

Lesson Six: *Covenant Faithfulness*
Genesis 14-17

Theme:

Genesis 15-17: God inaugurates and seals His covenant with Abraham, thereby demonstrating His faithfulness to His promises and encouraging His people to trust Him.

I. (15:1-18a) **Faithfulness**

a. Context: 14:10-12, 21-24

- i. (21) *The king of Sodom*: a symbol of the world's evil (I John 2:15-17)
 1. Abram must choose between the gift and the Giver (Gen 3:6)
- ii. (22-24) The response of faith
 1. Abram's allegiance is to the true King (*Most High*)
 2. Abram recognizes God's ability to provide (*possessor of heaven and earth*)
 3. Abram's unwavering commitment to holiness (*not a thread*)
 - a. A refusal to bind himself to the world (*I have made Abram rich*)
 - b. A decision to be "rich" in God
 - i. *The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup* (Ps 16:5; cf. Luke 12:16-21).

b. (15:1-6) **The promise of offspring**

- i. (1a) *Vision*: those that refuse the world will "see" God
 1. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (Matt 5:8).
- ii. The means of sight is the word of the LORD (v.4).
 1. *The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes* (Ps 19:8).
- iii. (1b) *Do not fear*: those that refuse the world's comfort will be comforted by God
 1. Protection:
 - a. *The LORD is my rock and my fortress...My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold* (Ps 18:2).
 2. Reward: Abram must put aside his doubts and trust the LORD.
 - a. *Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him* (Heb 11:6).
- iv. (2-3) *O Lord GOD*: a willingness to seek the LORD
 1. Abram's focus is outward and upward
 - a. *I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him* (Ps 142:2).
 2. A contrite heart (Prov 9:10)
 3. A dependence on the provision of God (*What will you give me?*)
 - a. Abram will only be satisfied by the hand of the LORD.
 4. An eternal perspective
 - a. *Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it* (John 8:56).
- v. (4-5) *The word of the LORD came to him*: the tenderness of God's response
 1. The LORD'S willingness to tend Abram's immediate need
 2. The LORD'S abundance
- vi. (6) *Then he believed in the LORD*: the demonstration of faith
 1. Abram focuses on the One who is able (Jude 1:24-25).
 - a. Abram is justified by faith (Rom 4)
 - i. *Believed*: expectant trust, a future orientation
 - ii. *Reckoned*: credited, the imputation of righteousness

- c. (15:7-18a) **The promise of land**
 - i. (7) The reminder of past faithfulness
 - 1. The identity of Abram's God (Ex 3:14)
 - 2. The foundation for Abram's trust
 - a. *The righteous has an everlasting foundation* (Prov 10:25).
 - b. *God is not a man, the He should lie* (Num 23:19a).
 - ii. (8) Abram seeks a sign from the LORD (Judg 6:36-40)
 - 1. God's willingness to strengthen our faith (Mark 9:24)
 - 2. An anchor in times of temptation
 - iii. (9-18a) The inauguration of the covenant
 - 1. *A bond in blood sovereignly administered* (O. Palmer Robertson)
 - a. (9-10) *Bond in blood*: a covenant is "cut" between God and man
 - i. The necessity for blood sacrifice (Gen 3:21; Heb 9:22)
 - ii. The "life and death" nature of the covenant
 - b. (17) *Sovereignly administered*:
 - i. (17) The symbols of God's presence
 - ii. (17) The LORD swears by Himself
 - 1. *For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself* (Heb 6:13).
 - iii. An unconditional covenant / Abram's "merit"
 - 2. (13) The result: Abram can *know for certain*
- II. (16:1-14) **Faithlessness**
 - a. A return to the garden
 - i. (1-2) A sinful desire (human effort—Gen 3:6)
 - 1. A refusal to submit to the LORD'S plan
 - ii. (2-3) The distortion of God's order (Gen 3:2-6)
 - 1. (2) Sarai's desire for Abram (3:16)
 - 2. (3) *took* and *gave*
 - iii. (4-14) The destruction of sin
 - 1. Sarai and Hagar
 - 2. Abram and Sarai
 - a. (5) Blame shifting (Gen 3:12-13)
 - b. (6) The refusal to accept responsibility
 - c. (5-6) *sight* and *good*
 - 3. The two seeds (Gen 3:15; 21:8-10)
 - a. The inadequacy of physical descent (Rom 9:6-8)
- III. (17:1-14) **A Sacred Reminder**
 - a. The seal of the covenant
 - i. (1) *The LORD appeared*: A vision of hope (a delay is not a denial)
 - ii. (1) *Blameless*: fulfilled in Christ (Col 1:21-22)
 - iii. (1) *God Almighty*: the God of all sufficiency, the God who is enough
 - iv. (2-8) *Abraham*: the reflection of God's promise
 - v. (9-14) *Circumcision*: the seal of the covenant
 - 1. Inclusion in the covenant community (a shadow of later expansion v.13)
 - 2. The need for cleansing by the removal of defilement
 - b. The fulfillment of the covenant in Christ
 - i. Christ offers His body and blood to satisfy the curse of sin.
 - ii. Christ offers those united to Him a superior circumcision (Col 2:9-12).
 - 1. The work of the Spirit, an inward act, the putting off of the evil nature
 - iii. The result: Abraham's children may *know for certain* (15:13; Rom 4:21)