't doubt that. I do affirm it.

And yet when it comes to my personal situation right now, my personal situation is different. I can't trust the Lord in my situation. You don't understand the special application that I have right now.

The particular nuances. The things that put me in a slightly different category from everyone else. I mean, this is entrustment here.

It's really the call to say, I now entrust myself. I hand over my own reasoning, my own thoughts of what is best, my desire for control, and I leave it in the Lord's hands. That's what Abram needed to do.

God said it. I'm just going to take him at his word and believe it. What's happened? Well, Abram and Sarai aren't getting any younger, and they've had to go to baby shower after baby shower after baby shower after baby shower.

And so Abram starts to waver a bit. It's a familiar storyline. It's not going to be the last time that the Father of our faith grapples with misgivings.

And yet our next storyline is so precious because the Lord comes to minister to Abram. And so our second storyline is this. Abram, unsurprisingly, gets gracious confirmation.

Unsurprisingly. Why is it unsurprising? Because the Lord knows how to nurture our faith. He knows how to strengthen our faith.

He ministers to us. And so he comes to Abram in his wrestling, in his grappling, and he fortifies him, as I said, not with a sharp rebuke, but rather by reiterating and reminding him of his promise. It's true.

Sometimes unbelief needs to be confronted with a stern rebuke. For sure. A strong admonition.

But other times, our unbelief is dealt with not by confrontation, but by comfort. Isn't that amazing of the Lord here? He deals with unbelief, not with confrontation, but with comfort. Abram gets no rebuke, no stiff correction.

Rather, the Lord sees Abram struggling right now. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. I don't doubt that you're going to give me the reward.

I just don't think you're going to make good on all of the promise. And so the Lord comes to strengthen him. And I say unsurprising because this is how God treats us.

This is His character to His children. And so Abram's weak faith is not going to disqualify him. It's not going to cause God to give up on him or to remove his promises from him.

Rather, the Lord is going to come alongside him and bolster him. Verse 4, then behold, translation, listen up, pay attention to this church. Look, the word of Yahweh came to him saying, this one will not be your heir.

How do you like that? I'm not even going to name him. It's just the Lord's way of saying, this is a bad plan, Abram. We're not doing that plan.

It's a dumb plan. It's not the plan. It's cute that you came up with a plan.

That guy's not going to get the inheritance. And I'm thinking, I wonder if Abram had already like talked about it and done the paperwork. Does the Eleazar know that he just got cut out of the will? He's expecting this great inheritance.

Maybe Abram was just kind of threatening the Lord and sharing with him what he'd been cooking up. But the Lord says, this man who I'm not even going to name, he will not be your heir, but instead one will come forth from your own body. He shall be your heir.

Abram already said, from you, your seed, your offspring. This isn't a new plan. I'm just going to say it again.

Why? Because it's the promise of God that produces faith in the heart. And so the Lord knows it's not merely that Abram needs to, to strengthen his own faith and conjure it up and kind of work harder to believe and suppress his doubts. He needs to be reminded of the promise of God.

And as he's reminded of the promise of God, faith rises. And so he hears, guess what? We're sticking to the plan. It will be one who comes forth from your own body.

He shall be your heir. And then verse five, he takes him outside for an object lesson. I mean, the word of God is sufficient, obviously, as it stands.

We don't need illustrations, but sometimes they're helpful, are they not? And so the Lord wants to take something from creation right now and burn it on Abram's mind. And so He says, either go out of the tent or look up, wherever it is at that point. It's nighttime.

And I want you to look toward the heavens and number the stars if you're able to number them. Now just think about this for a minute if you're Abram. Where did he hail from? Ur of the Chaldees.

And they were known for what? Astrology, worshiping the moon. This guy's very, very, very familiar with the constellations. He probably knows the Big Dipper and they had some name for it.

He understands the Milky Way. He's watched it intently. He grew up looking at the sky at night.

He was a stargazer. Not only that, but you imagine how brilliant that sky was. I mean, you have a few lantern lights here and there, but there's no light pollution.

And so he looks up and he just sees the grandeur of the God who made the stars and the God who's named everyone. And what happens when you see the stars like that? You just

feel instantly small. I mean, you look at the stars and you just think, well, that kind of puts things in perspective.

Those are like giant flaming planets. And here I am in this little like half a square foot with breath of life in my nostrils. And they know He who created the stars and knows them each by name.

He hung them in the heavens. And so Abram on the one hand is immediately feeling small. And it's interesting the way the Lord unfolds the instruction.

