

# SERMON GUIDE

## Genesis: Counted As Righteous

### Genesis 15:1-6



3.3.2024

#### **SERMON NOTES:**

I'm really excited about these next two weeks of sermons in Genesis 15. These next two sermons, particularly the passages we are covering, are crucial texts for understanding the gospel and the covenant God has made, not only with Abraham, but with us in Christ. I don't want to say these are foundational things, because that could imply "basic" things or "elementary" things. What we're going to look at is far from basic or elementary. These are core truths and doctrines, but they are profound in nature. They are the heart of the gospel and Christian faith.

Hitting coach in MLB. They are professional baseball players. Why do they need a hitting coach? They've been hitting since t-ball. Because the further they go in baseball, the more complex the core practice (hitting a baseball) becomes. The same is true in the Christian life. The gospel is a core principle. But living it and applying in every area of life requires staying sharp. Our lives are complex and difficult, but the gospel is still the core practice we must apply to our lives.

These are things we can't afford to get wrong. And I would argue these are things that Satan would love to distort and cause us to get wrong. So we'll be seeking to sharpen our understanding and grasp of these things like one sharpens a tool or weapon.

**Ecclesiastes 10:10 -- “If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen its edge, then one must exert more strength” (CSB)**

The ax for us as Christians is the gospel. We can never let it go dull or we will find ourselves laboring harder downstream to deal with life's issues. The gospel is crucial for all the things in life we will deal with. So today is going to be a sharpening of our understanding of the gospel.

#### **Exegesis of Genesis 15:1-6**

Abram has defeated the kings. He has encountered Melchizedek and given back the spoils of war to the defeated kings. Now we see an encounter Abram has with God after these things. We don't know how long, but it is some time after these things.

**VS 1 -- 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.”**

**\*God is personal** (The Triune God is not abstract or so transcendent that He doesn't relate to His creation. Here we see God be personal with Abram. Friends, His desire is to have personal fellowship with you. Those in Christ are offered fellowship with God, through the Spirit. This abiding and

communion with God is enjoyed by engaging in the means of grace He supplies. Scripture reading, prayer, worship with the church, and more.)

**\*God pursues** (Notice God speaks to Abram. He is the initiator here. Why is this? Because ultimately God is the One who pursues us long before we ever pursue Him. You know why you're a Christian today? Because God pursued you. )

**\*God reveals** (Here God's Word comes through a vision, but now His Word comes through the Scriptures. But the idea here to grasp is God speaks and reveals. This is the God who makes Himself known. This is a God who communicates. By the way, God's most prominent way of communicating to us in a real way is through our taking in of the Word. Reading. Discerning. Listening. Yes, God can prompt, nudge, and incline to direct us. But the primary communication to His people is through the Word. Read. Make a habit and plan to be in the Scriptures.)

**\*God commands Abram not to fear**

- Significant time has passed since the original promise (Genesis 12)
- Abram has now been in battle with neighbor kingdoms (land is occupied, no descendents)
- Why not fear? God promises to be his shield. He will protect him. He is shielding Abram's life. Abram is guarded by God.
- God promises great reward to Abram...but the reality is God Himself is Abram's reward. Everything is downstream from that. There are infinite benefits that come off of that, but that is first.

**VS 2 -- *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?"***

**\*We can bring our real selves and real questions to God**

- God has promised to give Abram great reward, but Abram wonders what that is. God promised land and children, Abram has neither at this moment. He even wonders if Eliezer of Damascus is going to ultimately be his only living heir.
- This is so important for us to recognize. God doesn't mind the real us showing up in prayer. We don't have to pose or pretend. He knows what we want, how we feel, and where our thoughts/hearts are. We can speak plainly. So many people try to dress up their conversation with God, while veiling their real feelings (as if God is fooled). Don't do that.

