

December 1, 2021

[Genesis 15:1-6](#)

By now, Abram (later named Abraham) has been hearing God's promises for some time. After leaving his ancestral land for Canaan and then stopping to settle down in Haran instead, Abram hears the Lord call him to resume the journey with the promise to make of him a great nation so that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Once he reaches Canaan, God then promises the land to his descendants. Forced to go to Egypt because of famine in Canaan, Abram returns to Canaan where God again promises the land to him and his offspring.

This passage opens with God making another promise. Coming immediately after Abram has rescued his nephew Lot from the captivity of a group of powerful kings and then refused the gifts of another King, God tells him not to fear, promising safety and, once again, "great" reward. But all these promises are beginning to sound a bit hollow to Abram, for he doesn't have the one thing that he sees as necessary for them to be realized -- an heir. As things stand, his heir will be his foreign slave. But "the word of the Lord" (the same word that spoke the universe into existence) insists that only his own flesh and blood will be his heir. Reminded that God is the creator, and he is the created ("count the stars, if you are able to count them"), Abram hears again the promise of many descendants, and "he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness."

One of God's greatest promises is to be with us. It's an easy promise to distrust, especially when things go terribly wrong in our lives or the lives of those we love. This passage reminds us of the importance of trusting the Lord even when we don't understand the why or how. While many Christians know this passage as Paul's proof of the sufficiency of salvation through faith rather than works, James cites this same scripture and Abraham's subsequent willingness to sacrifice his only heir as proof that "faith without works is dead." Being "righteous" means "to be aligned with" God, not with just some kind of intellectual faith, but with the willingness to trust God's promises enough to cling to him and risk what's most dear to us in his service, no matter what the circumstances.

Lord, we pray for the faith that trusts that you are for us, even when we struggle to see you or understand your ways. Give us the same trust that young children have in their loving parents. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Walter DuPre