The first instruction is, God and count the stars if you're able. It sounds like a project that some of you moms give to little boys when you need to get them out of the house. Here, go do an impossible project.

And so he's gazing up at the stars. He's taking it all in. And then it's as if the Lord says is He's recognizing the impossibility of counting them all out.

So shall your seed be. Those are going to be your descendants, your blood relatives. I understand that you're pushing a hundred right now.

I understand that your wife is pushing 90. I understand that you've been barren. I understand that I've closed her womb.

I understand you've concocted some plan B of how you're going to make it all work. See, the Lord is being so kind to Abram because for the rest of Abram's days, every night that he looks up, he can be reminded of the promise of God. It's a word picture.

It's displayed in the heavens for him. Don't believe what your eyes see. And so the Lord is telling the father of our faith who currently has no kids, you're going to have so many offspring, you're not even going to be able to count them.

Understand that the father of our faith, who's an example for us in his faith, also shows us how God strengthens the faith of his people. Do you relish in that? Do you trust that it's the Lord that causes your faith to stand? Do you remember what the apostle Paul said in 2nd Timothy 4.17? It was Jesus who stood with me and strengthened me. Timothy, I'm not at the end of my life telling you what a faithful guy I am because I was faithful.

The Lord Jesus came and he strengthened my faith every time I needed it. What did our Lord say at the end of the Great Commission? Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age. The Lord comes and he strengthens the faith of his people.

And so every time in the Christian life you've been fearful or discouraged or disobedient or rebellious or despairing or you felt like giving up or throwing in the towel or you're

resisting the Lord and your heart is inclined back to the Lord in faith, know that the Lord is the one shepherding you. Be reminded of that work he's doing and he is so gracious here to Abram to come and meet him where he's at and to strengthen him with a reminder. Three familiar storylines as Abram goes from questioning to confident.

First, we saw that he understandably grapples with misgivings because he's waiting on a promise that hasn't come about. Then unsurprisingly, we saw that he gets gracious confirmation. The Lord comes and ministers to him.

Now finally, we see Abram utterly gains righteousness as a gift. To say that he utterly gains it or unequivocally gains it is to say it is absolute, it is complete, there's no question about it. And this relates directly to faith.

Verse 6, Moses writes, then he believed in Yahweh and he counted it to him as righteousness. So Abram is standing there looking at all the stars as an old man who doesn't have a single kid. And when the Lord says, so shall your descendants be, Abram says, I believe it.

And like that, he's galvanized in his faith. I mean, is that not a sweet thing when the Lord does that? When you find that wrestling in your heart with unbelief and then suddenly there's conviction? And suddenly you go from wavering to confident? I mean, and obviously we don't stay there permanently. Abram's going to back off of this again.

But in that moment, he hears the promise and he believes. As one writer said, it was not then for the first time and not then only. I mean, don't you love that? He believed God when he left her of the Chaldees originally.

And he's believed God over and over and over and over again since then. But here's that promise on that night as he's looking out at the stars, he believes it. And then what's going to happen? He's going to doubt it again and then have to believe it again in the continual cycle.

But something significant is happening here. In fact, when you read that Abram believes and the Lord is the one who counts it to him as righteousness, you're finding a refrain that is going to be a favorite of the apostles. Romans 4 is going to pick up this theme.

Galatians 3 is going to quote this and pick up this theme. James 2 is going to pick up this theme. Why is this so important for God's people to understand? It's because of this.

Abram has a pretty good track record actually so far of good works if we were just to look at the big things he's done for God. Is it a small thing that he got up from her and packed up all of his belongings and left his kin and left all the resources he had there and his

family heritage and his future from that location? Is that a small thing? No. Huge act of faith to get up and go and follow the Lord.

Then he went into the land of Canaan. Was that an act of faith? Absolutely. And what about when he built altars to Yahweh? And what about when he separated from Lot in a gracious and benevolent way? And what about when he went and rescued Lot from war? And what about when he refused to take spoils from the king of Sodom? And what about when he paid homage and honor to Melchizedek? I mean, Abram has a pretty good growing pile here of big acts of faith and of good works.

Yet none of these, none of these form the basis or the grounds of Abram's favor with God. None of these are mentioned in the text. So when pastor writes, nor is there a hint given of any other sacred duties as the ground or cause or part cause of his justification before God.

Nothing that Abram did. No, it is said he believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness. And so the logic then in the new covenant, in the new testament is if Abram with all of his good works is accepted by God on nothing other than the basis of his faith, then so to you and I as ungodly sinners can only hope to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby be saved.