**VS 3-4 -- *3 And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." 4 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."***

**\*God's timing and our timing are not the same**

- Abram wonders why God still hasn't given him any heirs. He's getting older each day. This all looks like a lost cause. But God tells him that it isn't going to be some other family member. It's going to be an heir from him. Just as God promised in Genesis 12.
- It's been a long time though. Why not do it the second He promised it? This isn't how God operates. God always plays the long game. He fulfills His promises 10/10 times, but He never does it according to our schedules. He does it according to His own time frame (guided by wisdom). Why does this matter? We want God to operate and do things according to our timeframe. In fact, our faith is really tested when it doesn't happen immediately. We pray for our marriage to improve and if it doesn't look different in a week, we give up. "Where was God?" We need to learn patience and trust God's plans AND His timing. We cling to His promises AND His timing.
- God has made promises to His church about the gates of Hell not prevailing against us. Things look bad culturally. It looks like everything is going to hell in a hand-basket. But this is short-sighted. Our God reigns. He is at work. His purposes always prevail. We are not on the losing team. We are purposefully here for such a time as this.

***VS 5 -- 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."***

***\* God doesn't shift plans or need backups***

- Abram expresses his struggle. He believes God, but nothing has happened. But God responds to Abram by telling Him to look in the heavens (the sky) and see the stars. He tells him that's what his descendants will be like. The plan is the same. Nothing has changed. God doesn't reverse course.
- **God meets man in his weakness**
- God doesn't give Abram a "good talking to." He communicates the promise again. He understands Abram's weakness. He knows Abram expects something quicker. But the promise hasn't changed. He gives the promise to Abram again to strengthen him.
- Just recognize that God sees and knows our weakness. He is compassionate toward us. He knows we struggle. He knows us. Just like you don't expect certain things from your children when you know their limitations and struggles. God knows us infinitely better than we know our own children.
- **The battle we face each day is believing God over what we see**
- Satan's tactic is to get us to interpret our world through our eyes rather than through our ears. He wants us to look at our circumstances instead of remembering what God has said. Eve saw that the fruit was good instead of listening to God's command and warning (Genesis 3).

***VS 6 -- And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.***

- **Faith is counted as righteousness**

- This is the heart of the Christian faith. This is the gospel! Abram believed the LORD when God told him these things. He believed Him. He took Him at His word. The result? God counts that belief, that faith, as righteousness. This means God counted the belief and faith of Abraham as sufficient to give him right standing with God. We're going to spend the rest of our time here making sure we understand this.
- Abram's faith is in what God said. He's not putting faith in his faith, but faith in God. This is ultimately a hope fueled by trust in God. This kind of faith God applies to Abram as sufficient for right standing with Him. Notice that Abram is still a sinner. He still needs a Savior and atonement for sin. But in the meantime, his faith in God's Word is sufficient for God to count it, or credit it, to Abram as righteousness (right standing).

- **Faith in Jesus is still the litmus test of right-standing with God**

- This is why Paul calls Abraham the father of the faith (Romans 4). Abram's faith being counted as righteous, long before the law appeared, is Paul's primary message of how anyone is saved. We trust in the finished work of Jesus: His death and resurrection. Jesus is the basis of our forgiveness and salvation. Like Abraham, we believe God's Word and promise to us concerning His Son. And our faith/belief justifies us before God. This justification by faith means as we stand in the courtroom of God's justice, we are declared innocent as a result of trusting in Jesus. His finished work is applied to us as if we have done it.

- **Trusting in Jesus' finished work for salvation is called being "in Christ"**

- In Paul's 13 letters, he uses the phrase "in Christ" over 100 times to describe the life of the believer. This is vital. We are "in Christ," meaning our life is hidden with Christ. He took our sins. We take His righteousness. There is no condemnation left for us for sins because Jesus paid it all. He paid ALL OF IT.
- The "great exchange" is where Jesus exchanges His perfect obedience and righteousness for our sinfulness and rebellion. He's punished as a sinner. We receive His righteous works as our own. In this, we are able to stand before God as children: holy, righteousness.

- **Faith, not works saves us, but works demonstrate the presence of faith**

- In James 2, Jesus' brother reminds us that the kind of faith that simply consents to mental facts, but doesn't demonstrate itself in faithful actions, isn't real faith. Empty faith doesn't save. Simply agreeing with facts about the Bible or Jesus doesn't save you (the demons believe these things and are not saved!!).
- Saving faith is shown by our actions. EXAMPLE: saying you trust an airplane to be safe enough to travel on is empty faith if you refuse to fly on one. Your actions demonstrate that your trust is insufficient or even imagined.
- Interestingly enough, James references Abram showcasing his faith when he took Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him (James 2:21-23). The evidence that Abraham had faith was shown by his willingness to march Isaac up the mountain. Paul and James are not talking about two

different kinds of faith. They are one in the same. Our works evidence our faith, they are not the basis of it.

