



## Life Group Study Notes

# “Covenant of Blessing: The Gospel According To Abraham”

Ps. Mike Cantrell - May 22, 2016

### Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Who taught you to drive a car? How was the experience?
- When was the last time someone did good to you even though you had treated them poorly?
- Who do you trust to speak truth into your life even when you don't want to hear it?

### Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at [www.bethelworld.org](http://www.bethelworld.org)

Luke 24:15-17 ESV *While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad.*

Where do we turn when our faith falters, when life causes us sorrow and pain, when hopes are broken and our spirit as well? Our walk with God as it intersects with real life sometimes leaves us hurting and questioning, especially when our expectations are seemingly dashed by circumstances. In these times we discover that it's much easier to believe in God than to actually trust him.

Abraham (Abram) is an encouraging example of one who learned to trust God. On several occasions God gave Abraham major life-changing commands and promises. When Abraham asked for more information, God often didn't provide it, but instead called upon Abraham to trust him. God called him to leave his homeland and go to a place he would later show him. He wouldn't tell him where it was ahead of time. God told him he would inherit a land, but didn't tell him how it would come about in spite of Abraham's small household. Instead, God told him to wander through it. God told him he would have a promised son, but didn't tell him how it would come about in spite of his wife's barrenness and his old age. God then told him to sacrifice that very son, but wouldn't tell him why beforehand.

Genesis 15:1-8 ESV *After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?"*

God required Abraham to trust him, but also sought to assure him with promises based on his own holy character.

Genesis 15:8-12, 17-18 ESV *But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other... As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him... When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates..."*

The animals slaughtered in half were a symbolic form of establishing a binding covenant. Walking through the midst of them signified the ruin and destruction that the parties to the covenant called upon themselves if they were to fail to uphold their covenant promises and responsibilities. The amazing aspect of God's covenant with Abraham is that God would not allow him to walk through the slaughtered animals. Instead, God alone in the form of a symbolic fire pot and torch passed through the pieces. God made it clear that he would take full responsibility for the fulfillment of the covenant he was making with Abraham.

Hebrews 6:13-20 ESV *For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf...*

Like God's covenant with Abraham, God has made a covenant with the heirs of salvation. Christ alone has paid the price for our sin. It is God who provided atonement for our sins. It is God who draws us to himself. It is God who sanctifies us. It is God who will raise us from the dead. While we have a role to play in our salvation, it is always only secondary. We cooperate with the Holy Spirit, but he is the one who works salvation into our lives.

### **Discussion (10-15 minutes)**

**Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.**

- What is your understanding of the role you play in working out your salvation?
- What is the significance of God not letting Abraham walk through the sacrificed animals?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in bringing about your salvation?

### **Prayer (10-15 minutes)**

**Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.**

- Ask God to give you revelation concerning his preeminent role in bringing about your salvation.
- Ask God to expose any self-reliance that drives your endeavor to live a Christian life.
- Ask God to teach you to live by the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, and to keep in step with the Spirit.