Unless Abram could do 10 times as many good works and it wouldn't change God's favor. He could do a hundred times as many works and it wouldn't change God's favor toward him. He could do a hundred thousand more good works and it would not change God's settled disposition of favor to him by which he says you're declared righteous.

Because it doesn't say then he believed in Yahweh and he was righteous. It says at that moment God counted him righteous. He reckoned him righteous.

He declared him to be righteous. And I want you to understand that when Abram believed God, and this is what's so helpful about the way the scripture unfolds for us in passages like this, was not a perfect faith. As in Abram is declared righteous on the basis of imperfect faith.

Faith that would be here today and gone tomorrow. Faith that would falter many times. And yet faith that genuinely and sincerely relies upon the promise of God.

I don't believe that Abram is justified here at this moment. I think that as Moses is telling the story, he's mentioning that the moment and the mechanism, the instrumentality of Abram's righteousness was his expression of faith. I think that his conversion would have happened all the way back when he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees.

But Moses is describing it here that it was on the basis of faith. I want you to think about this then for just a minute in your own Christian life. Okay, sometimes as believers we struggle with a phrase that I just came up with and coined.

It's called spiritual identity dysphoria. Spiritual identity dysphoria. It's how you reconcile your thoughts and emotions and what you see in your life with what the scripture says is true of you.

You ever experienced this? And the Bible says I'm righteous, but I certainly feel very unrighteous, and I find that distressing. And how do we try to relieve that dysphoria? Well, ways of feeling righteous. We still yearn for it intrinsically, achieving it in some fashion.

How is that to be resolved? God declared me righteous. That's it. It's not imputed to me.

I'm not now being made righteous, and that's the basis of my standing. Rather, I've been declared it. See, when Abram looks inward to assess his spiritual condition, what is he going to keep finding? Well, it depends on the day.

Sometimes he's going to look and say, man, that was some serious courage. I mean, praise the Lord, but wow, that's serious faith. And other days, what's he going to say? Man, you coward.

You compromiser. You fool. And so Abram is learning here.

The Lord is shepherding and training the Father of our faith in how to navigate thinking about and assessing his own spiritual condition, which is to say, Abram, do not look inward, but learn to rely upon my promise. Abram is learning progressively here to depend upon God in deeper ways. And Abram is going to be the Father of our faith because he's justified before he does any works.

Circumcision is coming later, and that is chronologically significant, Genesis 17, because there's no sense in which the sign of the covenant promise relates to his declaration of being righteous. So I think this is very important for us. You know, as I was thinking about this, beloved, we rightly, we rightly have a concern with what's known as easy believism.

It's kind of the reduction of the gospel that gets so reduced that you lose the required content for the saving gospel that becomes something like accept Jesus into your heart and decide to follow him. And that's the gospel. And so we reject easy believism.

We reject antinomianism and this idea that you can just live your life as a carnal Christian and never bear fruit and still claim the name of Christ and have comfort in him. We rightly test, attest that faith without works is dead. And so we're going to continue to clarify that the gospel is not easy believism and that faith without works is dead.

And we also need to make sure to come back to this center point often and not make things more than what they are. Abram believed God in what it was credited to him as righteous. I want to finish by reading the apostolic testimony in Acts chapter 2. Peter there is preaching.

He's declaring that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ. He was, of course, Abraham's seed. Over and over as we go through Abraham, we're going to find this theme in the New Testament.

It's going to make passages of the New Testament more come alive in ways that hope and trust benefit your soul. It says in verse 36, Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ. He's the sovereign king.

This is lordship salvation. He is Savior and Lord at the same time. It's what it means to come to him, this Jesus whom you crucified.

And when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men, brothers, what should we do? And Peter said to them, repent. Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now catch this, verse 39, for the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.

Said another way, believe the promise of the gospel and be saved. Believe the promise of the gospel and be justified. So what is Abram believing in? Well, it's that same promise that the Lord will grant him salvation and forgiveness.

It's the same promise you and I believe. What a great reminder that man is justified on simple faith alone. Will you pray with me? God, you correct us and you shepherd us in such beautiful and profound ways through the scriptures.

Lord, on the one hand, you expose how incredibly pathetic our faith is. And then you remind us that even pathetic faith is enough, because our salvation doesn't depend on the quality of our faith, but the object of it. And so we trust in a very sure promise and a sure Savior and a sure offer of forgiveness in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord, thank you for providing justification for us and a foreign righteousness. And thank you for doing it on the basis of faith. And thank you for nourishing and protecting our faith day by day.

We love you so much. Amen.