- **All who put faith and trust in Jesus today are counted as righteous before God**
- There are endless testimonies of grace in this room. People who deserved damnation and Hell for eternity who will eternal life in Heaven because of the Lord Jesus. Come on, somebody. Is that you? It's me. It's all the grace of God. And that grace comes when we believe by faith in what Christ has done.
- Believe, friends. You can come exactly as you are in all your junk today. Listen to me closely: forsaking sin is not the precursor for experiencing this grace. This grace is offered to you by receiving Christ. Forsaking sin will become the fruit of this grace in your life. Don't clean up this morning or try to get your life together first. Simply come to Jesus. He is the offer today. All the benefits like redemption, comfort, joy, peace, and the like flow from being in Christ. He is the offer. He is the shield. He is the reward.
- Faith today will be credited to you as righteousness. What an incredible reality.

I pray the Lord has spoken to you today through His Word. He is purposeful in bringing about His plans. Be patient. Trust Him. Bring your real self to God and not some dressed up version of yourself. Express your real feelings. Find comfort in the reality that God knows your weaknesses and limitations. He is patient with us.

But most important of all...remember that faith is the foundation of Christianity. Trusting in the finished work of Christ, not in what we can do, is our hope. We are counted righteous. We don't earn it or achieve it.

***Isaiah 61:10 -- I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.***

He. Has. Clothed. Me. With. The. Garments. Of. Righteousness.  
Through faith in Jesus, we are clothed.

## LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

## BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**

- Read **Genesis 15:1-6** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
- What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
- Additional Scripture:
  - Isaiah 41:10
  - Deuteronomy 31:6
  - 2 Timothy 2:13
  - Matthew 13:44
  - Jeremiah 23:24
  - Psalm 139:4
  - 2 Peter 3:8
  - Romans 1:17
  - Ephesians 2:8-9
  - Romans 5:1
  - Philippians 3:9
  - James 2:17
  - John 14:12

- **REFLECT:**

- Why does God command Abram not to fear? What promise does God give Abram?
- How does Abram respond to God? What does that mean for us?
- Why does God reassure Abram again in verse 4 & 5?
- What caused Abram to be counted as righteous?
- If our faith is what makes us righteous then why does James emphasize works?

- **RESPOND:**

- How has the Lord pursued you?
- Do you feel like you can present your real self and your real questions to God? Why or why not?
- Why doesn't God act according to our timing?

- **MEDITATE:**

- Genesis 15:1 -- *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."*

- **MEMORIZE:**

- Genesis 15:6 -- *And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

## SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
  - Pray over any request from your group members.
  - Worship & Creative Associate - **Braden Benz**



- Ministry - **Journey Worship Co.**
- **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
  - The Wilsons
  - The Grays
  - The Starks
- **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
  - Kaesi
- **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Rashaida in Eritrea



- **Population in country:** 54,000
- **Global population:** 189,000

- **Christian Adherent:** 0.01%
- **Evangelical:** 0.01%
- **Primary Religion:** Islam
- **Primary Language:** Arabic, Hijazi
- **Summary:** The Rashaida are a Bedouin people, who populate either side of the Red Sea and came from a major tribe in mainland Arabia about 150 years ago. They are a nomadic people who live in tents made of goatskin, and they are herdsman, raising primarily goats and sheep. Since many do not read, they memorize in great detail the pedigree of their animals, keeping mental records of their herds over seven or eight preceding generations of the flock.
- **Prayer Focus:** There may be a few followers of Christ among the Rashaida community. Pray for them to become loving ambassadors of Christ to their families and communities. Pray Rashaida families would be able to live peaceful lives. Pray for stability and prosperity in Eritrea. Pray for bold and loving workers to go to the Rashaida people to build God's Church in Eritrea and beyond.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>